

# The New Testament Church



**Forum Terrace Church of Christ**

**Sunday Morning Adult Class – Summer Quarter 2024**

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# What is the Church?

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The man hunt was on. Police were joined by volunteers searching for the thirty-two year-old missing bride. A \$100,000 reward was being offered by her family. Fortunately, she was found unharmed. Later, she confessed that she had not been kidnaped, she just ran out on her groom. Run-away brides are not that uncommon.

Another bride is missing. It is the Bride of Christ. No, we are not alluding to Dan Brown's fictitious story in *The Da Vinci Code* of Mary Magdalene being Christ's secret wife. So what if He was married. Being married and even having children is not a sin. Nor would these keep Him from resurrecting or being our Savior.

Though Jesus Christ never had a physical bride on this earth He does have a spiritual Bride: The Church (Revelation 21:2,9; Eph. 5:23ff). Finding this type of bride does not require us to look into ancient books and art, but to start the search at the last known location of His Bride which was in the New Testament. To find someone who is missing requires the right identification markers, such as, the right age, place of birth, Social Security number, physical characteristics, etc. From the New Testament we can learn what identifying characteristics to look for in our search to find which church is really the Bride of Christ and which one's are imposters.

## Definition of "Church"

First, this requires a general definition of the term "church." The word "church" comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* which means "congregation, gathering, or assembly." The Old Testament Greek translation called the Septuagint uses this term nearly fifty times. Often it is a general reference to the gather of people into a congregation or assembly. According to the Englishman's Greek concordance it is used 115 times in the New Testament. It is used in both a secular and a religious sense. Thayer defines the church as "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place: an assembly" (195,196). Trench describes it as "the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the rights of citizenship, for the transaction of public affairs" (Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, 1,2). The term itself is not exclusively a religion term. In fact, in Acts 19:32,39 it is used to refer to a mob at Ephesus which was outraged over the ministry of Paul. In verse forty-one it is used to describe a group of silversmiths. Whether the word is used in a secular or religious sense must be determined by the context or by descriptive titles.

The Greek term *ekklesia* is a compound word: the preposition *ek* meaning "out of" and the noun *klesia* meaning "a calling". Therefore, "church" literally means "God's called out ones" or "*those called out by God.*" For God has called them "*unto his kingdom and glory,*" and to obey the gospel "*to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Th. 2:12,14). The church is composed of those who have been called out of the kingdom of darkness (error) into his marvelous light (truth).

The English word "church" is derived from the Greek root word "kuriakos" meaning "of or belonging to the Lord." It is used twice in the New Testament in this sense: 1) in reference to the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20) and 2) in reference to the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10). Romans 16:16 refers to the "churches of Christ." The Prepositional phrase "church of Christ" shows the possession of the church by the Lord.

"Church"	"of"	"Christ"
A called out people	belonging to	The Lord

Thus, this phrase is not a title as in a denominational designation, but it is an expression of identification with Christ as its possessor (1 Peter 2:9). Christ has full rights to claim ownership of the church. 1) He is its builder (Matt. 16:18); 2) He is its foundation (Eph. 2:19,20); 3) He is the chief cornerstone (1 Cr. 3:11); 4) He gave Himself for the church (Eph. 5:25); 5) and He bought it with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

The noun "church" is a collective noun. A collective noun is made up of several individuals or elements. Examples of collective nouns are: troop, jury; team; crew; family; assembly; pride of lions; herd of cows, pod of whales; congress of baboons, covey of quail; flock of geese; school; committee; company; crowd. A single cow cannot be a herd. It takes more than one cow to make up a herd of cows. A congress of baboons would consist of many individual baboons. One baboon could not be referred to as a congress. So a church is made up of an assembly of people. Several other collective nouns have been used synonymous with the church, such as, body (Eph. 1:21-23) or family (1 Tim. 3:15).

Furthermore, the word "church" is not denoting the material building, for it is a collective noun like the words "herd" and "flock". In Matthew 18:17 is found the words of Jesus saying, *"tell it unto the church, if he neglects to hear the church..."* The church can hear and speak, because it is people, not brick and mortar. Only by a figure of speech known as "metonymy" may the word "church" be used to designate the building where the saints assemble. However, literally and scripturally the church is something different than the edifice in which it meets. A school is a collective noun referring to students. However, most associated the term with the place where the students assemble to be educated. Although the building in which a congregation meets may be an architectural wonder and have a sign identifying it as the "Forum Terrace Church of Christ," it is only the building in which it meets. No matter where or in what the saints meet, it is only when they are gathered together do they constitute a church.

The "church" discussed in the New Testament never refers to "a denomination." According to Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary a denomination is "a religious organization unifying a single legal and administrative body to a number of local congregations" (221). "A denomination is a group of persons adhering to a particular creed under a distinctive name, Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians are separate Christian denominations" (Funk and Wagnalls Ency. College Dictionary, 1136). It is akin to the arithmetic term "denominator" and suggests a fraction or a part of the whole. It has been used in reference to different stamp values and currency, such as, a one, five, ten, twenty, etc. bill. "Made up of units of a designated kind...(1) The act of denominating; specif., the process of embodying and fixing concepts and classes in languages, naming...(2) A sect or a school having united by a common faith and form of worship and discipline, as, the Baptist denomination" (Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language).

The first reason the term church as used in the New Testament is not in reference to a denomination is because the early church was not divided up into religious divisions or denominations. Often churches will advertise themselves as undenominational or non-denominational. In fact, they are really inter-denominational in that they accept any denomination. The prefix "un" suggests a lack of the quality of the thing signified. For example, "unbelief" means the lack of belief. Un-denominational means the church lacks the quality of being a denomination or religious division. The prefix "non" means simply "not." The church in the Bible is not a denomination or is it divided up into separate religious groups. Paul taught the Corinthians that religious divisions are not to be a part of the New Testament church. "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). "That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25). The church of the first century was neither Catholic, Jewish or Protestant. It was not made up of Baptists, Methodists or Catholics.

Another reason "church" does not refer to a denomination(s) is the fact that there were no denomination in existence during New Testament times. Christ never promised to build a denominational church (Matt. 16:18). His blood was never shed to purchase a denomination (Acts 20:28). The apostles never joined any denominations. They never encouraged a single person to join a denomination. In fact, the closest example of a religious division in a New Testament church is condemned by Paul (1 Cor.

1:10-13).

The New Testament speaks about local churches and the church universal, but never a denomination of churches. A denomination is not the universal church, because it is not composed of all the saved on earth. The Methodist denomination for example only claim to represent part of the saved on earth. A denomination is not a local church for a denomination is composed of many local congregations which adhere to a particular religious creed. Therefore, a denomination is smaller than the universal church and larger than a local church. Since the New Testament never mentions such an organization it is unscriptural.

### **A Worship Assembly**

The term "church" is used to referred to three different religious organizations in the New Testament: 1) a worship assembly of Christians; 2) the Universal church; 3) and local churches.

Twice in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he uses the term "church" to identify the local congregation of believers at Corinth who gathered together in worship to God. "...when you come together as a church" (1 Cor. 11:18). "Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place,..." (1 Cor. 14:23).

### **A Local Church**

A local congregation is any number of saved individuals choosing to meet, worship, and work together under Christ's authority in a specific geographical locality. They may participate only in those works and only operate in ways assigned to them by the Word of God. Some local churches are referred to according to the city in which they meet: "*the church which is at Cenchrea*" (Rom. 16:1); "*the church of God which is at Corinth*" (1 Cor. 1:2); and "*the church of the Thessalonians*" (1 Thess. 1:1). Other local congregations are reference according to the homes where they met. "*Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house*" (Rom. 16:19). "*To the church in thy house*" (Philemon 1:2). The word "churches" refers to the local churches in different places. It never references different kinds of churches, institutions or denominations. Romans 16:16 speaks of "*the churches of Christ.*" "*The churches of Galatia*" (Gal. 1:2) relates to the various local churches throughout the Roman province of Galatia. The New Testament recognized only one *ekklesia* which was the church universal representing on those who are saved on earth. It was never used in reference to a federation of the many (Local) congregations (1 Cor. 12:12-24). The New Bible Dictionary explains: "The local *ekklesia* was not thought of as part of some world-wide *ekklesia*, which would have been a contradiction of terms"

### **The Universal Church**

As the term "church" is used in connect to God or Christ in the New Testament it is in reference to a group of people who belong to and are in spiritual fellowship with Christ no matter where the live on earth. This is describing the church universal. The universal church has no earthly organization, only Christ as its head (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). It has not earthly organization or arrangement by whihc it can function. Roman Catholicism has south to make the universal church functional by using Vatican City as its earthly headquarters under the headship fo the Pope. Protestant denominations have also sought to do so by use of councils, synods or denominational head quarters. The universal church is not made up of local congregations but Christians. They are the only units of the universal body of Christ.

The New Testament uses several terms denoting different aspects of the church universal. It is called a "*Kingdom*" (Mat. 16:18,19; Col. 1:13,14) To demonstrate how it functions as a government with Christ as King and saints as its citizens. The church is the "*house of God*" (1 Tim. 3:15) to convey its family feature. God is the Father and Christians are His children and brothers and sisters to one another. The worship aspect can be seen in the phrase "*temple of God.*" Christ is the High Priest. The saints represent a royal priesthood who offer up prayers, songs and spiritual sacrifices to God. Christ's blood in the atoning sacrifice for sin offered once for all time. Christians also make up the stones of this holy temple (Eph. 2:20,21). The church is called the "body of Christ" (Eph. 1:22,23; 4:4). This metaphor

describes the unity of the church. Christ is the head (Col. 1:18) and Christians are the individual body parts. The productiveness of the church is featured in a metaphor of a vineyard. God is the husbandman. Christ is the vine. and the disciples are the individual branches that bear fruit (John 15:1-8).

### Differences Between the Universal Church and a Local Church

The charts below are designed to further help distinguish the differences between the church universal and a local church.. Basically, the universal church is concerned with one's relationship to God, while the local church deals with our relationship with other Christians. Understanding these things will go a long way in overcome the denominational concepts and misunderstanding about the term "church". Many false doctrines which have surfaced over the past 2,000 years which could easily be resolved if men would make this Biblical distinction between the universal church and local church.

#### Distinction in Beginning

Universal	Local
Pentecost	Any Place
30 A.D.	Any Time
Acts 2	Acts 14:21-23

#### Distinction in Founder

Universal	Local
Christ, Matt. 16:18	Faithful Christians, Acts 14:21-23

#### Distinction in Manner of Entry

Universal	Local
Baptized into the Body, 1 Cor. 12:13	Joins, Acts 9:26
God Adds Saved, Acts 2:47	Members Accept, Ac. 9:26; Rom. 16:1,2

#### Distinction in Enrollment

Universal	Local
Only the Faithful Saved, 2 Tim. 2:19	Sometimes the Wicked, Rev. 2:14-16

#### Distinction in Effect of Death

Universal	Local
No Effect, Phil. 1:21- 25; Rev. 3:21	Ends Membership, Acts 5:1-11; 8:1,2
Saints dead & alive	Alive only

#### Distinction in Assembling

Universal	Local
Does NOT Regularly, 1 Cor. 15:24; Heb. 12:23	Does Regularly, Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 16:1,2



### Distinction in Fellowship

Universal	Local
Mainly Fellowship with God, 1 Jn. 1:1-4	Mainly Fellowship with Christians, Phil. 4:15
May Have Fellowship with God, 3 John 9-10	While NOT Having Fellowship with Congregation
May NOT Have Fellowship With God	While Having Fellowship with Congregation, 1 Cor. 5:1-13

### Distinction In Number

Universal	Local
Only One, Eph. 4:5	Many, Rev. 2,3; Rom.16:16

### Distinction in Divisibility

Universal	Local
Cannot Be Divided, 1 Cor. 1:13	Can Be Divided, 1 Cor. 12:25

### Distinction in Shepherds

Universal	Local
Only One Shepherd, Jn. 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:25	Must Have a Plurality, Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1

### Distinction in Work

Universal	Local
No Collective Action	Collective Action, Eph. 4:12-16
Does NOT Edify	Edifies, Eph. 4:12-16
NO Treasury	Has Treasury, 2 Cor. 10:8; 1 Cor. 16:1,2
Does NOT send out or pay preachers	Send/pays preachers, Ac. 11:22; 2 Cor. 10:8
Does NOT Provide Benevolence	Benevolence to Needy Saints Only
Does NOT Discipline	Disciplines, 1 Cor. 5:1f

### Distinction in Discipline

Universal	Local
God Controls Destiny of Universal, Rev. 22:19	Has NO Controlling Influence
God Disciplines Congregations, Rev. 2:5	Cannot Discipline Other Congregations
Does NOT Discipline Members	Must Discipline, 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Th. 3:6-15

### Distinction in Gender Roles

Universal	Local
No distinction, Gal. 3:29	Women Cannot Lead, 1 Cor. 2:9; 11:2f; 14:34

### Distinction in Necessity of Belonging

Universal	Local
Must Be A Member To Be Saved, 2 Tim. 2:10; Eph. 4:25	Should Be If Possible, Acts 9:26; 8:36-39; 3 Jn. 9,10

**Questions:**

1. What is the literal meaning of the Greek word *ekklesia*?
  
2. T F The word *ekklesia* is always used in a religious sense and never is it used to describe a secular gathering in the New Testament.
  
3. T F Our English word “church” is derived from the Greek root word *kuriakos* which is never used in the New Testament.
  
4. T F The phrase “*churches of Christ*” in Romans 16:16 is a reference to a denominational title.
  
5. To whom does the New Testament church belong to and why?
  
6. The universal church refers to a) all the saved in reference to a specific geographic location b) all the saved on earth with no reference to geographical location c) Roman Catholicism.
  
7. T F The universal church is made up of local congregations.
  
8. Give some examples of local churches mentioned in the New Testament.
  
9. Matching:
 

___ kingdom	a. worship aspect
___ house of God	b. unity aspect
___ body of Christ	c. productiveness aspect
___ temple of God	d. family aspect
___ vineyard	c. governmental aspect
  
10. The word “church” is a \_\_\_\_\_ noun.
  
11. T F A denominational church is a religious division.
  
12. T F The New Testament church is inter-denominational.

13. How many denominations did Christ build?
14. How many of the apostles were members of a denomination?
15. T F A denomination is smaller than the universal church and larger than a denomination.

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Explain the distinction in the work a local church to that of the church universal.
2. Explain how one may join a local church and list the steps needed to be added to the universal church.

**Homework:** Explain to a member of a denomination or inter-denomination how the New Testament church is not a denomination.

## Establishment of the Church

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A wide variety of theories exist with regard to the time when the Kingdom/Church was established. Some say it began with Adam. Others believe it began with Abel or with Abraham. John the Baptist is believed by some to have established the church. Still others contend in the millennial speculations that the kingdom age is yet to come and that Jesus is to set up a literal thousand year kingdom in Jerusalem when He returns the second time. Jesus Christ came to this earth to set up or establish his kingdom, but being rejected by the Jews, he postponed his kingdom and set up the church instead. Ultra-dispensationalist say it was established in the days of Paul. According to the Book of Mormon the kingdom was established in 147 B.C. (Mosiah 18:17). Still there are quite a few denominations who point back in time to the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 for the beginning of the Kingdom. Some Baptist scholars claim: "The day of Pentecost was the birthday of the church of Christ. What existed before in germ then sprang into full being" (Vedder. 14) and "the first assembly, or church, founded by the apostles was that at Jerusalem" (Orchard 2.31). Surely not all these can be true.

It is of importance to the disciples of Christ as to the when and where of the Kingdom's establishment. It helps to identify the time and place the plan of redeeming man came to be. It points to the time when the Law of Christ came into effect for both Jew and Gentile. And it is necessary to show when and where the many kingdom prophecies were fulfilled.

### The Kingdom Is the Church

Before exploring the prophecies of the Kingdom it is necessary to define what is meant by the term "kingdom." Sometimes in the New Testament the words "kingdom" and "church" can be used interchangeably. Many believe the kingdom and the church are separate and distinct divine institutions. A common belief among premillennialists is the church was established only after Jesus was crucified and thus prevented from establishing the Kingdom when He first came.

Christ Himself demonstrates the church and the kingdom are one and the same. He promised Peter and the rest of the Apostles "*upon this rock I will build my church*" (Matt. 16:16). He next promised to give them the keys of the kingdom (16:18) and that some of them would live to see the kingdom established (18:24).

In 62 A.D., Paul tells the saints at Colossae that they are in the kingdom of Christ. God had conveyed them "*into the kingdom of the Son*" and the Son "*is the head of the body, the church*" (Col. 1:12-14,18). Therefore, the kingdom must have existed by 62 A.D., because the Colossians were saints in the kingdom.

Both the church and the Kingdom share many common traits. The church and the Kingdom have the same beginning place: Jerusalem. The church and the Kingdom were bought with the same blood (Rev. 5:9-10; Acts 20:28). They both have the same ruler. Christ is the King of the Kingdom (Col. 1:13). And Christ is Head over the church (Col. 1:18). The terms of entrance are the same for both the kingdom and the church. One enters the kingdom by a birth of water and of the Spirit (John 3:1-5). Entrance is also gained to the church by water baptism (Acts 2:38,47; 1 Cor. 12:13). They both have the same memorial. The Lord's table was to be in the kingdom (Matt. 26:29) and in the church (1 Cor. 11:20-27).

Furthermore, Paul claimed there was but one spiritual body with Christ as its Head. Just as it cannot have two heads it cannot have two bodies: the church and the kingdom (Eph. 4:4).

### The Kingdom Prophesied

One of the things setting the Bible apart from all other books ever written are the prophecies

contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. According to H. W. Everest there are five essential criteria that has to be met before one establishes the truthfulness of a prophecy. 1) The event must be beyond the power of man to foresee. 2) It must be demonstrated that the prediction was made before the event. 3) The prediction must be applicable to the event. 4) The language of the prediction must be unambiguous and unmistakable. 5) The prediction must have a clear and demonstrable fulfillment. (Everest 260). The fact the kingdom was promised throughout the Old Testament as a future event indicates it was not established during the times covered from Genesis to Malachi. According to Deuteronomy 18:22 if a prophecy does not come true, then the prophet is a false prophet and is to be put to death. The prophets Isaiah, Daniel, Micah, Joel, John the Baptist and God's Son, Jesus Christ all prophesied its coming.

▶ **The Original Planning for the Promised Kingdom**

The idea of or plan for a Kingdom has been a part of the eternal mind of the Everlasting God. The church existed in the mind of God even before the world was created. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved"* (Eph. 1:3-6). *"And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (3:9-11).

▶ **Birthplace of the Promised Kingdom**

Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem was to be the birthplace of the Lord's Bride. *"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* (Is. 2:2,3). Notice the kingdom is also called the *"house of Jehovah."* The Lord's house is the church. *"The house of God, which is the church of the living God"* (1 Tim. 3:15). This great house of God was to be established in Jerusalem ((Lk. 24:47; Ac. 2:1-4). It was to be established on the mountain. The word *"mountain"* should be understood as government. Isaiah is using a figurative language to show that the church was to be exalted in its nature. The actual location is for the coming kingdom's beginning is Zion. Zion was a section of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:6,10). Isaiah also prophesies that all nations will flow unto it. On the day of Pentecost the Gospel was preached to *"all nations"* or *"many people"* (Acts 2:9-11, 39). Also, it was to be a peaceable kingdom. The new *"house of the God of Jacob"* was not to be a war making kingdom, but its citizens were to have a peaceful disposition (Is. 2:4; Mt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18).

Jesus, Himself, pointed to Jerusalem as the starting place of His Kingdom. *"Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high'"* (Luke 24:46-49).

▶ **Miracles and Salvation of the Promised Kingdom**

Of the coming Kingdom in the *"last days,"* Joel prophesied, *"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions"* (Joel 2:28). *"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls"* (Joel 2:32). On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 the apostles spoke in tongues and prophesied by commanding the people to obey

the Lord and be saved.

► **The Time of Arrival for the Promised Kingdom**

In 725 B.C., Isaiah prophesied in the days of the Assyrian empire. It would be about 750 years till the fulfillment of this great prophecy of hope. The *"last days"* identify the time when the Kingdom would come. The fulfillment can be seen by Peter quoting Joel 2:28 and marking Pentecost AD.30 as the beginning of the "last days."

When interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream Daniel informed him that during the time of the fourth empire, a kingdom made without hands would consume all the nations. Furthermore, Isaiah pointed to Jerusalem as the place where it would be established (Is. 2:2-4). Peter quoted from Joel and declared that the Kingdom of promise, the church, was being fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in 30 AD (Acts 2:16-21). Daniel 2, Isaiah 2, Joel 2 all point to Acts 2 as the birthday of the Bride or church of Christ. The Bride of Christ is nearly 2000 years old (and doesn't look too bad for her age).

Daniel, prophesying in 600 B.C. during the Babylonian empire, is the only prophet who pin-points the very days of the Kingdom's establishment. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which troubled him. Daniel, as the mouth of God, interpreted the dream. The great image which the King saw in his dream, represented great world empires. The head of gold represent Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian empire which lasted from 626 to 539 B.C. The breast of silver representing the Medo-Persian empire from 539 to 331 B.C. The belly and thighs of brass representing the Greek empire from 331 to about 200 B.C. The Roman Republic is represented by the legs of iron from 200 B.C. to 61 B.C. Finally, the feet which was composed of iron mingled with clay represented the Roman Empire with Herods ruling in Palestine. This political situation lasted from 61 B.C. to 70 A.D. What happened to this great image? *"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever"* (Dan. 2:44). A stone cut out of the mountain not made with hands smote the image on the feet breaking it in pieces (2:34,35,45). Daniel was exact in prophesying the time of the kingdom's establishment. *"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene"* (Luke 3:1; cf. Mt. 3:1,2). This is when both Jesus and John began to preach the Kingdom was at hand. The kingdom did come in the days of Rome, never to be destroyed.

► **Time of the Promised King's Arrival**

Daniel by way of a night vision was permitted to see Christ being given a kingdom, (church) which was not to pass away. *"I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed"* (Dan. 7:13,14). Jesus ascended into Heaven in a cloud and into the presence of God the Father (Acts 1:9-10). The *"son of man"* is Christ, and the *"ancient of days"* is Jehovah. This is in harmony with Jesus parable in Luke 19:11,12. With Christ's ascension there is the fulfillment of this prophecy.

► **Location of the Promised King's Arrival**

In Second Samuel chapter seven is a record of the promise God made to David to seat one of his descendants upon his throne. This chapter reveals, David the king had purposed to build a house for God. But God will build a Kingdom out of David's house. God said to David, *"since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you."*

*Your throne shall be established forever* (2 Sam. 7:11-16). God promised one of the seed of David will receive a kingdom and this would take place when David was already in the grave (7:12). This coming King would suffer at the hands of men (7:14), but the mercy of God will not depart from Him as it did Saul (7:15). But the last descendant of David to sit upon a literal throne in Jerusalem was Zedekiah who was dethroned by the Babylonians. This promise that Christ was to sit on the throne of David was renewed in the New Testament (Lk. 1:32,33). The angel Gabriel announced that the child born to Mary was to be given the throne of David (Luke 1:32). Jesus was of the seed of David (Acts 13:23). Peter said that God had sworn unto David that He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne and that Jesus is now ruling as King in Heaven, seated upon the throne of David (Acts 2:29-36, esp. verse 31).

► **King's Forerunner on the Promised Kingdom**

According to prophecy, John the Baptist (baptizer or immerser) was one like Elijah who was to appear before the *"great and dreadful day of the Lord"* (Mal. 4:5). John was the messenger sent to prepare the way before the Lord (Mal. 3:1) and he was the *"voice of one crying in the wilderness"* (Is. 40:3). In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, about 26 A.D., John came preaching his message in preparation for the coming Kingdom. *"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'"* (Matt. 3:1,2). Some have argued the Kingdom started in the days of John the Baptist. But Jesus said John was not in the Kingdom. *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"* (Mt. 11:11). John was a great man, but Christ said a citizen of the kingdom would be greater. Why was John not a citizen of the Kingdom? Just like Abraham and Moses, John lived and died under the Law of Moses (Mt. 14:1,2). After John was put in prison, he was never released (Matt. 14:3-12). Christ came to complete the preparatory ministry begun by John the Baptist.

► **The King on the Promised Kingdom**

The church could not begin before the *"fullness of time"* spoken of in Galatians 4:4, Jesus said, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel"* (Mark 1:15). *"At hand"* tells the time of his message's fulfillment. Twice Christ send out groups of men to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom. First, He commissioned the seventy disciples (Lk. 10:10,11). Next, Jesus commissioned the twelve commanding them: *"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'"* (Matt. 10:7). Thayer defined the phrase *"at hand"* as "near." Paul's statement in 2 Tim. 4:6, when he speaks of his death as being "at hand" meaning he was soon to die. Jesus taught the disciples to pray *"thy kingdom come"* (Matt. 6:10). Certainly Jesus would not have commanded the disciples to pray for the coming of an already existing institution. After Peter proclaimed of Jesus *"Thou art the Christ the son of the living God"* *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it'"* (Matt. 16:17,18). Christ promised the church was to be built upon that very fact.

Later the twelve supposed the Kingdom was to appear immediately (Lk. 19:11). This view seems to have been shared by the entire body of disciples (Mk. 11:8-10). After Christ's death, men were still waiting for the kingdom. After the resurrection and before His ascension, Christ further prepared His disciples for the coming of the kingdom. He told them *"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem ... Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high"* (Lk. 24:47,49). After Jesus arose from the dead, lived forty days with men, and prepared to go back to the Father the disciples still were waiting for the Kingdom to be established (Acts 1:6). Jesus ascended into Heaven and the apostles waited for ten days in Jerusalem till the Day of Pentecost.

**If the Kingdom Came Before the Day of Pentecost...**

If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, then it could not have been purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). The price was not paid till the sacrifice was offered. If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, then it had no foundation. A house is not begun without first laying a firm foundation. God's

house, the church, is no exception. (Isa. 28:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:5-6). A sure foundation would be laid in Zion but first had to be tried and rejected (Is. 28:16; Mt. 21:42; Mk. 8:31). Christ was tried and proven in his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3; Acts 4:10,11). Jesus Christ is the one and only foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11). If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, then it had no Head. Christ became Head of the church after His death, resurrection, and ascension (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18). If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, then it had no King. If established prior to His death, then it was established before Christ was King of His Kingdom (Acts 2:29,30). If the Kingdom came before Pentecost then it had no throne. Peter said on Pentecost God *"would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne"* (Acts 2:30). If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, then it had no Law. There cannot be a New Testament church without a New Testament. Christ took the Law of Moses away in order to establish another (Heb. 10:9). The Law was taken out of the way when it was nailed to the cross of Christ (Col. 2:14). Only after Christ's death and resurrection would the New Testament be in effect (Heb. 9:16,17). If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, then it had no citizens (Col. 1:13,14). If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, it had no High Priest. Christ could not have been a priest while on earth (Heb. 8:4). If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, it have had no remission of sins. *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"* (Heb. 10:4). If the Kingdom came before Pentecost, then it could have no gentiles (Eph. 2:14,15).

### **Kingdom Established on Pentecost at Jerusalem**

The church of Christ was not established until all the conditions of prophecy were met. The day they were all met is the day of the Kingdom's establishment. The only day which meets these conditions of fulfilling the prophecies is Pentecost in about 30 A.D.

Pentecost was an annual feast of the Jews which was celebrated fifty days after the Passover and fell on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:16). The fact that it occurred on the fiftieth day after the Passover is in the name of Pentecost, which is a Greek adjective meaning fiftieth. Pentecost is one of the three annual festivals at which the law required every male Jew of the whole nation to be present (Ex 23:14-17).

After the ascension of Jesus the apostles returned per the instructions of Jesus to Jerusalem to wait for the power from on high (Mark 9:1; Lk. 24:46-53; Acts 1:12). The power came in the form of cloven tongues like fire over the heads of the apostles. They began to speak in tongues. By simple deduction the following premisses lead to a valid conclusion. First, the Kingdom was to come with power (Mk. 9:1). Next, that power was to come with the Holy Spirit (Ac. 1:8). Then, the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:1-4). Therefore, the Kingdom of God came on the day of Pentecost.

Many other prophecies from both the Old Testament prophets and Christ were fulfilled on Pentecost. The fact these events took place in Jerusalem at the Temple which is on Zion fulfills prophecies concerning the location of the establishment of the Kingdom (Acts 2:5 Is 2:2-4). Many nations and people were represented at Pentecost to hear the Gospel preached (acts 2:5,39) fulfilling Isaiah 2:2-4. The Law of the New Testament was preached at Jerusalem (Acts 2:14f) fulfilling the prophecy *"out of Zion shall go forth the law...."* Pentecost is claimed to be the beginning of the *"last days"* (Acts 2:14-17) as Peter quoted the kingdom prophecy in Joel 2. Peter claimed Jesus was now seated upon the throne of David (Acts 2:30-33). He proclaims the Jews had rejected Jesus by killing Him (Mt. 16:18; Is. 28:16; 1 Cor. 3:11). Peter preached what Christ had instructed him (Lk. 24:46-49) when commanding the Jews to repent and be baptized to receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). All necessary elements for the establishment of the Kingdom were present on Pentecost: a King, a throne, a Law and citizens.

All the Kingdom prophecies of Joel 2, Daniel 2, Isaiah 2 are fulfilled in Acts 2. Pentecost in the year 30 A.D. is the Kingdom's birthday. Every passage before points forward to Pentecost. The testimony of those from Gen. 1 through Acts 1:1-9 is that the church will be established. So far all things have pointed forward to the day of Pentecost as the day of establishment Acts 2 is indeed one of the great and important chapters of the Bible.



### Scriptures Point Back to Pentecost

The remainder of the New Testament past Acts 2:46 mentions the Kingdom/church in the present tense. It must have existed before these letters were penned by inspired authors. From Revelation chapters 1, 2, and 3, seven congregations in Asia are mentioned as having been in existence. The apostle John affirms that he was in the Kingdom (Rev. 1:9). He also said in his letter to Gaius, *"I wrote unto the church"* (3 John 1:9). Peter, in 1 Peter 5:2 wrote *"feed the flock of God which is among you"* (1 Peter 5:2). James 5:14 speaks of the elders of the church. Even the writer of Hebrews speaks of the reality of the church's existence. Hebrews 12:28 is a fulfillment of Daniel 2:44 and Matthew 16:18.

Paul taught that the church should relieve those who were widows indeed (1 Tim. 5:16). The *"household of God"* is the church made up of fellow-citizens (1 Tim. 3:15). Both First and Second Thessalonians were addressed to the church of the Thessalonians. According to Colossians 1:13, the people of Colosse had been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom (church) of Jesus. The church in Philippi sent support unto Paul (Phil. 5:15). Jesus is said to be the Head of the church which He has cleansed in Ephesians 5:25-27. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, God had made Christ Head of the church. The Book of Galatians was written to the churches of Galatia. When Christ comes again will He set up the Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:51f)? Paul wrote, *"let your women keep silence in the churches"* (1 Cor. 14:33,34). Furthermore, the saints at Corinth were to be partaking of the Lord's Supper in the Church or Kingdom (1 Cor. 11). If the kingdom is yet in the future, then why do we partake of the Lord's Supper. Christ instituted it on the night He was betrayed as a memorial or a remembrance of His passion. Christ said, *"I shall not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come."* If this memorial is not to be taken till the kingdom comes then why did the Christians observe it on Pentecost (cf, Ac. 2:42)? Why were the Corinthians commanded to observe it till Christ comes? The Lord's Supper was not to be taken till the Kingdom of God comes. But, it was taken on the day of Pentecost. Therefore, the Kingdom of God must have come on the day of Pentecost. Jesus promised His disciples at the Last Supper *"that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom"* (Lk. 22:29,30). Both First and Second Corinthians were written to the church of God in Corinth. Paul, in Rom. 16:16 wrote; *"The churches of Christ salute you."* Luke writes of Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders *"to feed the church of God"* (Acts 20:28). From Miletus Paul sent for the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17). Paul saluted the church in Caesarea (Acts 18:22). Luke, in Acts 16:1-5, reports that congregations of the church were established in the faith by Paul and Timothy. In Acts 14:23-27 there is the gathering together of the church at Antioch. Again in Acts 13:1 is mentioned the prophets in the church at Antioch. Acts 12:1 makes mention of Herod's persecuting the church. Acts 11:26 the whole church was assembled in one place. In Acts 11:22 Luke made a statement about the church in Jerusalem. Peter a few years later refers to this day as the beginning (Acts 11:15). According Acts 11:12 the church had ears to hear. The conversion of Saul brought rest unto the congregations of the church (Acts 9:26-31). The first few verses of Acts 8 gives a report on the persecution of the church. After the death of Ananias and Sapphira great fear came upon all the church (Acts 5:11). Acts 2:47 declares that God was adding the saved to the church daily. Verse 47 records that the church was then in existence, and every subsequent New Testament scripture concerning the church/Kingdom speaks of it as being in existence. From the Book of Revelation to Acts 2:47 it has been established. Its arrival must be somewhere between Acts 1:9 and Acts 2:47. The church /Kingdom began in Jerusalem around AD 30 with the teaching by the apostles starting about 9:00 am.

Any church that did not begin when the Lord's did, is not the church of the Lord. When Christ comes again He will not establish the kingdom of heaven. Instead, he will present it to the Father in Heaven (1 Cor. 15:23-28). All men need to prepare themselves for that Day so they will be ushered into Heaven. *"That ye walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory"* (1 Th. 2:12).

## Questions:

1. Show from the scriptures that the Kingdom and the church are one and the same in several places within the New Testament.
2. Why was John the Baptist not in the Kingdom?
3. Could Christ be the High Priest of His Temple while He was on earth? Explain.
4. Can a kingdom exist without a king, citizens, or law? Explain.
5. With what and when did Christ purchase the church?
6. When would Christ partake of the Lord's Supper again?
7. T F Every passage before the day of Pentecost spoke of the church (Kingdom) as being in the future?
8. T F Every passage after the Day of Pentecost speaks of the church as yet to be established?
9. What had the Colossians been translated into by 62 AD?
10. How do we know that the word "*kingdom*" in Hebrews 12:28 refers to the church?
11. List some things the "church" and "kingdom" have in common?
12. When was Christ seated on the throne of David?
13. Where was the Lord's Table to be according to Luke 22:30? Give scripture to prove that we have it now?

14. What will happen to the kingdom when Christ comes again?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. Premillennialism is a doctrine of men which teaches Christ will establish His Kingdom after His Second Coming. Why is this a dangerous doctrine?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What spiritual condition would you find yourself today if Christ has not yet established His Kingdom/church?

**Homework:** Pray a prayer of thanksgiving that Christ's kingdom has come.

## History of the Church

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An article titled, *An Unusual Church of Christ*, states: "The denomination, first recognized in 1906, is the most conservative of the three Restorationist streams (the other two being the Disciples of Christ and the Christian Churches)" (Christianity Today Cindy Crosby March 2004). When and where did the first "Churches of Christ" appear? If you go to many resources on the historical origins of churches or denominations, they will not even give a separate listing for "Churches of Christ." Instead, the history of the Churches of Christ will be listed under the now liberal Christian Churches. The information given would lead many to believe that the church was started by Alexander Campbell and broke away as a separate denomination by 1906. Keep in mind there are many various denominations that call themselves "Church of Christ": Untied Church of Christ, The Church of Jesus Christ (Mormon), Disciples of Christ (Church of Christ); First Church of Christ Scientists, along with many other smaller denominations which have used the phrase "Church of Christ" in their official title.

Those who believe the Church of Christ was started by Alexander Campbell refer to its members as "Campbellites." Much can be learned about the use of this name "Campbellite" from the Session Records of Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church of Southwestern Ohio. It was during the decade of the 1830s that the "Campbellites" were the most troublesome to them. Cincinnati, near which Pleasant Ridge was located, saw a New Testament church established in 1828. Consider the following quotes from their records:

- *"Friday August 10, 1832...Satisfactory information was received by Session that Martha Alcorn, a member of this church, had joined a Church known to us by the name of Campbelites therefore it was resolved that her name should be stricken off these records which was accordingly done.*
- *"Sabbath Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1832...Session being acquainted with the circumstances of Eunis Swift joining the Cambelite Baptist, ordered that her name should be stricken of these records.*
- *"Pleasant Ridge, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1833...Mary Dill, a member of this Church, had joined the Cambelite Society in Carthage and after a deliberate consideration of the case, the Session were unanimously of the opinion that her name should be stricken off these records.*

By 1852 southwestern Ohio had sixty New Testament churches with more than 5,000 members.

The term "Campbellite" is taken from a father and son who had a great influence upon many Churches of Christ in the early 1800's. Thomas and Alexander Campbell were originally associated with the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It was the father, Thomas, who first began to move away from denominationalism. His desire was to leave the creeds and doctrines of men to get back to the Bible. He wrote, "We shall speak where the Bible speaks, we shall be silent where the Bible is silent."

The son, Alexander, was born in 1788 and educated at the University of Glasgow. The young Campbell joined his father in America on September 29, 1809. On June 12, 1812, Alexander and seven other members of his family (including his father) were baptized in Buffalo Creek by Matthias Luce, a Baptist minister. The purpose of this baptism was for the remission of their sins. In 1830, the Mahoning Baptist Association of which the Campbell's were members, was dissolved because they found that the Bible authorizes no such associations other than the church.

The Campbell's had a great influence upon what has become known as the Restoration Movement. The Baptist historian Benedict, speaking of the first Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee, *"It increased between three and four hundred members, when the Campbellites succeeded in making proselytes to their views nearly the whole of this great and growing interest. The pastor and people, with their chapel, all were brought under the influence of the reformers."*

As late as 1923 the Kansas City Star carried an article: *When the "Campbellites" First Came to Missouri*. In this article is found the following: "...the converts came to be known as 'Campbellites,' though that appellation has always been distasteful to their leaders". A good reason exists for this distaste among members of the Church of Christ. Please consider the following reasons I am not a "Campbellite".

- **A Faithful Christian Can NOT Be a Disciple of Campbell**

Personally I have read very little of either Thomas or Alexander Campbell's writings. I am not a follower/learner/student of Campbell. However, I am a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, I preach that which I preach for the simple reason that it is found in the New Testament, and not because it may be found in the writings of Alexander Campbell. "*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*" (Col. 3:17). Additionally, my stand for unity in Christ does not make me a "Campbellite", Jesus and the apostles taught it first. "*Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" (I Cor. 1:10; also see Jn. 17:19-2). Furthermore, I believe that the doctrines and commandments of men should be rejected, but this does not make me a "Campbellite." Jesus and the apostles taught the same thing, "*Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'*" (Mt. 15:7-9). Finally, I teach that hearing, believing, repenting, confessing and being baptized are conditions for membership in the church of Christ. This too does not make me a "Campbellite." These scriptural terms of pardon were laid down by Jesus and the apostles (Rom. 10:17; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9,10).

A disciple adheres to the teachings of his master. However, on several key issues I strongly disagree with Alexander Campbell.

Campbell's view on located preachers is also contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. He contended for a distinction between preaching and teaching. Evangelists, he argued, were to serve "abroad" in the world, while a plurality of local elders were to serve "at home" in the congregation (Christian System, p. 79). Campbell's view was a hindrance in that it prevented a "settled ministry" of able preachers to work with local churches.

Contrary to my understanding of the scriptures Campbell believed in conventions.

*"I am of opinion that a convention or general meeting, of the churches of the Reformation, is a very great desideratum. Nay, I will further say, that it is all important to the cause of reformation. I am also of opinion that Cincinnati is the proper place for holding such a convention"* (Millennial Harbinger, 1849, p. 476).

The Missionary Society was formed in 1845 and began to function. Campbell served as its first president.

*"The establishment of this society marked the climax of years of intense effort on the part of Alexander Campbell to urge the brotherhood to found some kind of a general organization through which the entire brotherhood could cooperate to evangelize the world"* (Earl West, The Search For The Ancient Order, vol. 1, p. 166).

This too is an unscriptural arrangement for the carrying out of the local congregation's duty in evangelism.

- **No One Can Be Baptized in Campbell's Name**

In Corinth some were calling themselves by Paul's name instead of Christ's, so he asked, "*Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am*

of Christ." *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* (1 Cor. 1:12,13). Likewise, I know of no one who has been baptized in the name or authority of Campbell. However, like myself, I know of many who have been baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38).

- **Campbell Did Not Die for Anyone**

To these same brethren at Corinth Paul further inquired as to whether he had died for them. The obvious answer is: NO! Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3). Thus, we should wear His name and none other.

- **Campbell's Name Is Divisive**

Just as Paul condemned the use of divisive names by the brethren in Corinth, so Campbell's name would be a cause of religious division among men. Many other great scholars have expressed their agreement with Paul. Dr. Albert Barnes: *"Should not, and will not, all these divisions be merged into the high and holy name, 'Christian?'"* Henry Ward Beecher said at the communion table: *"Let me speak the language of heaven and call you simply 'Christians.'" Campbell himself would not want me to wear his name: "Abandon all party names and take the name of 'Christian'"* We like the disciples at Antioch call ourselves "Christians", never "Campbellites" (Ac.11:26).

- **Salvation Is Not in Campbell's Name**

There is only one name by which salvation can be found and that is the name of Christ. *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

- **Campbell Is Not Old Enough to Have Established the Church of Christ**

Consider the following facts about the churches of Christ in America in relation to the birth of Campbell and also his arrival in America.

- ▶ When Barton W. Stone established churches of Christ in Kentucky in 1804, Campbell was just 16.
- ▶ When Abner Jones and twenty Baptist congregations turned to the New Testament in 1802, Campbell was 14.
- ▶ In 1793, when James O'Kelly split with the Methodist and started churches of Christ, Campbell was only five years old.
- ▶ In the early 1790's when Abner Jones and Elias Smith started their work in New Hampshire and Vermont, Campbell was only three or four.
- ▶ A historical marker at Revere Mass., a northeast suburb of Boston which says: (1710) Church of Christ in Rumney Marsh. Erected in 1710. Thomas Cheever, the first settled minister. Died Dec. 27, 1749 aged 91 years. Massachusetts Bay Colony, Tercentenary Commission. This was 78 years before Campbell was born.
- ▶ Each of these originated independently of the others between 1790 and 1810 in different parts of the country.

Clearly, neither Alexander or even his father Thomas Campbell could have started the churches of Christ in America or another place. The Church of Christ originated 1800 years before the Restoration movement with Christ as its founder on the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem in 30 A.D. Paul indicated to the brethren at Rome that he and they knew of these churches. *"Salute one another with a holy kiss, the churches of Christ salute you"* (Romans 16:16).

- **Centuries before Campbell Was Born Churches of Christ have Been in Existence**

The "Church of Christ" under investigation in this lesson is the group of churches which claim to be the "church of Christ" mentioned in the Bible - the one begun on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached the first Gospel sermon and the same one Paul wrote about (Rom. 16:16). A group of believers who recognize no creed but the Bible, have no central earthly headquarters, use vocal music, observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday, reject denominationalism, etc. Historical evidence is abundant that groups like this existed long before Alexander Campbell was ever born. Evidence can be found

through Europe and America long before Alexander Campbell was born in 1788.

“Tottlebank, England – A book of minutes from the meeting of the church of Christ in this little town near Ulverston in the Lake District of England, testifies that the church met regularly in an upper room of a building still standing, according to Ken Chumbley. One page of the book says ‘The 18th day of ye sixth month, called, August 1669. A Church of Christ was formed in order and sate down together in the ffellowship and order of ye Gospel of Jesus Christ. Att the house of Williman Rawlinson of Tottlebank, in Coulton in furness. There were present and Assisted Mr. George Larkham, Pastor off a Church of Christ in Cumberland, and Mr. Roger Sawrey of Broughton tower. A member of Christ and of that particular Church in London of which Mr. George Coackine is teaching Elder. The persons Joyninge themselves at this time, Gabriel Camelford, Hugh Towers, William Towers, James Towers, Joseph Towers, James Fisher, Henry Jackson.’ Chumbley notes an interesting fact that at this time all religious meetings, except those of the Church of England (Episcopal), were illegal. He believes the reason they met in the particular room in which they did, was because it gave a vantage point from which could be seen the approach of the King’s soldiers on the highway from a great distance” (Christian Chronicle, “17th Century Church Stands”, June 19, 1972, p. 7).

Perhaps they were part of the same group that Dr. Robinson of Overdale College, Birmingham, England wrote about: “In the Furness District of Lancashire - in N.W. England - there existed in 1669, during the reign of Charles II, a group of eight churches of Christ. Most of them are not now in existence. An old minute-book has been found on the year 1669 and it shows that they called themselves by the name of church of Christ, practiced baptism by immersion, celebrated the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s Day, and had elders and deacons.”

John Glas was born in Fifeshire, Scotland in Oct. 1695, the son of several generations of Presbyterian preachers. Educated at St. Andrews and Edinburgh universities, in the early 1720s he was minister of the Presbyterian church in Dundee. By the end of that decade, however, he had been expelled from the church because of his insistence on acting only on Bible authority. He preached and established independent churches until age 78 and his work was known and respected by American restorers. His tombstone read:

JOHN GLAS  
Minister of the Congregational Church in this place,  
Died 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1773,  
Aged 78 years.  
He long survived  
KATHARINE BLACK,  
His beloved wife,  
And all his Children, Fifteen in number,  
Many of whom arrived at mature age;  
And Nine lie here beside their Parents.  
His Character in the  
Churches of CHRIST is well known  
And will outlive all monumental inscriptions.

Robert Sandeman, a younger comrade of Glas worked in the restoration movement in Danbury Connecticut. “Robert Sandeman, son-in-law of the Scottish ‘Independent’ preacher John Glas, came to America in 1763 and organized a congregation in Danbury, Connecticut (He died in 1772 and was buried in the city cemetery in Danbury). Among other things Sandeman distinguished between Old and New Testaments, advocated weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, and placed church government in the hands of elders” (Steve Wolfgang, “The History of Restoration Efforts” Guardian of Truth, June 5, 1986, p. 31).

In fact, there were many heretical groups which have existed throughout the ages which were like modern day churches of Christ. A group called by their enemies the "Paulicians" because they used the letters of Paul to show how churches and Christians should believe and practice were forced underground by AD 900 by persecution. They would call themselves only "Christians." They opposed infant baptism. Baptism was by immersion only for those who believed and repented. They rejected Old Testament practices such as a separate priesthood and did not consider Catholics to be Christians.

Many other groups such as those who followed Gundulphus (AD 1025) and Berengarius (AD 999-1088) were known to reject the teachings of the Catholic church and taught that the Bible was to be the sole authority in religion.

In 1130 a Catholic mob burned Peter of Bruys to death because he taught baptism of adult believers for the remission of sins and opposed infant baptism, prayers for the dead, and transubstantiation.

In AD 1143 over one hundred people were tortured in Rhein for worshiping autonomously with elders and deacons. They confessed under duress that many other groups existed.

Throughout Europe and England Henry of Toulouse in AD 1146 taught baptism by immersion. He opposed sacraments and clergy. Four years later he was executed. Countless other examples of these brave men and women who worshiped God according to the authority of the New Testament could be brought forth to suggest that there could easily have been many churches of Christ in existence throughout the ages.

Jesus promised to build His church and the "gates of Hades" (death) would not prevail against it (Matt. 16:15f).. Persecution did not wipe out New Testament Christianity. If the church ceased to exist between 606 AD when the Catholic Church was formed and the 1820s when the Restoration movement began than Jesus' promise was in vain. Daniel had prophesied that the kingdom of God (church) would never cease (Dan. 2:44). Furthermore, Paul assured us in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 that there would be faithful Christians alive and well on the earth when Christ comes again. The New Testament church is out there. It is no further than your New Testament. You are encouraged to read it, obey the Gospel, and be added to the Lord's Church today.

### **Apostasy of the First Century Church of Christ**

Whatever happened to the church established in the first century? How is it there are over two thousands different denominations in the world today, yet only one church in the New Testament?

The apostles warned the saints that unless they remained faithful to the Word of God "*some would fall away from the faith*" (1 Tim. 4:1-4). Paul even mentioned some characteristics of this departure from the Truth: "*forbidding to marry*" and "*commanding to abstain from meats.*" In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he warned, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables*" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Paul even pin pointed the area where apostasy would arise to the elders of the church at Ephesus. "*For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves*" (Acts 20:28-30).

In 606 AD Boniface III, Bishop of Rome was designated Pope by Emperor Phocas. This gave rise to the establishment of the Universal Bishop of the Catholic Church, known as the Pope. This was accompanied by many other departures from the Truth. These departures eventually split the Roman Catholic church and the Greek Orthodox church in 1054 AD. The Greek church rejected the Roman Catholic practices of the authority of the Pope, doctrines of purgatory, transubstantiation, and hereditary sin, the selling of indulgences, the practice of extreme unction, instrumental music, and sprinkling instead of immersion for baptism. However both the Roman and Greek churches remained obviously dissimilar from the New Testament church.

On October 31, 1517 a Catholic priest, Martin Luther, nailed his ninety-five thesis on the door of a church in Whittenburg, Germany outlining his disagreement with the unscriptural practices of the Roman Catholic church. In 1530, his followers adopted the "Augsburg Confession" which became the



creed for the first Protestant denomination: the Lutheran Church. Luther's intention was not to form a new denomination but was merely attempting to change the existing denomination: the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1522, the Pope in Rome refused to grant King Henry VIII of England a divorce. So, Henry obtained one any way and was excommunicated in 1538. He formed the Church of England in response.

John Calvin, the architect of the doctrine of Calvinism, formed the Reformed church in Switzerland. His followers in Scotland under the leadership of John Knox came to be known as the Presbyterian Church.

A second generation of Protestantism quickly followed. At Amsterdam, Holland John Smyth began the Baptist Church in 1606. The Congregational Church grew out of the Church of England in 1608. As a result of a merger attempt between the Congregational and the Presbyterian Church in 1609 the Brethren Church was formed. In the early 1700s two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, formed the Methodist Church when they broke away from the Church of England. Due to political differences with the Church of England in America the Episcopalians split from England in 1789.

In the next century in America came the rise of other denominations which had been labeled cults by the mainstream denominations. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or Mormons began with Joseph Smith at Fayette, New York on April 6, 1830. Out of the teachings of William Miller the Seventh-Day Adventist began around the same time. They claim that Mrs. Ellen G. White's Testimonials are inspired like the Bible. In Boston in 1879 the writings of Mary Baker Eddy gave rise to the Church of Christ Scientist. Charles Taz Russell helped form the Jehovah's Witnesses in Pittsburgh in 1886.

Also in early America attempts were made to restore the New Testament church instead of producing a Protestant denomination by merely reforming another man-made church. They did so by going back beyond all denominations both Protestant and Catholic to the first century where the first church began under the doctrine and authority of Christ's apostles in Jerusalem in 30 AD.

### **Questions:**

1. Why are New Testament Christians called Campbellites by some people?
2. What were some false teachings held by Alexander Campbell?
3. Why can no true Christian wear the name of Campbell?
4. Give some examples from history showing Alexander Campbell was not old enough to start the Church of Christ?
5. Who were the Paulicians? What did they believe? When were they forced "underground" by persecution?
6. When and who was the first Pope?
7. What is transubstantiation?

8. Into what two denominations did Catholicism divide into in 1040? Why?
  
9. T F Early reformers set out to start different denominations.
  
10. What did Martin Luther do on October 31, 1517 in Whittenburg, Germany? Why?
  
11. Why was Henry VII excommunicated by the Pope? What did he do in response?
  
12. What were Calvin's followers in Switzerland known as; and what were they known as in Scotland?
  
13. T F John the Baptist founded the Baptist Church?

Match the denomination with its founder(s):

- |                                     |                            |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 14. ____ Methodist                  | a. Charles Taz Russell     |
| 15. ____ Baptist                    | b. John and Charles Wesley |
| 16. ____ Mormons                    | c. John Smyth              |
| 17. ____ Seventh Day Adventists     | d. Joseph Smith            |
| 18. ____ Church of Christ Scientist | e. Mary Baker Eddy         |
| 19. ____ Jehovah's Witness          | f. William Miller          |

20. T F A restoration implies there was an original.

**Application and Discussion:**

1. If someone asked you how to discover which church today is the New Testament church, how would you instruct them as to go about their research?
  
2. How would you go about showing that the Roman Catholic church was not the first church?

**Homework:** So your own research (perhaps using the internet) and find other religious groups in history who were like the New Testament church.

## Creed and Authority of the Church

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### By What Authority Do You Do These Things?

The chief priests and elders of the Jews recognized the need for authority when they asked Jesus: *"By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"* (Mt. 21:23). Jesus, recognizing their motive was to trick Him, asked: *"The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men?"* (Mt. 21:25). Their question shows two things: 1) a recognition of a need for authority in religion and 2) that such authority must come from one who has the rightful power to grant authority. Jesus' question shows that authority can be derived from two sources: 1) God in Heaven or 2) men on the earth.

Certainly, the questions asked by the Jewish leaders needs to be asked today of all men and all churches everywhere. Suppose someone came into our assembly and asked, *"By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?"* How would we answer? What would be the proper answer? Must a Christian or church have authority for what it teaches and practices? Absolutely, yes! The Bible demands that we be ready to give an answer from the Word of God (1 Pet. 3:15).

Does the church have authority to practice and teach certain things? If so, what is the source of this authority? In order to answer the first question, we have to understand what "authority of the church" means. According to Catholicism, authority is derived from the Catholic Church. The Pope and priests tell the people what the Bible means and Church traditions are as binding as the scriptures. Their authority comes from men, not from Heaven. According to the Protestant denominations, they make laws at conventions, councils, etc. These laws are written into their creeds books. These creeds of men represent the authority for church action. Therefore, their source of authority is from men on earth, not God in Heaven.

What about the church of the first century? Did it have authority? If so, where did this authority originate? All phrases must be understood within the context in which they are used. For example, the phrase "love of God" could mean: the love God has from mankind or the love man has for God. You should look at Titus 3:3 and 1 John 5:3 as examples. By authority we mean the right to act or take action. The word church could be a denomination. However, in the first century, there were no denominations, only one church (Eph. 1:22,23; 4:5). The term "church" is used in two senses in the New Testament. First, "church" is used of the universal church. It is composed of all the Christians no matter where they live. Christ is the head of the universal church. It is a relationship. The universal church has no earthly organization. Christians do not join together to do church work at the universal level. The church universal does not have any collective responsibilities. Therefore, it has no actions to take. The term "church" is also used of a local church, such as, the church at Corinth or the church at Rome. Local churches are composed of Christians who live within a certain geographical area and agree to work and worship together. For the purpose of this study we are predominately focused on the idea of "the authority of the local church."

Keep in mind, the individual Christian and the local church derive authority for what they do from the same source. The authority of a Christian is the New Testament. The authority of a local church is the New Testament.

Although the individual Christian and the church have the same source of authority, each has been authorized to do different things. Each Christian is given personal responsibilities by God to be done individually. Local churches have been given collective responsibilities to be done together with other Christians in the church.

We should look at a few things which the individual has the authority do that the church has no authority to practice. The individual Christian has social relationships in the community (1 Cor. 10:31-33;

Col. 4:5; 1 Pet. 2:12). The local church is not a social club or societal institution. A Christian has economic relationships in his occupational pursuits (Col. 3:22-41; 1 Th. 4:11,12; 1 Tim. 5:8). The church is not a business. It cannot own a business. A Christian can get married and have physical children. The church is only married in a spiritual sense. The church does not have children. It is instead composed of the children of God. A Christian has civil relationships in the nation where he lives (Rom. 13:1-8; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). A Christian may vote, but the local congregation, as a collective, is not involved in politics. A Christian must pay taxes, but the local congregation, as a collective, is not to pay the government taxes. The local church is not to make a living for my family, rear my children, engage in business pursuits, work as a political body or meet social relationships through community organizations. An individual Christian may do those things, but the local church may not.

There are things the local church has authority to do that cannot be done on the individual level. The church can worship (Acts 20:7) and partake of the Lord's Supper collectively (1 Cor. 11:17ff). A local congregation must practice discipline against an unruly member (1 Cor. 5 Matt. 18:15-18). It has been charged with supporting widows "indeed" (1 Tim. 5:16). All the members of a local church must work together (Eph. 4:11-16). The idea that I may be a Christian and refuse to become a member of a local congregation of faithful Christians near me, is false. The difference between what the local church can do and what the individual Christian can do is simply that some things are authorized to be done by all the Christians in a local church collectively and some things are to be done individually.

The most important question is: Who gave the church the right to take these actions listed above? The local church's authority is not inherent. It has no authority within itself. All authority the church has to do these things comes from the Word of God which was written by inspired apostles and prophets (Eph. 5:3-5) by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20,21) sent from Christ (Jn. 14:26; 15:26:16:13) who received all authority from God the Father (Mt. 28:18). If a local congregation cannot come up with a "thus saith the Lord" or book, chapter and verse for teaching a particular doctrine or taking a certain action, it should not teach the doctrine or perform the action.

The local church must have authority for every thing it teaches and practices. Without authority it cannot act. It can do nothing without God's approval. If God never gave the church the authority to take up a collection on the first day of the week or to partake of the Lord's Supper, it could not do either of these things. However, from the Bible we learn that the church is to do those things. We have book, chapter and verse to prove it. The local church is not its own source of authority, but must derive its authority from the divine chain of authority which originates with God. Thus, all the church's authority is delegated from God.

### **The Authority of the New Testament Church is Not the Old Testament**

The Law of Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms, etc. cannot be recognized as the authority for the New Testament Church. When Jesus died He nailed the Law to the cross (Col. 2:14-17). Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant under which the church is guided today (Heb. 8:6-13). The Covenant changed with the change of the priesthood (Heb. 7:12). Christ is the surety of the better Covenant (Heb. 7:18-22). The New Covenant was made effective after the death of Christ (Heb. 9:14,15). To seek to justify one's self by the Law is to fall from grace (Gal. 5:1-4).

If the Old Testament is not part of the creed or authority of the New Testament church, how should Christians view the Old Testament scriptures. It should be used as evidence that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God (Acts 2:22f; 10:43; Luke 24:44). The Hebrew writer uses the characters of the Old Testament in the Hebrew Hall of Faith in chapter eleven. 1 Corinthians chapter ten uses the disobedience of the Israelites as examples of how Christians are not to behave. Paul wrote, "for whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

### **The Bible is the Church's Only Creed**

The word "creed" comes from the Latin word "credo" meaning "I believe." According to Webster it means "a brief statement of religious belief, esp. one accepted as authoritative by a church." A creed

can come from one of two sources: God or man. *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ"* (Rom. 10:17).

The Bible is the only creed for the New Testament church. It is also called the Faith, the Gospel or Good News, the doctrine of Christ, the Word of God, the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), etc. It is the apostle's doctrine because it came to them as they were guided by the Holy Spirit sent by Christ (Jn. 16:13,14; 14:26). It came by the authority of Christ (Gal. 1:11,12).

Denominations have their creed books which authorize their leaders to teach certain doctrines and state what their members are to believe. The Catholics have their catechisms, oral and written traditions, councils, and the pontiff. The Lutherans have their Catechisms and the Augsburg Confession of Faith. The Methodists have their Discipline. The Baptists have their Manuals. The Confession of Faith is the creed of the Presbyterians. The Mormons have three sources of authority for what they believe and practice: Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Peril of Great Price. The Jehovah Witnesses have the Watch Tower publications.

The above creed books of men are the wrong source of authority for man's faith for several reasons. The most obvious reason is that they are not from God but the product of the mind of men. Man cannot direct his own footsteps (Jer. 10:23). The traditions and philosophies of men are condemned (Col. 2:8; Matt. 15:7-9). Creeds are additions to and subtractions from the Word of God (Rev. 22:18,19; 2 John 9). Any creed book which has more than what is found in the Bible has added to what God has said. Any creed book which has less than what God has given in His Word. Creeds divide men religiously. *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Cor. 1:10).

The Church of Christ found in the New Testament did not have a creed apart from the Bible. There is no such thing as "Church of Christ" doctrine; baptism, denomination, etc. The sinner simply obeyed the Gospel and was added to the body of Christ, the church. Just as there is one God and one body, there is one faith or system of belief. In other words Christ has only one set of teaching for His one body. This system of belief is found nowhere else except in God's Word. It is the doctrine of Christ which formed the New Testament church.

### **The Seed is the Creed**

*"The seed is the Word of God"* (Lk. 8:1) in the parable of the sower. The seed of God is planted in the hearts of men (1 Pet. 1:22,23). Those who received the good news grew into fruitful Christians. Therefore, it is the Word of God that makes Christians, not the ideas and opinions of men.

On the day of Pentecost the seed was sown by the apostles and it brought forth the New Testament church. Today, if this seed is sown, it will bring forth a church exactly like the New Testament church. For God had established in the laws of nature that every plant or seed would reproduce after its kind (Gen. 1:11,12; Gal. 6:7).

No one ever became anything other than a Christian when following only the Bible. Those who call themselves Mormons did not become so by following the Bible or a Methodist Discipline, but they became such by following the Book of Mormon. No one ever became a Methodist by following a Presbyterian Confession of Faith or the Bible. Foremost, no one ever became a Christian by following the Methodist Discipline, Presbyterian Confession of Faith, or the Book of Mormon. For God never told anyone to do anything which would put him into any denomination. But, all those who will read and follow the Word of God, will be added by God to the church, not a denomination (Ac. 2:47).

Using the New Testament as their blueprint true Christians can be established in the 21st century the church belonging to Christ. Just as the oak is in the acorn, the church is in the seed of God. *"For whatever the Gospel is said to do, the church is said to be. The gospel saves, purifies, and washes away sins, therefore the church is the sanctified, the saved, the purified, and the ones washed of their sins."*

In this cold, dark world of sin, spiritual carelessness, apathy, denominations, and deception, there is a pure light that shines. For Christ promised, *"I will build my church, and the gates of hades will not prevail against it"* (Mt. 16:18). The church belonging to Christ or the church of Christ is here, today. It is available for all those, who are willing to sincerely accept the seed of God into their heart, lay all human

labels and creeds aside, and put on the name of Christ.

In Time Magazine's section on religion a few decades ago it called members of the Church of Christ "the most Bible-bound of all religionists." May it be true of this generation of New Testament Christians.

**Questions:**

1. What are the two possible sources of authority in religion?
2. What was the New Testament church's source of authority?
3. List some things individual Christians have the power or authority to do, and the local congregation does not.
4. List some things Christians must do as part of the local church?
5. T F The local church's authority is not inherent but delegated.
6. Why is the Law of Moses not the source of authority for the church today?
7. What good can be derived by New Testament Christians from the Old Testament?
8. What is a creed? List some examples of denominational creeds.
9. Does the New Testament church have a creed? If so, what is it?
10. Why are creeds of men contrary to the will of God?

11. How does the seed principle work in relationship in establishing New Testament churches in the twenty-first century?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. If you were to arrive an area where were no New Testament churches what are some things you would do to establish one?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How would you go about teaching someone that the New Testament is the only creed men must follow religiously?

**Homework:** Find someone who is interested in knowing what the New Testament church believes and give them a Bible as the only creed book.

# Organization of the Church

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## Congregational Autonomy

Each local congregation in the New Testament was autonomous. This term is derived from two Greek words *auto* meaning “self” and *nomos* meaning “law.” Therefore, autonomous means “self-law, self-rule or self-governing. According to Random House Dictionary it means “independence..., the right of self-government..., a self governing community.” Each local congregation is independent and self-governing without any outside controlling influence or authority. Although the term “autonomous” is not found on the pages of the New Testament, it does express the Biblical principle clearly taught by the scriptures.

Several denominations currently claim congregational independence or autonomy, however closer investigation reveals some startling contradictions. The Congregational Holiness Church “government is, as the name suggests, congregational. Local church are grouped in annual associations from which delegates are elected to a general association” (Mead 101). The Conservative Congregational Christian Conference is said that its “local churches are completely autonomous; national officers include a president, two vice-presidents,...all elected for three years” (Mead 103). The Congregational Methodist Church has “district conferences...district, annual, and general conferences are all recognized as church courts, ruling on violations of church law...” (Mead 166).

The early local churches of Christ of the first and second century were truly autonomous and independent. Mosheim wrote of them,

All the churches, in those primitive times, were independent bodies; or none of them subject to the jurisdiction of any other. For though the churches which were founded by the apostles themselves frequently had the honor shown them to be consulted in difficult and doubtful cases, yet they had no judicial authority, no control, no power or giving laws. On the contrary, it is as clear as the noon-day, that all Christian churches had equal rights, and were in all respects on a footing of equality. Nor does there appear in this first century any vestige of that consociation of the churches of the same provinces, which gave rise to ecclesiastical councils, and to metropolitan. But, rather as is manifest, it was not till the second century that the custom of holding ecclesiastical councils first began in Greece, and thence extended into other provinces (Mosheim, Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 1, p. 72).

## History of Denominational Church Organization

The apostle Paul warned that apostasy in the church would begin among the elders of the local congregations. *“Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves”* (Acts 20:30). Soon after the apostles were gone some elders were exalting themselves over the others in local congregations. He began to call himself “bishop” while his fellow-elders were the “presbyters.” He became the “president of the presbytery.” This change in church government became quite established by 150 A.D.

The next digression in God’s order of church government came when the bishop of a congregation took control of “mission” churches taking them under his oversight and control. As a result these new congregations lost their equality, autonomy and independence. This gave rise to the man-made position of Diocesan Bishop. These men began to meet in councils within provinces to discuss issues. In time these councils produces rules or creeds for churches to adhere to.

This new form of church government continued to progress until 606 AD when Boniface the III was declared to be the Pope of the universal or Catholic Church. He said, “we declare, say, define and pronounce to every human creature that it is altogether essential to salvation to be subject to the pontiff.



There is but one name in all the world; and that is the pope's. All princes ought to kiss his feet. He alone can nominate or displace bishops, or dissolve councils. Nobody can judge him, He has never erred, and shall never err in time to come. He can depose princes, and release subjects from their oaths of fidelity. Thou art the shepherd, thou art the physician, thou art the husbandman, finally thou are another God on earth" (Christopher Marcellus, Lateran Council; History of the Councils, Labbe and Sassart, Vol. 14, p. 304).

The Reformation Movement rejected the authority of the Pope, but did not return to the God-given organization of the New Testament church. They merely perpetuated the ecclesiastical system found in the Catholic Church. Centralized government of Mormons is in Salt Lake City, the Jehovah's Witnesses have their headquarters in New York at the Watchtower Society, the Disciples of Christ have a General Assembly, there is the general conference of the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Southern Baptist Convention meets to determine rules for their local congregations. All of these are but Protestant replicas of the Vatican City on Rome and Catholicism's hierarchal government structure.

It was during the Restoration Movement in America that a movement was begun to restore the order and government of the church of the first century. Barton W. Stone became convinced that it was unscriptural for the congregations to be bound together as they then were by this "presbytery," dissolved it by writing: "The last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery". The fifth item said, "We will, that each particular church, as a body, actuated by the same spirit, choose her own preacher, and support him by a freewill offering, without a written call or subscription - admit members - remove offenses; and never henceforth delegate here right to government to any man or set of men whatever".

### **Reasons For Congregational Autonomy and Independence**

- **It Is Scriptural**

The universal church is not made up of local congregations or denominations. Christ is its only head. "*And He is the head of the body, the church*" (Col. 1:18; cf. Eph. 5:23). Heaven its only headquarters. Because Heaven is where the Head is quartered (Col. 1:18). Christ's church is described as a kingdom ruled by a monarchy. Christ is its King. He alone has all authority to legislate law (Matt. 28:18). Any man who has assumed the authority to change the government of the church or the laws has rebelled against the King. Christ's will is law and rebellion against it is treason. Christ is the sole Ruler of his citizens in matters of faith. No group of His disciples has been given the responsibility of policing other congregations.

The organization God planned for Christ's church was simple. They had nothing larger than the local church and nothing smaller than the local church. In contrast, a denomination is a religious organization larger than a local church and smaller than the universal church. In the New Testament there is not a single word about two or more congregations being bound together by any sort of an organization whatsoever. There's nothing said about representatives appointed to attend any sort of a conference of the churches. The only kind of organization God has given is on a congregational level. All other forms of government are excluded.

- **It Is Effective**

Since the local congregation is the only church organization God has given us, then whatever work God wants the church as an organization to do, can be done by the local congregation. It is self-sufficient to do its own work.

The local church is effective in carrying out evangelism. Thirty-four years after Pentecost, Paul declared in Colossians 1:23 that the Gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven. This remarkable success was achieved without any church organization except that of the local congregation. They had no cell phones, no internet, no computers! Our trouble today is not a lack of sufficient organization, but our failure to use the organization which the Lord has provided. When the church at Jerusalem was scattered abroad the Bible says they went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4). No worldwide organization was set up for the purpose of evangelism. When Paul went out to preach different churches sent directly to him (2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:18). The local church sent out preachers (Acts 11:22). The early church had no centralized organization to send out preachers. Two

congregations can co-operate in the finest and most effective way without either knowing that the other is in existence.

The local church is efficient in benevolence. The Jerusalem congregation took care of its own needy (Acts 2:44,45; 4:32-37). Paul wrote letters and visited churches in Galatia, Achaia, and Macedonia telling them about the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-27,31). The funds were collected locally and each congregation sending its own fund to the needed saints in another local congregation (1 Cor. 16:1-3).

The local church was effectual in edifying its saints (Eph. 4:11-16). It did not need a church college to develop future leaders.

- **It is a Safeguard**

When local congregations submit to the authority of a centralized organization to govern any aspect of the local church, they have relinquished power or control to that group. It is harder for a local congregation to resist the momentum of the larger more powerful organization. When one church gives control of their treasury or preaching or teaching or eldership to another, they thereby relinquish control of these. If only a part of their means and work go to the jurisdiction of another church, it still results in a loss of autonomy and independence.

When local congregations are allowed to maintain autonomy and are independent from each other it is comparatively easier for them remain faithful to Christ even when other churches fall away. If one church becomes corrupted by a false doctrine or immorality other churches are not as easily infected. Rebellion of some churches will not necessarily spread to others. The independence of the churches is a protection for each one. Even if there was only one faithful group of believers on earth, they could still function faithfully in fulfilling its mission.

### **Organization of Local Congregations**

To the church Christ *"Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers"* (Eph. 4:11).

- **Elders to Oversee the Church**

The Presbyterian Church has a local government in their congregations ruled by elders who are youths and often female. In the Catholic Church the term "bishop" is often used for a man who is over a particular parish or see. While the term is used in some Protestant denominations to refer to a spiritual leader ordained over a particular district. The Mormon church has elders who are youths often unmarried and without a family. Many denominational preachers are called "pastors." Among all this confusion of denominational terminology which of these reflects the organization of the church found in the New Testament?

A study of the definitions of Biblical terms is critical to an accurate understanding of any Bible topic. Words are vehicles by which thoughts are expressed in a way that the mind can clearly understand. Biblical terms like *"bishop," "elder," "pastor,"* etc. are used in a variety of ways. Six different English words are translated from three Greek words relative to our study. The six English words are: *"elder"* and *"presbyter"* both translated from the Greek word *presbuteros*; *"overseer"* and *"bishop"* translated from the Greek word *episcopos*; also there is *"shepherd"* and *"pastor"* translated from *poimen*. These are not honorary titles, but words describing the work to be done by those qualified for the office.

These six terms under discussion are used interchangeably in the New Testament. In Acts 20:17 the apostle Paul calls for the *"elders"* of the church at Ephesus to meet him in Miletus. In verse 28 he refers to them as *"overseers"* and instructs them to *"feed"* the church. The word *"feed"* comes from the Greek word *"poimainein"* which is simply the verb form of *"poimen"* (shepherd or pastor). Therefore, in this context the same group of men are referred to as elders, overseers, and shepherds. This clearly establishes the fact that they are one and the same. Again Paul uses the terms interchangeably when he tells Titus to *"appoint elders in every city"* (Tit. 1:5). Then in verse 7 he instructs him: "For a bishop must be blameless". Further evidence comes from the apostle Peter. He exhorts "the elders among you" (1 Pet. 5:1) to "feed the flock of God which is among you serving as overseers" (v. 2). The word "feed" once again is the verb form of "poimen" which is a shepherd or pastor. Peter then uses the three

Greek terms to refer to the same office.

<b>presbuteros</b>	elder	presbyter
<b>episcopos</b>	overseer	bishop
<b>poimen</b>	pastor	shepherd

Biblically speaking, the terms elder, presbyter, overseer, bishop, pastor and shepherd all refer to the same office in the organization of the early church. Every congregation in the New Testament times that had these men appointed to the leadership would have a plurality of elders, overseers or pastors. Any man claiming to be an elder, presbyter, overseer, bishop, pastor or shepherd must first meet the qualifications found in 1 Tim. 3:1f and Tit. 1:5. Furthermore, a preacher or minister was not the same as the Pastor of a congregation. First, the terms preacher, minister, evangelist are not used interchangeably in the New Testament with the term “pastor” (Eph. 4:11). Pastor is used interchangeably with the terms “elder” and “overseer.” Secondly, there would have to be a plurality of men equally serving the congregation as pastors having all met the same qualifications.

Elders were not appointed by leaders of another church or religious organization. They became so by the authority of the Holy Spirit when their met the qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1f; Tit. 1:5f) outlined by the Holy Spirit revealed Word. With the aid of the preacher the local congregation chose qualified men to oversee the local work. Each congregation is to have a plurality of men to serve a congregation (Tit. 1:5). Elders were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23). Jurisdiction of elders was limited to the local congregation. Paul sent for the elders from Ephesus (Acts 20:17). Elders of the flock was the church at Ephesus distinguishing them from elders in other places (20:28). Elders were to tend their own flock (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Elders are not overseers of any aspect of the teaching, work or worship of any other church.

■ **Deacons to Serve the Church**

When Paul wrote his letter to the church at Philippi he addressed “*to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons*” (Phil. 1:1). The Greek term for deacon means “slave or servant.” Deacons had to meet certain God-given qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8f) before a local congregation could appoint them. Their work is not specifically outlined in the Bible. They serve the needs of the local church under the direction of the eldership.

■ **Preachers to Proclaim Truth to the Church**

Preachers are also called “evangelists” and “ministers” in the New Testament. Their qualifications and work is detailed in Paul’s letters to the evangelists Timothy and Titus. Paul wrote to Timothy: “*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*” (2 Tim. 4:1,2). They are not set by a church headquarters. Each congregation is responsible for the preaching of the Word by faithful men. Each church is to financially provide wages for those who preach to the local congregation and if it cannot other congregations can send fund directly to him (2 Cor. 8 and 9).

■ **Teachers of the Word to the Church**

Paul also instructed Timothy: “*the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Tim. 2:2).

■ **Members of the Church**

Just as a body is composed of various members so the body (the church) of Christ is made up of many individual members (1 Cor. 12:12f). They were baptized in the universal church and are expected to join a local congregation with which to work and worship.

**Conclusion**

Local churches of the New Testament recognized no spiritual head on earth but only the Head

of the church which is headquartered in Heaven. They not recognize the authority of any council, synod, or conference. There is no higher organization on earth than the local church. The church, with its elders to oversee it, the deacons to serve it, and the evangelists to proclaim the word is an independent entity and answerable only to Christ. In this way churches of the first century were truly autonomous and independent and equal. They were independently organized (Acts 14:23); overseen (1 Pet. 5:2); and operated to fulfill its work (Acts 11:27-30; Phil. 4:15,16).

**Questions:**

1. Define autonomous?
  
2. What were the original changes made in the organization of the church by the middle of the second century?
  
3. Who was the first Pope? What authority did he claim for himself?
  
4. Did Protestants return to the organization of the New Testament church as outlined in the Bible? Explain.
  
5. When did men attempt to return to the New Testament church organization?
  
6. T F The only kind of organization God has given is on a congregational level. All other forms of government are excluded.
  
7. Why did the early church not use missionary societies or a centralized organization to help them spread the Gospel?
  
8. What safeguards does God's plan of church government provide local churches?
  
9. What are the other five English terms used to refer to elders in the New Testament?

10. How are elders appointed? What is the limit of their realm of authority?
  
11. What is a New Testament deacon?
  
12. Other than elders and deacons who else makes up a local congregation?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. What do you believe may be the underlying motive behind man's desire to restructure church government?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why do you think God's organization of the church is more effective in edification, evangelism, and benevolence?

**Homework:** Find a way to encourage the leaders of the local congregation this week.

## Name of the Church

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Shakespeare wrote: "That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell just as sweet" (Romeo and Juliet Act II, Scene ii). Those who support denominational names use this point out it does not matter what one calls the church or which denominational handle they use to describe themselves. They will argue: "a Christian by any other name is a Christian just the same". First, Shakespeare is not a religious authority. Next, all he meant was that the name "rose" given to a particular flower did not determine the sweet aroma of its smell. Finally, as this lesson will show, it matters to God what one calls His church and the designations used to refer to His saints.

In fact, very few who use this argument actually believe it. Denominational names are important to people. One denomination would not want to be called by the name of another denomination. Try calling a Baptist a Mormon, if the Baptist says that names are not important. Even class a Lutheran with a Jehovah Witness, and the Lutheran will get defensive.

### Names are Important to God

Names are of importance to our every day life. How chaotic would everyday life be if names were meaningless. You go through a drive thru to order a cheeseburger, fries and a chocolate shake and they send out liver and onions with beet juice to drink. You send a package to a relative in Miami and they ship it to Nome, Alaska. When someone incorrectly pronounces our name and we are prompt to correct them. Parents take special care to name their children. They do not name them Judas or Jezebel or Rover or Saddam. Because names do carry with them meaning and reputation. Names are very important in all aspects of society. The banker believes in people signing the right name to a check.

So, what's in a name? Names help identify and reflect relationships. My wife would not appreciate it if I started calling her "Bertha" instead of "Beverley." Once we were signing some official legal documents. Whoever drew up the forms made the common mistake of spelling her name with two "e's" instead of three. New documents had to be prepared and the signing had to start all over again.

Names are important to God. God gave special names to various men and women. God took the trouble of naming John the Baptist before he was born (Lk. 1:13). Zacharias would not allow him to be named by any other name (Lk. 1:57-64). God sent angels to tell Joseph and Mary that the child that was to be born was to have a certain name. "*Thou shalt call His name Jesus*" (Lk. 1:31, KJV). God changed the names of certain men and women. Abram's (father) name was changed to Abraham (father of many) (Gen. 17:5). Did it really matter as to whether he was called Abram or Abraham the rest of his life? Sarai's name was changed to Sarah (17:15). Jacob's name was changed to Israel (32:28). Why? Because these name changes reflected a change in relationship and reflected God's promises.

### Christ's Name is Important to God's Children

Consider just how important the name of Christ is to New Testament Christians. Salvation is only found in His name (Ac. 4:10-12). The children of God are to believe in His name (Jn. 1:12). The disciples of Christ are to confess His name (Mt. 10:32,33; Rev. 2:13: 3:8). To be saved the lost are to repent and baptized in His name (Ac. 2:38; Mt. 28:19). Christians may be hated and persecuted for His name's sake (Mt. 10:22). Though persecuted, they are to "*glorify Christ in this name* (Christian)" (1 Pet. 4:15,16). Christians are to pray in His name (Eph. 5:20). Saints are called by His worthy name (Js. 2:7). The faithful are to hold fast His name (Rev. 2:13). And Christians find their religious authority in His name (Col. 3:17).

### Names Given to the New Testament Church

The New Testament names for the church designate a divine relationship. The early church did not have a single specific name or title. In the first century it could simply be referred to as "the church". The phrases given denote the relationship in Deity and possession by God. Each phrases follows the same pattern: a group of called-out people belonging to Deity.

Group of People	belonging to	Deity	Passage
churches	of	Christ	Rom. 16:16
church	of	God	1 Cor. 1:1,2; Acts 20:28
body	of	Christ	Col. 1:14,18; Eph. 1:21,22; 4:3; 45:23; 1 Cor. 12:12f
church	of	the Living God	1 Tim. 3:15
church	of	the Lord	Acts 20:28
church	of	the Firstborn	Heb. 12:23
Temple	of	God	Eph. 2:19-22
Household (family)	of	God	1 Tim. 3:15; Gal. 6:10
Kingdom	of	God	Col. 1:13
Bride	of	Christ	Eph. 5:22-33; cf. 2 Cor. 11:2

All these are descriptive phrases are scriptural and acceptable to God to use as phrases of description of His church. If these are suitable in describing the New Testament church, they are sufficient to describe it today. Any other phrase than these are human labels. There are scriptural names for the church and their are unscriptural names. A church not having a Bible name is not the church of the Bible. If you cannot find the name of the church of which you are a member in the bible you are not in Christ's church. It is wrong to identify the Lord's church with human names.

According to the New Testament the Bride of Christ was called by His name. *"Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you"* (Rom. 16:16). Christ's Bride is not called Lutheran or Baptist. Martin Luther is not the groom of the church, Christ is the groom and His Bride bears His name. The church is not the bride of John the Baptist. My wife would not like to be called Mrs. John Smith because that does not properly reflect her marriage relationship. Likewise, the Lord's Bride which He died for should not be known as Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Nazarene, Mormon, etc.

### The Prophesied Name

Several hundred years before the coming of Christ and His Church Isaiah prophesied that God's people would be known by a new name. *"For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name"* (Is. 61:1,2). *"You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen; for the Lord GOD will slay you, and call His servants by another name"* (Is. 65:15).

What is the "new name" prophesied by Isaiah? Is it the name "Christian." Some scholars argue that it is not the name give by God to His saints in the New Testament, but it originated from the enemies of Christ. They called His disciples "Christians" out of scorn and derision.

If the new name is not "Christian" than what is it? All the other names referring to God's people in the New Testament were also names used in the Old Testament:

- ▶ "Children of God" (I Jn. 3:1; Dt. 14:1)
- ▶ "Brethren" (Mt. 23:8; Ps. 13:1; 22:22)
- ▶ "Disciples" (Mt. 5:1; Is. 8:16)
- ▶ "Saints" (Ac. 9:13; Dt. 33:2; Ps. 30:4)
- ▶ "Witnesses" (Ac. 1:8; Is. 43:10)
- ▶ "Sheep" (Jn. 10; Ps. 79:13)
- ▶ "Beloved of God" (Rom. 1:7; Dt. 33:12; Neh. 13:26)

The only new name to be found in the New Testament is "Christian". It is not until the Book of Acts that a "new name" is found. At a church filled with Gentile disciples this prophecy was fulfilled.

Notice the particulars of Isaiah's prophecy and how it finds fulfillment in the name "Christian." This prophecy was to be fulfilled when the gentiles "*see thy righteousness*". The promise of remission of sins and the gift of the H.S. is not only to the Jews but also to those that are "*afar off*" (Ac. 2:37-39). It was not until the gentiles had seen the righteousness of the Lord that the "new name" was to be given. The first Gentile converts are found in Acts ten and it is discussed in chapter eleven (the conversion of the household of Cornelius). In Acts 11:26 a new designation is found: "*And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*"

This "new name" is given by God. Isaiah prophesied the name would be that "*which the mouth of the Lord shall name*". If the name "Christian" is given by mouth of man than it isn't the "new name" according to prophecy. The Greek word for "*called*" in Acts 11:26 indicates a divine calling. Thayer defines *chrematixoi* to mean "to give a Divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven." Several English translations more accurately reflect this meaning. The Kingdom Interlinear Translation reads: "*And it was first in Antioch that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians*". According to Young's Literal Translation Acts 11:26 is rendered: "*The disciples also were divinely called first in Antioch Christians.*" Without exception, every time this Greek word is used in the New Testament it pertains to a divine calling. This is why God's children are only known as "Christians".

### **The Necessity of Only Wearing the Name "Christian"**

Those who consider themselves believers in Christ call themselves by a variety of names: "Catholic", "Protestant", "Mormon", "Baptist", "Methodist", "Lutheran", "Witness", "Presbyterian", "Adventist", etc. Yet none of these names are used to describe saved believers in Christ in the New Testament. Despite what some Baptists may claim, John the Baptist was not a member of the church. He lived and died a Jew under the Law of Moses. When John is called "the Baptist" it is not describing his relationship to Christ's kingdom or church. It is used to describe what he did, John immersed people in the Jordan River out of obedience to God in preparation for the coming of the Christ. It would be the same as if one referred to "Sam, the bricklayer." Except John's work was greater in that it was part of the scheme of redemption. Furthermore, John did not live long enough to be baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:2ff). He died before the church was established.

All the names given to the saved believers in the New Testament describe, identify or express their relationship to God and one another or give honor to the Father or the Son. The name "*disciples*" was used to describe the saved, because they are dedicated to learning and following the teaching of Christ (Jn. 15:8; Ac. 11:26). The saved are called "saints" because they "*are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,*" (1 Cor. 1:2; cf. Rom. 1:7; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). Saint, sanctify, sanctification, and holy are all derived from the same Greek root word meaning "to be set apart" unto God. Because the saved render service to God they are His "*servants*" (Rev. 1:1). They are "*children*" of God, because God is their Father (Gal. 3:26, I Jn. 3:1). The "*children*" of God and "*sons of God*" (Rom. 8:14) are also called "*brethren*", because of their relationship to other children of God (Gal. 6:1). Having been made subjects to the King, they are citizens of His kingdom (Eph. 2:19; 3:6; I Cor. 15:6; Js. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:10). The church is the body of Christ and the saved are members of this one body (I Cor. 12:20; cf. Eph. 1:22,23; 4:3f). Because they make up a priesthood in relationship to their High Priest, Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:13f), they are called "*priests*" (1 Pet. 2:5-9). Each priest can offer up his prayers to God through the Mediator



and High Priest, Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). Each one of these saved souls can offer up *"living sacrifices"* in worship unto God (Rom. 12:1). Due to the fact they are a *"royal priesthood,"* the Bible not only refers to them as *"priests"* but also *"kings"* (Rev. 1:5,6). One is saved and is an *"heir of God"* (Rom. 8:17), because of their inheritance through the obedience to the Gospel. God counts all His saved children dear to Him and they are *"beloved of God"* (Rom. 1:7), God showed His love by the sacrifice of His only Son (Jn. 3:16). In reference to the spiritual warfare they engaged in, they are soldiers (Philemon 2; Eph. 6:10-18). Only three times in the New Testament are the saved called *"Christians"* (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). Every time it is spelled or pronounced, it gives glory to Christ, and shows that its wearer belongs to Him.

When the church at Corinth was divided in regard to who they followed, Paul let them know through three rhetorical questions which name they should wear. Paul wrote, *"now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* (1 Cor. 1:10-13). The only way by which the Corinthians could wear Paul's name is if Paul was crucified for them and they were immersed in the name of Paul. Christ was crucified for them (1 Cor. 6:19,20). They were baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 19:5). Christ is not divided nor is his body (1 Cor. 12:25). Therefore, the only name that can be worn is that of Christ. Paul is saying it is wrong to wear another name.

Denominational leaders even recognize the unscriptural use of these human names. The Lutheran church was founded by the followers of Martin Luther. When they were attempting to call themselves Lutherans while he was still alive, he referenced Paul's argument in 1 Cor. 1:10-13 and pleaded with his followers: "I pray you to leave my name alone and call not yourself Lutherans, but Christians. who is Luther?...I have not been crucified for anyone. Paul would not let them call themselves after Paul,...but of Christ. How then does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes to give my name to the children of God? Cease, my dear friends, to clinging to these party names and distinctions; away with all; and let us call ourselves only Christians..." (Life Of Luther, Stork, p. 289). Charles Spurgeon a well-known Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century wrote, "I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish, but let Christ's name last forever" (Spurgeon Memorial Library, Vol. 1, p. 168). John Wesley founded the Methodist church, but he was opposed to his followers using denominational designations. "Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgotten; that we might all agree to sit down together, as humble, loving disciples at the feet of the common Master..." (Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, Preface, p. 7).

Most denominational names do not honor the Lord or Christ; instead they exalt some man, organizational arrangement, belief or practice. Adventists exalt the second coming over the Returning Savior. Seventh-Day Adventists promote the day of rest commanded in the Old Testament over the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7). Baptists exalt baptism above the One we are baptized into (Gal. 3:25f). Methodists exalt methods of holiness above the Holy One. A Nazarene is not one who lives in Nazareth, but this denominationalist exalts the earthly home of Jesus above the King residing at the right hand of God's throne in Heaven. Episcopalians and Presbyterians exalt a form of church government over the King of the Kingdom, the Overseer, and Chief Shepherd of the Flock (1 Pet. 5:4f; Acts 20:28). The Pentecostals exalt the miracles of Pentecost over the One in whose name these were performed. Protestants are called such because they protest the abuses of the Catholic church not because they wish to return to and glorify the true Gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). Catholics exalt the universal nature of the church over the Head of the Church.

Denominational names are given by men to each other, and the name of Christ is buried beneath the rubble. Jesus warned of this unreasonable respect for human names. He said, *"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the*

*only God?"* (Jn. 5:43,44). Wearing man-made names cannot glorify God or His Son. Man is commanded to glorify God in the name "Christian." *"If he suffers as a Christian he has nothing to be ashamed of and may glorify God in Christ's name"* (1 Pet. 4:16, J.B. Philips New Testament). Catholics are trying to glorify God in the name "Catholic." Therefore, Catholics are in disobedience to the command of God. Likewise, Baptists are not glorifying Christ by calling themselves "Baptists." Thus, they are not in agreement with the New Testament Scriptures.

The name we wear religiously shows where our allegiance is. Where is your allegiance? What does the name you wear signify and glorify? Bible things should be called by Bible names. Men cannot improve upon the perfect Will of God. Will you be content to be right with God and wear the names designated for the saved in the New Testament?

**Questions:**

1. How important is the proper use of names in everyday life?
  
2. Show from the Bible that names are important to God?
  
3. T F It matters not what names you call Christ, so long as you love Him.
  
4. In whose name is salvation found?
  
5. What do some scholars believe is the origin of the name "*Christian?*"
  
6. What does Isaiah 62:2 and 65:15 prophecy?
  
7. Why are the names children, brethren, disciples, saints, witnesses, sheep, etc. not the new name Isaiah prophesied?
  
8. When was this prophecy of Isaiah to be fulfilled?
  
9. Who was to give the new name according to prophecy?

10. Define “called” in Acts 11:26?
  
11. What do all these scriptural phrases used to identify the New Testament church denote?
  
12. Whose names were the Corinthians using? Which one’s were correct? Why?
  
13. Who were Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, and John Wesley? What did they write concerning denominational names?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. Do you think denominational names are important to those who wear them? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why is it that a church which may identify itself using scriptural phrases, such as, “Church of Christ” and still not be the New Testament Church?

**Homework:** Find an acquaintance who attends a denomination or inter-denomination and contrast for them the Bible pattern for scriptural identification of its members and the early church with the titles used to describe their church and its members.

# Unity of the Church

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“One” is a great number. Oneness is unity. More than “one” allows for confusion between one thing and another. It is hard to get mixed up on “one.” If you have a ring full of keys and one of them unlocks a door, it may take awhile to find the right key. But if you hold only the right key, there is no room for error. Unity in oneness means there are no other options.

## Preparation for Unity

God has helped His saints out by giving them a list of “ones” in Ephesians 4:3-6. These are involved in maintaining unity with others and being able to walk with Him. First, how is the unity of the spirit achieved and maintained? Paul commanded the church at Ephesus to endeavor *“to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4:3)

Preparing for unity requires the effort necessary to maintain it. They are *“endeavoring to keep.”* They are giving diligence to preserve, keep and care for unity. The unity is that of the Spirit who created this unity through the apostles’ doctrine which the disciples are to continue in (Acts 2:42). It is the same as the teachings or doctrine of Christ. This unity must be kept *“in the bond of peace”* or the bond which is peace. Christ our peace, and is thus a bond of peace. The bonds which unite in peace. Peace is important but it is not unity.

## Platform of Unity

Now Paul gives Christians of all ages the plan of unity. Notice this plan has several planks in its platform. *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (Eph. 4:4-6)

### ✓ **One Body - Unity of Organization**

God has always planned for there to be but one true church. When Paul wrote he did not have to signify whether he intended the letter to go to the Catholic church or the Presbyterian church. He did not have to because these would not come to exist for several hundred years.

The church is the one body. Paul had already told the Ephesian Christians what he meant by “body.” God *“gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”* (Eph. 1:22,23). There are many members composing the one church (1 Cor. 12:12-27). The one church has its One Head (Col. 1:18).

The church is an organism made up of living members. Men think that there are many churches. The “one body” refers to the church universal. Some have the idea that the one body is composed of men of all denominations. Christ has only one Bride (Eph. 5:23ff). *“He is the Savior of the body”* (Eph. 5:23). Does one have to be in the church to be saved? Yes! Unless they can be saved without a Savior. The church is the saved. *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:47).

### ✓ **One Spirit - Unity of Revelation**

The Holy Spirit is a Divine Being. He is “God” (Jn. 14:16;26; Acts 5:3,4). The Holy Spirit’s work was to reveal to man the Word of God. Paul had previously explained how this was accomplished. *“How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets”* (Eph. 3:3-5). J.P. Miller explained the role of the Godhead when he wrote, “God purposes,

Christ executed, and the Holy Spirit reveals.” Jesus told the disciples, *“however, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come”* (Jn. 16:13).

✓ **One Hope - Unity in Goal**

Hope means “desire” plus “expectation.” The saints have been called *“to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Pet. 1:4,5). Modernism likes to compare this hope to “the pie in the sky in the sweet bye and bye.” The “health and wealth” Gospel gives material goods as the Christian’s hope. Premillennialist claim the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth as the one hope. The Watchtower Society teaches that 144,000 have the hope of heaven and the rest of the saved have hope of living on earth eternally. Our hope is the Heavenly home. It is the *“hope of calling.”*

✓ **One Lord - Unity in Authority**

The word “*Lord*” may be applied to either the Father or the Son, but here it refers to Jesus. God has bestowed authority on him as the King of kings and Head of His church. At the transfiguration God said from Heaven *“this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”* (Matt. 17:5). In giving the great commission Jesus said, *“all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”* (Matt. 28:18). “*Lord*” means one supreme, ruler, one with authority. He is the only Lord, boss or master Christians are to obey. Jesus asked His would-be disciples, *“but why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?”* (Lk. 6:46). We must do all in the name of the Lord.

✓ **One Faith - Unity of Teaching**

The word “*faith*” refers to that which is believed, the Gospel of Christ. One faith is in reference to the contents of belief. Jude told Christians to *“contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 1:3). *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). *“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith”* (Acts 6:7). Denominationalism, represents the many faiths of men, undermines the unity of the church. Ecumenists have tried to create unity among differing “faiths” by dividing the New Testament into two sections: Gospel and doctrine. The Gospel includes things all Christians must believe: inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and the miracles of the Bible. However, the Bible does not make any distinction between Gospel and the doctrines or teachings of the Bible. The in result of this effort is not unity in faith but unity-in-diversity, ending in the acceptance of women preachers, loose views on divorce and remarriage, and the rejection of water baptism as having anything to do with the Gospel.

✓ **One Baptism - Unity of Salvation**

There are several different baptisms mentioned in the Bible: baptism of Moses (1 Cor. 10:1,2a); baptism of John (Matt. 3:5,6; Acts 18:26,27; 19:1-7); baptism of sufferings (Lk. 12:50); baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11); baptism of the Fire (Matt. 3:11); baptism for the dead (1 Cor. 15:29); and baptism of the Great Commission: Jesus said just before His ascension into Heaven, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:15,16).

The one baptism involves one method or means which is immersion (Rom. 6:3,4) which requires a burial in water. It is not sprinkling and pouring. The one baptism involves one recipient: those who are penitent believers were the only ones offered baptism in the New Testament. No example of baptism for infants and small children can be found. The one baptism involves one name: “baptism in the name of Christ” (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:47,48; 19:5,6). The one baptism has but one design or motive: salvation. The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach “repentance must precede baptism, but sins are not washed away by baptism.” (Make Sure of all Things, Article on Baptism, p. 30). Yet God sent the preacher Ananias to Paul to tell him, *“now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* (Acts 22:16). The one baptism is obeyed in one sequence: first repentance, baptism, and then the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Seventh-day Adventists teach, “...baptism is an ordinance of the Christian church, and should follow repentance and forgiveness of sins.” (Church

Manual, Issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1942, p. 193). The one baptism has but one location for the saved - the Church. *"And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:47).

### ✓ **One God - Unity of Worship**

God is the only Creator. His position is *"over all"*, that is, all powerful, transcendent, sovereign the supremacy of absolute rule. His position is *"through all"*, that is, everywhere, expressing immanence; all pervading presence. And His position is *"in all"*, that is, indwelling of God, expressing the constant abode of the one God and Father in His people. Jesus reminded Satan, *"you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve"* (Matt. 4:10). A god by any other name is not God. Not Hinduism's 330 gods million or Islam's Allah.

In order for the "unity of the Spirit" to exist, men must accept these seven facts. Unity begins with same-mindedness. Same mindedness comes only when we agree as to which "one" we are going to accept. Until individuals decide that the Word of God will be the only guide in religious matters, they cannot expect to have the sameness of mind or unity.

### **Prayer for Unity**

Some men have thanked God that there are so many different denominations. But Jesus considered unity among His people to be of great importance. Jesus prayed, *"Neither pray I for these along, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me; and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* Jn. 17:20,21. Christ wanted unity among His followers, like He and the Father are one. If all are one, then all men will believe that God the Father sent Jesus. An Indian chief once told a missionary what he thought of the religious division among denominations: "Go home, and agree among yourselves, and then come to me, and I will consider the matter." Division is the most fruitful source of atheism.

### **Plea for Unity**

The apostle Paul made the following plea for unity: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Cor. 1:10). There are divisions today, because all do not speak the same thing. And so there is no way that they are perfectly joined together. To be of *"the same mind"* implies unity of belief or faith and purpose while being of the *"same judgment"* implies unity of action.

This is by no means the first and only time the New Testament commands saints to be of the same mind (2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2). Paul encouraged brethren to be *"like-minded one with another"* so they could with *"one mind and mouth glorify God"* (Rom. 15:5,6). Paul said it would be his joy if be *"like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"* (Phil. 2:3). *"Let us walk by the same rule,[a] let us be of the same mind"* (Phil. 3:16).

Some will argue that there is one body but it is divided up into many different denominations. When the first sign of denominationalism reared its divisive head Paul condemned it. "Now I say this, that each of you says, *"I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ"* (1 Cor. 1:12,13a). Paul rebukes this by way of three questions (1 Cor. 1:13). 1) *"Is Christ divided?"* NO! *"That there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another"* (1 Cor. 12:25). 2) *"Was Paul crucified for you?"* NO! Christ died to purchase them. *"For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body"* (1 Cor. 6:20). 3) *"Were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* No! *"And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized"* (Ac. 18:8). But, if Christ was crucified for them and they were baptized in Christ's name, then those who claimed, "I am of Christ" were correct, because these two necessary conditions have been fulfilled.

## Personification of Unity

### ◆ Christ Has One Body

In scripture, the church is referred to as being the one body of Christ. *"The church, which is His body"* (Eph. 1:22,23). *"There is one body"* (Eph. 4:4). Just as, Christ had only one fleshly body, so He has only one church. There is but one church as there is but *"one God and Father of all"* (Eph. 4:6). Once again, *"but now are they many members; but one body"* (1 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 12:4,5). Christ has but one organized body composed of many Christians (members).

Christ is the Head of the one body, which is the church (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). Christ is the one head and the church is His only body. Headship over the church gives Christ authority. Just as a body reacts as it receives orders from the head, so the church receives its authority to act from Christ. It is *"subject to Christ"* (Eph. 5:24). The body of Christ takes orders from its head *"in all things"* (Eph. 1:22).

Again Paul wrote, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God" (Eph. 4:4-6). What did he mean by "one body"? In the first chapter of the Ephesian letter Paul said, "and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Eph. 1:22,23). Nothing could be plainer. Since there is just one body, and the body is the church, there must be one church.

How does one become a member of this one body of Christ? *"Ye were called in one body"* (Col. 3:15). *"For in one spirit were we all immersed into one body,"* (1 Cor. 12:13).

### ◆ Christ Has One Bride

From the very beginning God ruled out men having multiple wives when he made Eve for Adam. Although He could have, God did not make Eve, Betty, Sue, Gertrude, etc. for Adam. As God created only one woman Eve, for the one man Adam, so He brought forth only one church for Christ's bride (Eph. 5:23-28). Christ has only one Bride or Church not many brides.

Christ is not a polygamist. He does not have over 2000 brides or churches. His brides are not the Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Nazarene, Mormon, etc. churches. Christ only has one Bride: the church of Christ.

If you were searching for your missing bride you would not fall for the argument: "one bride is just as good as another." You would not accept just any woman as your lost wife. If she were missing you would want people to realize that you only have one and she has specific traits that will identify her as your one and only. If you want to be a part of the real Bride of Christ, search for the one that is like the church described in the New Testament.

### ◆ Christ Has One Family

God has but one household or family. Paul said, *"I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Tim. 3:15). The house of God is the church and is composed of His sons and daughters. If God has two thousand different families He is an unfaithful father.

## Pleasure of Unity

David spoke of the pleasure of unity. *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, For brethren to dwell together in unity!"* (Ps. 133:1). Today, there are nearly two thousand different denominations of Christianity. How enjoyable would it be for men to leave this many made mas of confusion which leads to doubt and disbelief and return to the one Church of Christ. What if men and women returned to the early church of the New Testament which from the very start were united as one. They *"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship"* (Acts 2:42). They *"day by day, continued steadfastly with one accord in the Temple"* (Acts 2:46). *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one mind"* (Acts 4:32).

## Conclusion

Why is unity so important? Where there is unity there is peace. One can identify the true church by recognizing that there is one body, the church. Which one? Jesus said, "my church" (Mt. 16:18) or

the church belonging to Christ (Rom. 16:16).

**Questions:**

1. For what sort of unity did Jesus pray?
  
2. What is the “*one body*”?
  
3. T F We can only have one Lord, one Spirit, and one Father, but we can have two thousand different faiths or churches.
  
4. T F Christ’s blood was to purchase all the churches, including denominations.
  
5. How do we know that denominations are not the members of the body in Romans 12:4-5 and 1 Cor. 12:13-26?
  
6. T F The word “kingdom” and “church” are always used interchangeably in the New Testament.
  
7. How many brides does Christ have?
  
8. How many families does the Father have?
  
9. How many churches did Christ promise to build?
  
10. T F To give thanks for denominations is in direct conflict with Christ’s prayer for unity in John 17.
  
11. List the passages which command us to be like-minded or of the same mind.
  
12. T F We can all walk by the same rule, yet mind different things in religion.



**Application and Discussion:**

1. Are differences of opinion on matters which are not of faith, such as, to wear a tie in worship or not wear a tie in violation of the New Testament's command for saints to be of the same mind and judgment? Explain.
  
2. Describe the several different baptisms practiced among denominations today. Contrast these with the "*one baptism*" of the New Testament church.

**Homework:** Find someone who is part of a denomination and discuss with them the unity of the church found in the New Testament and contrast that with the religious confusion found among denominations today. See if they will not agree it would be better for all "Christians" to be of the same mind and judgment. Discuss how this could be made possible.

## Salvation and the Church

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Does one have to be a member of a church to be saved? Today, many will answer: "I don't think it makes much difference to which church a person belongs or whether one is a member of any church, just so one is sincere." Still others will argue, "The church does not save. It is not important for salvation. One can go to heaven just as well without being a member of the church as he can in the church." In contrast, some believe that you must be a member of the church in the New Testament, if you are saved?

### **What New Testament Christians Do Not Believe...**

First, as New Testament Christians we do not consider ourselves morally better than all those in denominations or even those who consider themselves Christians but are not members of a denomination. Members of the Church of Christ can and do commit some of the same sins as others in and out of the various denominations.

Furthermore, we are not making a claim of superiority over other churches. It is not a claim to be the best denomination. This would come across as extreme prejudice and with self-righteous exclusiveness. Our claim is not like a group of fans at a ball game waving giant hands chanting, "We're number one! We're number one!"

Our desire is not to exclude others from Heaven or from obtaining salvation. We want all our friends and neighbors to have salvation and enter into heaven by obedient faith.

Finally, we by no means are claiming a person has to be a member of a particular denomination in order to be saved. To many minds, the word "church" implies a denomination. One denomination is basically as good as another. We claim that the Church of the New Testament is essential to salvation. Yet at the same time, we claim that no one has to be a member of any denomination. These two statements appear to be self contradicting and irreconcilable.

### **What Do New Testament Christians Believe...**

The fact is, we believe the Lord's Church is not a denomination. It is not made up of various denominations and has nothing to do with the denominations of men. The Lord bled for and built His Church. Never did He die for or promise to build the hundreds of denominations in existence today. This is why we claim that you do not have to be a member of a denomination to be saved, but the saved are in the Church of the Lord.

Although many believe there are many churches or denominations, we believe that there is only one Church and it is not divided up into various denominations. Did the early Christians you read about in the book of Acts belong to various churches or denominations? NO! Why? Because no denominations existed in the first centuries. Adam Clarke, a noted Methodist commentator, wrote in his comments on Col. 4:5:

"...the church of Christ was considered an enclosure; a field, or vineyard, well hedged or walled. Those who were not members of it were considered without; i.e. not under that special protection and defense which the true followers of Christ had...As to be a Christian was essential to the salvation of the soul, so to be in the church of Christ was essential to being a Christian; therefore it was concluded that 'there was no salvation out of the pale of the church.'"

Even a major denomination's creed, *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches*, by Edward T. Hiscox,

states that there was only one church and that it was essential for salvation:

It is most likely that in that Apostolic age when there was but “one Lord, on faith and one baptism,” and no differing denominations existed, the baptism of a convert by that very act constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the riches and privileges of full membership. In that sense, “baptism was the door into the church.” Now it is different...

Therefore, we believe that the Church is essential to salvation. If there is no Church, there can be no salvation. If you are saved you are a part of the Lord’s Church. How?...

### **The Church is Essential to Salvation**

#### ▶ **God Adds the Saved to the Church**

How is it that if one is saved he is a part of the Lord’s Church? God adds the saved to the Church. “*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*” (Acts 2:47, NKJV). Compare with: “*And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved*” (Acts 2:47, NASV).

The word “*added*” here means to “join to, to gather to any company.” Those who were saved became numbered or joined with the apostles. Notice the Church did not do the adding. The Lord is the One that added the saved. Neither did any of these 3000 who were saved on the day of Pentecost join themselves to the Church. God did the saving and God did the joining.

Furthermore, God adds people to the Church as soon as they are saved. He is perfect. Therefore, He makes no mistakes in His record-keeping. No soul is added who is not saved. He does not fail to add anyone who is truly saved. God does not fall weeks or months behind. He does this job daily. To assume that one can be saved out of the Church is to assume that one can be saved without the Lord knowing it. To be saved and join yourself to the Church of your choice is insolent. God does the saving, and God has the right to join to the Church of His choice. You have no choice in the matter. After all, you did not send your son to die for and establish a Church (Acts 20:28).

#### ▶ **The Saved Are in the Church**

On the day of Pentecost when the Church was established, those who were being saved by the Lord did not stand around wondering, “Which church should I join?” They joined no church. The Lord added or joined them to “*the church.*” If one is saved, he is joined by God to the Church, and thus, it is superfluous and nonsensical to argue about which Church he could join. The saved are in the Church. None of the saved are outside of the Church. There was only one Church to be joined to by God. It was God’s choice as to which Church He joined the saved. Therefore, all the saved have been added to the Church of Jesus Christ from the moment they are saved.

No record exists of anybody being saved outside of Church. To be a Christian, to be saved, to be a member of Christ’s Church, are all the same thing. All true believers were added to the Lord by God: “*And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*” (Acts 5:14).

#### ▶ **The Church Does Not Save**

The American Standard Version says God added “*...those that were saved.*” Therefore, the Church does not do the saving. The Church is the saved. It is the recipient of saved, not the dispenser of salvation. The Son of God is the Savior of the Church (Eph. 5:23). If a soul is saved, they are at that point added or joined by God to the Church of the New Testament.

#### ▶ **Baptism Saves and Puts One into the Church**

If God adds a person to “the church” at moment of his salvation, at what point is one saved? God has chosen a very simple mechanism for man to gain entrance into His Church. That mechanism is baptism. On the day of Pentecost, the people interrupted Peter’s preaching to ask, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins’*” (Acts 2:37,38). At the point in time they were baptized their sins were remitted. Remission of sins is the same as being saved.

There is no evidence in the New Testament were one is saved and later baptized in order to join a Church of his choice. Rather one is saved at the moment he is baptized and at that point, he is also added or baptized into the Church. *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and have all been made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Cor. 12:13). No one can be saved unless he is baptized into the Church, that is, the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22,23, 4:3-5).

▶ **The Saved Are Not Added to a Denomination**

Again, God never added anyone to a denomination when they were saved. Not a single denomination was in existence at the time. Any attempt to separate or divide Christians into separate religious denominations was met with strong rebuke by the Lord’s apostles (1 Cor. 1:10-13). None of the apostles ever joined a denomination, created a denomination or even added a single soul to a denomination. God adds all the saved to *“the church”* (Acts 2:47).

▶ **Denominations Do Not Save**

Some of the staunchest supporters of denominations concede that one can be saved outside of a denomination or all the denominations. Since this is so, why have denominations? Division upon division- -what is it good for? In fact, not only are denominations non-essential to salvation, a person cannot be saved in a denomination.

The Church we read about in the New Testament is not a denomination; it is not the sum total of all the denominations; and it has nothing whatever to do with denominations. No denomination is required. No denomination is commanded. No denomination is permitted. Denominationalism is sinful (Jn. 17:20,21; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:3-6; 1:22,23).

### **Salvation In Christ & In the Church**

How to obtain membership in a particular church varies from denomination to denomination. However, to be a part of the Lord’s Church has never changed in two thousand years. God adds the saved to the Church at the same moment they are saved (Acts 2:47). God is not a respecter of persons. It does not matter if you are rich or poor, educated or ignorant, young or old, etc. God will add you to the church when you are saved.

□ **If In Christ, Then In The Church**

At the point one is baptized for the remission of sins he is saved, and God adds the saved to the Church (Acts 2:47). Likewise, when one is baptized he is in Christ and puts on Christ (Gal. 3:27). Paul said the Christians in Thessalonica were in Christ and God and constituted the Church (1 Thess. 1:1). Who could deny that salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10)? Therefore, those enjoying the salvation in Christ are those in the Church of Christ. It is unfeasible to detach salvation from the Church since salvation is in Christ. To be in Christ means to be in the church, then salvation must be in the Church.

Conversely, to be out of the Church means to be out of Christ. Can one be saved outside of the Church? Only if he can be saved apart from Christ for *“He is the Savior of the body”* (Eph. 5:23). How is it possible to be saved without a Savior? Can anyone save themselves?

□ **All Spiritual Blessings Are in Christ**

Where are all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3)? Where are all promises (2 Cor. 1:20)? Where are men accepted (Eph. 1:6)? Where is the blood, the forgiveness of sins found (Eph. 1:6-7)? Where must one be to have an inheritance (Eph. 1: 11)? Where are those saved by grace created (Eph. 2:8-11)? Where is sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2)? Where is redemption (Col. 1:14)? Where is there no condemnation (Rom. 8:1)? Where do we become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17)? Where is the *“prize of the high calling”* (Phil. 3:14)? Where do men die blessed (Rev. 14:13)? If you said “in Christ,” then you are correct. All these things are found in Christ. Apart from Christ, not one of these blessings can be found. The New Testament is a vast catalog of the various spiritual blessings that can be found in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10).

You should take careful note of Ephesians 1:3: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”* The term *“heavenly places”* is found five times in Ephesians and refers to the Church, the glorious bride of Christ. Therefore, all spiritual blessings are found in Christ and in His bride or Church. Can you name one spiritual blessing that is not in Christ? Can you name one spiritual blessing that cannot be found in the

Church? To be in Christ is to be in the Church and to have all these spiritual blessings. Who could now argue that the Church is not important and non-essential to our salvation? Can we be saved without the spiritual blessings found in Christ and His Church?

### **Redemption, Justification, Reconciliation & Sanctification in the Church**

The familiar Biblical terms redemption, justification, reconciliation and sanctification are found throughout the epistles of the New Testament. They have several things in common: 1) they express different aspects of our salvation; 2) they can only be found in Christ; and 3) they are found in His church.

- **Redemption**

The idea behind redemption is “to buy back” or to recover something. To redeem a coupon for its redemption value you must go to the store and use it toward the purchase of the specified item. If it is 50 cents off a particular box of cereal, then you will have redeemed the coupon at the time of purchase.

Lost souls are redeemed “*with the precious blood of Christ*” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Not only did God redeem our souls from sin through the blood of Christ, but Christ purchased the Church with His blood. “*...the church of God which He purchased with His own blood*” (Acts 20:28). The blood of Christ is in the Church, and to claim to be saved out of the Church is to claim to be saved without the Blood of Christ.

- **Justification**

The word *justify* means to deem to be right, and justification is the state of being acquitted of one’s sins. This is not a declaration of innocence, but having done the right things or met the right conditions to be declared right or just before God.

A sinner must be justified to be saved (Rom. 3:23-24). Those whom God has called are justified (Rom. 8:30). The called are in the body (Col. 3:15). The Body is the Church (Col. 1:18). Therefore, the justified are in the Church.

Justification is made possible by the Blood of Christ. “*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*” (Rom. 5:9). The Church is purchased by the Blood of Christ. Thus, those in the church are those who are justified.

- **Reconciliation**

When one is reconciled, he is made friends again with the one he has become estranged from. Spiritually, we have become enemies of God by way of our love of this world and fellowship with darkness (Js. 4:4). Reconciliation means we have been placed back into a state of acceptability with God. We have been made friends again with our Creator.

The one who made the reunion possible is God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Reconciliation is in or by Christ. “*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation*” (2 Cor. 5:18,19). Three things are clearly stated: 1) God is reconciling us unto Himself by Christ; 2) He does not impute the trespasses unto those who are reconciled; and 3) this is done by the word of reconciliation.

Where are those who are reconciled? They are in Christ. But are they in the Church or out? Reconciliation is in the Body of Church: “*and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity*” (Eph. 2:16). It is admitted that man must be reconciled to God to be saved. Reconciliation unto God is in the Body or Church. Therefore, man must be in the Church to be saved.

- **Sanctification**

To be sanctified means to be holy, cleansed, released from sin, and set apart from sin into the service of God. We have been sanctified by the Blood of Christ: “*By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (Heb. 10:10). Christ has sanctified the Bride (His Church), “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and*

without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

How did Christ cleanse or wash the Church? Paul had his sins washed away when he obeyed the instruction of baptism (Acts 22:16). The way one becomes a member of the Church is exactly the same way one is sanctified, born again, reconciled to God, and enters into Christ through having his sins washed away in baptism. Those sanctified are in the Church (1 Cor. 1:2). Being in the Church means being sanctified. Can one be saved outside the Church? Can people be saved without sanctification?

Akin to the term *sanctified* is the word *saint*. When a sinner is sanctified he becomes a saint. The church is made up of saints, not alien sinners. Consider the significance of the following chart:

Saints	Church
“The saints...at Ephesus” Eph. 1:1	“The church of Ephesus” Rev. 2:1
“The saints...at Philippi” Phil. 1:1	“no church...but ye only” Phil. 4:15
“Thy saints at Jerusalem” Ac. 9:13	“The church...at Jerusalem” Ac. 8:1
“Churches of the Saints” 1 Cor. 14:33	“Churches of Christ” Rom. 16:16

The saints, the individually sanctified ones, comprise the Church of Christ in the specified location.

Christ sanctified, or set apart, the Church. But just what did He sanctify? A denomination? No; He sanctified the Church we read about in the New Testament, the one He bled and died for and the one He built.

### Conclusion

At this point, you may still be asking, “Where is the passage that says one must be a member of the Church of Christ to be saved?” It is found in Ephesians 5:23: “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” Again, “the body” is the Church. To be saved outside the Church is to be saved without a Savior. Is being a part of the Church essential to your soul’s salvation? Absolutely!

### Questions:

1. What do New Testament Christians NOT believe with regard to salvation and the church?
2. What did the denominational preacher, Adam Clarke, and Hiscox Baptist Manual say in regard to the New Testament church?
3. How does one become a member of the church universal? In contrast, how does one become a member of a local congregation?
4. Can members of a church be saved without a Savior? Explain.

5. Define "*heavenly places*" as used in Ephesians?
6. Where can all the spiritual blessings of Christ be found?
7. What does "redemption" mean and where is it found?
8. What does "redemption" mean and where is it found?
9. What does "reconciliation" mean and where is it found?
10. What does "sanctification" mean and where is it found?
11. Can one be a saint without being sanctified? Explain. Where are the saints found in the New Testament?
12. Where is the passage that says one must be a member of the Church of Christ to be saved?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. Why is it that so many are offended and reject the idea someone has to be in the church to be saved?
2. Must a Christian maintain membership in the Lord's church to be to continue to be one of the saved on earth and safe in Christ? Explain.

**Homework:** Ask a member of a denomination if their church has a Savior. Quote to them Ephesians 5:23. Study it together.

## Membership in the Church

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In the previous lesson it was demonstrated from the Scriptures that the church is essential for salvation. Christ is the Savior of the Body (Eph. 5:23). The saved are added to the church by God (Acts 2:47). One is baptized into the body which is the church (1 Cor. 12:12f). However, when one is saved he is not automatically added to a local congregation of believers but to the church universal. After all, when Philip baptized the Ethiopian, this new convert was part of the universal church but had not joined a local congregation. At the time of baptism for the remission of sins one is added by God to the church universal, but after he is saved must join himself to a local church.

Many do not believe church membership is necessary. "Can a person be a good Christian or Jew if he or she doesn't attend church or synagogue? Seven out of 10 of the church segment, and eight persons in 10 of the unchurched, answer in the affirmative" (The Unchurched American [Princeton Religion Research Center], p.9).

Is the local church important to the plan of God? Is membership in the church essential for one to be pleasing to God? Some say that there is no need to be an active member in the local group. They view local church membership from a denominational point of view as one chooses to join "religious club." Still some state, "we never read in the New Testament of anyone being a 'member of the church.' The disciples were NOT 'members of the church,'" (The Examiner, Vol. I, p. 27). Yet Paul wrong to the church at Corinth, "*now you are the body of Christ, and members individually*" (1 Cor. 12:27). The Revised Standard Version reads, "*individually members of it.*"

### **New Testament Examples of Local Church Membership**

#### ► **Paul Joined Himself to the Jerusalem Church**

After Saul of Tarsus was converted he eventually returned to Jerusalem and "*he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out*" (Acts 9:26-28).

To understand this situation better consider some background to the text. After Saul of Tarsus was converted (Acts 9), he preached in Damascus (Acts 9:19-22), went away into Arabia (Gal. 1:17), returned to Damascus (Gal. 1:17), and finally after three years went up to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18).

After arriving at Jerusalem Paul attempted to identify himself with them. He actually made an open effort at having himself united in the openly with the church at Jerusalem. For the former persecutor of the church it was a brave act for the church was then "*everywhere spoken against*" (Acts 28:22).

Paul's intended purpose was to become a part of the local group of believers who form the congregation at Jerusalem. Barnes' Notes explains, "he attempted, he endeavored. To become connected with them as their fellow Christian." Campbell in his *Commentary on Acts* says Paul's intention was to "attach himself."

His action appears to be immediate. He did not delay long in seeking to be identified with the saints and to begin working with them. Today, Christians will move to a new location and wait several months to years before identifying themselves with a particular local church.

It was Saul who took the initiative in this matter. He did not wait for others to approach him. His infinitive "to join" conveys Paul's need to work, fellowship, and worship with fellow Christians. He did more than just show up and sit in a pew. Showing up and participating does not automatically make one a member of a particular congregation.



The leadership (apostles) of the Jerusalem did not just accept Paul without evidence. Barnabas presented to them the proof that Paul was indeed a faithful Christian. Brethren are wise to ask a few questions of those who come desiring to place membership. Was this Saul of Tarsus the Pharisee seeking to persecute the flock or was this Paul the apostle striving to work with the faithful?

As soon as Paul was a part of that congregation, he got actively involved in the work that was being done. *"He was with them coming in and going out"* (Acts 9:26-28).

► **Paul and Barnabas at Antioch**

Though the phrase "placing membership" is not found in the text, the concept of identifying with a local congregation is justified by the text. Paul and Barnabas were identified with the church at Antioch. *"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul"* (Acts 13:1). Barnabas and Saul were among those teachers *"in the church"* at Antioch. Thus, they must have identified with the local church. Luke tells us that they assembled with the church there for a whole year (Acts 11:25-26).

► **Apollos at Achaia**

Apollos sought to be received by the brethren in Achaia. *"And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace"* (Acts 18:27). Before he left the local brethren at Corinth determined is essential to write and encourage the brethren in Achaia to receive him.

► **Pheobe in the Church at Cenchrea**

Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome, *"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, 2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also"* (Rom. 16:1,2). Paul recommends that the church in Rome receive Phoebe. Some who identify themselves wish to bring a letter of commendation from a faithful church where they were formerly members. Paul alludes to such a practice (2 Corinthians 3:1),

### **Requisites for Local Church Membership**

First, no one can be a member of a local congregation without first being saved from their sins. God has given several logical steps that are taken by a sinner which results in their salvation. He must hear the Gospel message. *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). Next, he must believe the message he has heard about God and the sending of His Son to die for all mankind. *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). Having believed that Jesus is the Son of God he must repent or turn away from sin and turn back to God (Acts 2:38). After Peter accused the Jews in a sermon at Pentecost of killing the Son of God, they asked what should they do. Peter answered, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). Furthermore they will need to have confessed Christ verbally and publically. *"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"* (Rom. 10:9,10). Finally, one is saved at the point of baptism when their sins are washed away. God sent Ananias to tell Paul what he must do to be saved. Ananias told Paul, *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). On the day of Pentecost *"those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:41,47).

The saved must chose to join himself to a local congregation of Christ. Membership in a local church is obtained by mutual consent; not by baptism. Merely worshiping with a group does not necessarily indicate a desire to belong or a willingness to be accepted as a member or join in the work. There are different ways to make this desire known. He can go forward at the selected time before the gathered assembly to express his desire. Present a letter with an accompanied letter from a

congregation where he was previously a member. He can speak with elders or leadership of the congregation.

The local congregation upon receiving the request either accepts and rejects. False brethren and teachers as well as brethren refusing to repent of their sinfulness are often rejected. It is not uncommon for individuals desire to be a member of a local New Testament church without first becoming a New Testament Christian. This prerequisite needs to be explored before just accepting one as a faithful member of the body of Christ.

When one joins a local congregation he has agreed to work with in fellowship and peaceful unity.

The New Testament does not support the idea of dual membership. That is, membership in more than one local congregation. One cannot be a sheep under the local elders in one place and also be accountable before the shepherds of another flock. When Paul moved from Damascus to Jerusalem he did not leave his membership at Damascus or Arabia (Acts 9:26-29). Each church is autonomous. This being the case, just because one is a member of one local church does not make him a member of another local church also. And there is no such thing as membership at large.

### **Local Church membership is Necessary to Have...**

- **A Local Church**

Far too many Christians fail to understand the necessity of membership in a local congregation. Some think it is optional. However, without local church membership no local congregation could ever exist. The church is a family or household of God, but if there are not local members of the family there cannot be a local household of God. The church is to be lead by shepherds/elders of the flock. If there were no local sheep there can be no flock for the shepherds to tend to feed.

As soon as the Lord's church was established, the first citizens of the kingdom formed a local congregation at Jerusalem. They worshiped together on a permanent basis and had a treasury through which they did a common work (Acts 2:44-46). As Luke put it, "they continued steadfastly" (Acts 2:42).

Examples of many other local congregations are found throughout the New Testament:

- ◆ Rom. 16:16 - *The churches of Christ salute you.*
- ◆ 1 Cor. 1:2 - *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth.*
- ◆ 2 Cor. 1:1 - *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth.*
- ◆ 2 Cor. 8:1 - *The churches of Macedonia.*
- ◆ 1 Cor. 14:23 - *If therefore the whole church be come together in one place.*
- ◆ Gal. 1:2 - *Unto the churches of Galatia.*
- ◆ 2 Thes. 1:1 - *Unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- ◆ Rev. 1:11 - *Send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.*

Just as a body cannot exist or function without its individual members, a local congregation cannot function without members working together. To argue that local church membership is not essential is to do away with the local church.

- **Remain Faithful**

Once a Christian has placed membership at a local congregation they need to be faithful. The early Christians were faithful and committed to the work. "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42). The ultimate reward for faithfulness is a crown of life after this life is over. "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10).

- **Faithful Attendance**

Just as it was with Adam in the Garden it is not good for a Christian to be alone. A major part of being faithful is the good habit of faithful attendance by assembling with the saints. "*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day*

*approaching*" (Heb. 10:24,25). Attendance is where Christians can provoke one another to love and good works. God created the church so that we would have others to worship with and encourage one another. If one member does not have to attend than no member has to attend. If no one attends there can be no local congregation of believers.

- **Worship in Spirit and in Truth**

When Christians assemble for worship they must be true worshipers - those whom God is seeking to worship Him. Who are the true worshipers? *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23,24). True worshipers will participate in the Divinely designed activities as they are commanded in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:23-25). On the first day of every week they will come together to observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). It is a corporate act to be down *"when ye come together. . . into one place"* (1 Cor. 11:20). Paul also commanded the local church at Corinth: *"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper"* (1 Cor. 16:1f). This is in harmony with the instructions Paul gave to other churches. The same obligation here was upon the members at Corinth: *"every one of you."* They will sing spiritual songs to one another. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* (Col. 3:16). They will listen to God's Word as it is preached to them. *"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight"* (Acts 20:7). Finally, they will pray to God (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15).

- **Share the Word With the Lost**

New Testament Christians cannot expect the non-believers to spread the word of God inasmuch as they do not believe it; we cannot expect those who refuse to obey the word of God to teach the world. The immoral are not going to accomplish the work given to the church. The denominationalists are not going to teach God's plan of salvation.

Christians were saved so they could spread the Good News of Salvation to others. Paul consider himself to be a debtor who had to pay forward by preaching to others. Paul commended the church at Thessalonica for spreading the Word of God. *"And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything"* (1 Thess. 1:6-8).

- **Fellowship With One Another**

There are some thirty-seven or thirty-eight "one another" commandments in the New Testament The phrase "one another" denotes a joint participation of one Christian with another Christian. These are commandments which require one to render something beneficial to another. The local congregation affords the Christian the perfect place to fulfill many of these commandments.

- John 13:34 - love one another
- Romans 12:16 - be of the same mind toward one another
- Romans 14:19 - building up of one another
- Romans 15:7 - accept one another
- Galatians 5:13 - serve one another
- Galatians 6:2 - bear one another's burdens
- Ephesians 4:25 - members of one another
- Ephesians 4:32 - be kind to one another
- Ephesians 5:21 - be subject to one another
- Hebrews 10:24 -stimulate one another
- James 5:16 - confess your sins to one another and pray for one another
- 1 Peter 4:9 - be hospitable to one another

Being a church member means he has fellowship with the saints. (Phil. 2:1-7). Fellowship means “joint participation in spiritual activities. It is a “tacit agreement to work with them and fully support every scriptural endeavor of the church. One makes that compact by becoming a member of a local congregation.” Church membership involves two things - blessings and responsibilities. Some want all the blessings of membership without any of the responsibilities.

- **Edification of Saints**

Worshiping God with fellow saints is only a part of why Christians need to be members of a local congregation. Paul tells us that a congregation works like a body where the various parts are necessary in order for the whole body to live, grow and function. God gave various members to the body (church) *“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love”* (Eph. 4:12,16).

### **Conclusion**

Various denominations and world religions have a variety of expectations from their members. Mormons for example who take part in a ritual ceremony are to wear sacred underwear. The Latter Day Saints also encourage members to be baptized for dead relatives. Jaintist Digambaras forsake clothing as a form of asceticism. And the Jehovah Witnesses discourage members from having birthday parties and blood transfusions. When one becomes a member of a local Church of Christ what is expected? They should worship God together in spirit and truth, attend services for the congregation faithfully, have fellowship in the word with one another, edify each other, share the Word with the lost souls around them, and remain faithful.

God never intended for a Christian to have to go it alone. Everyone needs someone to help them in their journey in this life toward eternal life. Based upon the duties demanded of each individual Christians in the passages above it would be impossible for one to make it to heaven without being a part of a local congregation.

"Can I be a Christian without joining the local church?" Answer: Yes, it is as possible as being:

- A student who will not go to school.
- A soldier who will not join an army.
- A citizen who does not pay taxes or vote.
- A salesman with no customers.
- An explorer with no base camp.
- A seaman on a ship without a crew.
- A business man on a deserted island.
- An author without readers.
- A tuba player without an orchestra.
- A parent without a family.
- A football player without a team.
- A politician who is a hermit.
- A scientist who does not share his findings.
- A bee without a hive.

- Robert G. Lee, *Sermonic Library*, pp. 115-16.

### **Questions:**

1. Show from the scriptures that there is such a thing of membership in a local church.

2. What did Paul desire to do when he came to Jerusalem after his baptism into Christ? How did the local church respond? What did Barnabas do?
  
3. What does it mean when it was said of Paul: *"He was with them coming in and going out"* at Jerusalem?
  
4. What did the church at Ephesus do for Apollos when he decided to leave them and go to Ephesus?
  
5. Who was Pheobe and what did Paul do for her?
  
6. What is the first thing necessary before one can place membership in a local congregation?
  
7. T F According to the New Testament a Christians can scripturally have membership in multiple congregations.
  
8. Can there be such a thing as a local congregation without church membership? Explain.
  
9. What does one's attendance do for other Christians of a congregation?
  
10. What two worship activities are to be done as a congregation on the first day of the week?
  
11. Why did Paul commend the congregation at Thessalonica?

12. Define the term "fellowship" as used in the New Testament?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. How would letters of commendation sent from a former congregation where one was a member to that member's new local church be of benefit to all parties?

2. Can all or any of the "one another" commandments be consistently fulfilled by a lone Christian who is not a member of any congregation? Explain.

**Homework:** Find a lone Christian who is not a member of a local church and impress them with the need to be a part of one.

## Work of the Church

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There was a reason why Christ died and bought the church with His own blood (Ac. 20:28). The church was part of God's eternal purpose for a reason (Eph. 3:10,11; 1 Cor. 2:7). In Ephesians 3:21 is found the real purpose for the church: *"unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen."* The mission or purpose of the church is to glorify the Lord. But how is the church to glorify Him?

Looking at the denominations around the country one might think the church was created as a social association with physical and secular goals instead of spiritual objectives. They have their ball teams, ski trips, ice cream socials, etc. Yet all such things are not glorifying to God. The New Testament churches glorified God by doing their divine missions of benevolence, edification, and evangelism.

One of the best ways to commit a list to memory is by use of an acronym. In this case we form the word "BEE". The letters of B.E.E. stand for Benevolence, Edification, and Evangelism. The local church is to be busy as a BEE in its divine mission.

### **B - Benevolence**

God in His infinite wisdom saw that it was fitting for His household (Eph. 2:19) to care for the physical as well as spiritual needs of His sons and daughters.

Although the church has the responsibility of caring for its members, the individual Christian has a broader duty than that of the church. In Galatians 6:1-10 the individual Christian is commanded by Paul, *"as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men"* (Gal. 6:10). Benevolence is commanded only as the opportunity arises. Christians have the responsibility of benevolence to every man as they see their needs and are able to help. On Gal. 6:10, Donald Campbell, Th.D of the Dallas Theological Seminary says: *"this passage then speaks clearly about Christian social responsibility, but it should be noted that it is addressed to individual believers. The church is not an agency for social work, though individual Christians are charged to minister in this way as they are able and have opportunity (cf. Rom. 12:17-21)"* (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 610).

On the other hand, the church is somewhat limited in the work of benevolence. The New Testament church provided only for its members:

- *"Their widows were neglected"* (Ac. 6:2)
- *"send relief unto the brethren"* ( Ac. 11:27-30)
- *"ministering unto the saints"* (Rom. 15:25)
- *"a certain contribution for the poor among the saints"* (Rom. 15:26)

and also see I Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 8-9. The church is even limited in its benevolent work for its own saints. *"Honor widows that are widows indeed...If any woman that believeth hath widows, let her relieve them, and let not the church be burdened; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed"* (1 Tim. 5:3,16). Truly, the church is limited in its work in the field of benevolence, but for individual Christians it is a wide open field.

There is a New Testament example of a church assisting its members (Ac. 6:1-3). One church assisting other churches who have needy saints whom they do not have the means to assist (Ac. 11:27-30). And many churches assisting another church (Rom. 15:25-28). A church cannot receive relief from another church or churches unless it has needy saints it cannot assist. A local church selected its own messengers to take their contribution to others (1 Cor. 16:3; Ac. 11:30). During his third missionary

journey Paul was a messenger taking relief money to the saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26ff). Moses warned, "*build all things according to the pattern*" (Heb. 8:5). The church must follow the divine pattern for its work in benevolence.

In the area of benevolence the church may have the responsibility of paying for a member's medical bills, but does this give the church a right to build and staff medical facilities? Some answer this "yes" because Jesus said, "*They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick*" (Mt. 9:12). Though Christ healed many in order for others to believe, He was mainly concerned with man's spiritual health. Also, the church's main concern is for those of this world who are spiritually sick. It has not been authorized to build hospitals.

An area in which churches abuse the work of benevolence is by building and maintaining homes for orphans, the aged (widows), and unwed mothers. Although the church may be called by opportunity to help pay the bills for the a house or home the homeless saint and their dependant children, whether they be orphans, aged or unwed mothers, it has not been given the responsibility or authority to provide homes for all the world - opportunity or no opportunity. Orphan homes are not even the best way to care for the orphans of this world. Family closeness provides more than any orphanage could ever hope to provide for a child. "Family closeness provides the emotional support conducive to normal development, and good role models for adult responsibility; so they learn adult roles" (J. T. Landis, *Building a Successful Marriage*, pp. 503, 504). Therefore, the orphans of this world should be adopted by those who profess to be Christians, not locked away in an orphanage by the church. Likewise, the family is to care for the aged (1 Tim. 5:3,16). The best way to deal with unwed mothers is not through benevolence but by preaching out against fornication.

Some firmly assert that "since the church is composed of individuals, the church can do anything the individual can do." A member of the local church can owe and/or operate a business, can the church? What about marriage, voting, vacations, etc.? This opens the floodgate to the church being involved in just about anything imaginable. The Bible shows there is a clear distinction between what the individual can do and the local church can do in the realm of discipline (Matt. 18:15-17). Individual Christians can support any widow while the church can only support widows "*indeed*" (1 Tim. 5:16). The individual Christian is to assist all or any widow and orphan just as he is responsible for keep "*himself unspotted from the world*" (James 1:27).

The local congregation or congregations are sufficient in taking care of the needy saints. The use of human institutions or a sponsoring church destroys the all-sufficiency and autonomy of the local church. In the early churches of the New Testament there was never another organization or congregation which was used to assist them in sending aid from one church to a another church to support the needy saints and the needy of this world..

Some are confused as to what is the purpose of benevolence. They will argue that it is a means to spread the Gospel to the lost while assisting them with their physical needs. Benevolence is the outcome of Kingdom of Heaven not the agency used to promote the grow of the church. It is the Gospel which is the power of salvation not food and clothing (Rom. 1:16)..

The real purposes behind assisting needy saints was for the joy and pleasure of helping others in need (2 Cor. 8:3); as a demonstration of self-consecration (8:3-5); to show proof of brotherly-love (8:8,24); to show gratitude to God (8:9); to fulfill a commitment made to others (8:10,11); to achieve and maintain equality among the brethren (8:13,14); to honor a spiritual debt (Rom. 15:26,27); to receive God's blessings (2 Cor. 9:8; Acts 2:47; 4:33; 6:7); to be all-sufficient in good deeds (2 Cor. 8:8); and to glorify God (2 Cor. 8:12,15).

As can be seen the church is not a world-wide benevolent organization. It discharges this duty of benevolence only when there are needy saints. Why? Because the church is a spiritual organization with a spiritual Head and headquarters, therefore it has a spiritual goal: to support and spread the truth. The work of spreading the Gospel is of greater importance to the church, the physical needs even among the saints is secondary (Ac. 6:2,3; Rom. 15:27).

## **E - Edification**

The work of edification is part of the church's mission. To edify is "to build up". Therefore,



"edification is the promotion of spiritual growth" (Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 348).

It is true that the church has been fully enabled to do the work God as chosen for it. In Ephesians 4:8,11, Christ gave gifts to *"each one of us"* that the church may be filled. He gave to His people apostles and prophets who laid down the foundation work for the church and we have them today in the New Testament (Eph. 3:3-5). Also, Christ gave the church evangelists who preach the glad tidings, pastors who tend to the needs of the local church (Ac. 20:17,28; 14:23), and teachers who instruct the church in the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:2). Pastors or elders are to oversee the local flock's edification. *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood"* (Ac. 20:28). These men must be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2) and to be an example or pattern of righteousness before the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Why all these gifts? *"For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ"* (Eph. 4:12). Notice the end result of these gifts to the church: *"from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love"* (Eph. 4:16).

This work of edification is also the work of each individual Christian as well as the church, *"let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together...but exhorting one another"* (Heb. 10:24,25). *"Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ"* (Gal. 6:1,2).

The church collectively is instructed to edify. *"When you assemble...let all things be done for edification"* (1 Cor. 14:16). Whenever the church comes together to worship God all the things that are done must be for the building up of one another. If there are things done in the assembly that do not edify, then such are not acceptable in worship. By singing in worship the saints *"let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* (Col. 3:15). By praying together the saints intercede for the needs of each other. Preaching will *"convince, rebuke, exhort"* the brethren (2 Tim. 4:2). It has the Word of God *"which is able to build you up"* (Ac. 20:32). As the saints partake of the Lord's Supper together they *"proclaim the Lord's death till He comes"* (1 Cor. 11:26). Giving is for funds to support the preaching and teaching of the Gospel.

The church is quite self-sufficient in carrying out the work of edification. It has members who are workers and who give liberally to help the church fulfill this mission. No local congregation or congregations has a need to utilize outside organizations to educate its members or develop elders, preachers, and teachers for them.

## **E - Evangelism**

Christ commanded His apostles, *"go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Mt. 28:19,20, KJV). The apostles were given the Great Commission by the Lord (Mark. 16:15; Matt. 28:18-20). No local congregation is able to share the Gospel with the who world. However, the mystery of Christ is to *"be make known through the church"* (Eph. 3:10). It is to be *"the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is to be the foundation and support of the mystery. The early church was busy sending forth messengers of the Gospel. Paul *"robbed other churches, taking wages of them that (he) might minister unto"* the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:8). The church at Phillipi was such a church (Phil. 4:15).

The scriptures attest to the fact that evangelism is both the work of the church and individual Christians. The church at Thessalonica *"sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything,"* (1 Th. 1:8). Paul was thankful to God for the Phillipian's *"fellowship in furtherance of the gospel,"* (Phil. 1:5).

The New Testament churches and Christians were sufficiently able to carry out the mission of teaching the lost. Never do you read about a man-made missionary society used by the early Christians to spread the Word. No sponsoring church was ever utilized to do the work of sounding *“forth the word of the Lord”* for any other congregation.

E - Endurance to Achieve Goal  
V - Value of the Lost Soul  
A - Able to Gospel to Teach  
N - Now's the Time to Reach  
G - Gospel Must Be Taught  
E - Enthusiasm Can Be Caught  
L - Love Shows We Care  
I - Individuals Must Share  
S - Salvation From Sin  
M - Mobilize Other Men

### **Conclusion**

The church is the greatest organization or kingdom ever established on earth. It exists in order to render glory to God and Christ. The church glorifies God by fulfilling its divine missions of benevolence, edification, and evangelism.

When a man fails to do his work on the job, does his work in the wrong manner or does things in which he is not to do, he will be fired if such continues. The same holds true for any church that fails to evangelize, edify, and be benevolent. A church that is busy doing other things it has no authority to do is not glorifying God. And finally, a church that unscripturally performs its divine missions of benevolence, edification or evangelism will cease to be the glorifying church of Christ. So let the church put all its efforts into truly glorifying God and nothing more.).

### **Questions:**

1. What is the purpose of the church according to Ephesians 3:21?
  - a. evangelism
  - b. edification
  - c. benevolence
  - d. glorify God
  - e. all the above
2. Explain the different responsibilities the individual Christian has in contrast to the duty of the local church in the realm of benevolence.
3. Which widows can a local church add to its "roll" of those who it may assist on an on-going basis?
4. What if a congregation has needy saints whom they cannot assist, what is the Bible pattern on how this is to be addressed?

5. T F Because a congregation may assist a needy saint with hospital bills this proves the church(es) are authorized to build and maintain hospitals.
6. T F Orphan homes are not even the best way to care for the orphans of this world.
7. Show from the scriptures that the church cannot do anything its members are either commanded or permitted to do?
8. T F The use of human institutions or a sponsoring church destroys the all-sufficiency and autonomy of the local church.
9. What is the God-given means to bring salvation to the lost?
10. What is "edification"?
11. What gifts did God give the New Testament church for its edification?
12. How were local congregations in the New Testament involved in spreading the Gospel to the lost in the first century?
13. T F The local churches of the New Testament used sponsoring churches to do the work of sounding "forth the word of the Lord" to the lost.

**Application and Discussion:**

1. Explain how the five acts of worship help edify you.
2. Could the church (as it is designed by God) ever be able to physically assist of all the needy or poor people of this world? Explain.

**Homework:** Consider this week the sort of things which could be implemented to assist a congregation in being more effective in edifying the members.

## Worship of the Church - Part One

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Who is right? Some use instruments of music others only sing. Some take the Lord's Supper the first day of every week while others partake of it once a year. In some denominations they gather for worship on Sunday while others gather on Saturday. To arrive at an answer we must first of all understand what is worship, then investigate whether it matters to God how one worships and finally determine how we can know our worship is pleasing to God?

Worship involves our expression of praise and reverence toward God. What ways can I express myself in worship? Any way I want to? Can I play checkers and call it worship? Building a dog house and call it worship?

### What Is Worship?

An article in the Dec. 1995 issue of Look Magazine, the article quoted HaKeem Olajuwon as saying that he considers the game of basketball, "an act of worship." Olajuwon is a Muslim. However, it is not just Muslims who have this broad view of the meaning of worship, Mike Root in his book, *Unbroken Bread* wrote: "Worship is a life given in obedience to God. It's not a when or where proposition, but a what. It's what we are. You can't go to it or leave it, dress for it or from it, and you can't start it or stop it... it doesn't open and close with a prayer, and it doesn't have human leader or a special day" (115).

The concept of worship can be a challenge to define. One person might understand worship to mean an attitude while another might understand it to be an act. Some may view worship as so vague that it defies definition. Some understand it so subjectively that it can mean anything one wants it to mean. After defining several Greek verbs translated "worship" in the New Testament, W. E. Vine's wrote, "the worship of God is nowhere openly defined in Scripture. A consideration of the above verbs shows that it is not confined to praise; broadly it may be regarded as the direct acknowledgment to God, of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by deed done in such acknowledgment" (An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words). About ten terms in Greek are translated "worship" in the King James Version. Some of these are defined below.

- proskuneo, the most frequent word rendered worship (pros, toward) and kuneo (to kiss); "to kiss the hand." Those who would approach royalty would show reverence by kissing the hand of their superior.
- sebo; to revere
- sebazomai; to honor
- latreuo; from latris (a hired servant); to serve

Worship in the Bible involves 1) activity on the part of the one showing worship. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines worship as: "act of paying divine honors to a deity; religious reverence or homage." It is something which one person does and another person or object or god receives; 2) an act which is done voluntarily; 3) emotions or the response of the heart. Worship on the one hand involves the inner attitude of the worshiper (proskuneo) and on the other hand the external acts he does in worship (latreuo). 4) Finally, worship involves what can be both taught and learned.

Worship can take place in private. Jesus was in Gethsemane in a garden, a very personal and private setting when He worshiped God on the night He was betrayed (Mt. 26:36f). Jesus Himself often received worship from others in a private settings. A man worshiped Jesus when asking for his daughter

to be healed (Matthew 9:18). Peter was praying and worshiping on a housetop when he received a vision (Acts 10:9). Prayer and singing are often acts of personal and private worship which can be done by the individual Christian (Js. 5:13).

Worship can take place in a corporate setting. Sometimes small-group gatherings are shown in the New Testament to engage in worship. Part of the church at Jerusalem gathered in the home of Mary, the mother of Mark, for a prayer meeting when Peter was in prison (Acts 12:12). While in stocks in the inner prison at Philippi Paul and Silas were praying and singing at midnight (Acts 16:25). Paul's tearful departure from the elders at Ephesus may be considered another example of this type of corporate worship (Acts 20:36).

Furthermore, worship can be congregational, that is, worship participated in by the members of a congregation during a formal assembly. All local congregations must meet together on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:18-20; Acts 20:7). At such a time the members are commanded to give of their means upon the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1,2). The church at Corinth had such congregational assemblies. Worship during these assemblies were given guidelines by the apostle Paul. *"If therefore the whole church should assemble together...when you assemble, ...but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; ...Let the women keep silent in the churches"* (1 Cor. 14:23,26,28,34).

It has been reasoned by some, as noted above, that just about anything someone does can be called "worship." Is everything a believer does worship to God? After all, some terms for worship can be defined as "service," all Christians are to serve God. So is all the service rendered is worship to God? It may be true that all worship is service to God, but not all service to God is worship. Worship is giving God honor and praise. Service is giving God obedience. Part of our service to God is our worship to Him, but all service is not worship. For example, consider Abraham's command to go to a certain mountain and offer up his only son of promise. Abraham knew there was a difference between just serving or obeying God and worshiping Him when he *"said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you'"* (Gen. 22:5). When they traveled three days to the mountain this was obedient service to God, but it was not worship.

Three friends of Daniel were brought before the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar for not worshiping the golden image he had set up. In their response they made a distinction between the act of serving and worshiping this golden image. They told the king, *"let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up"* (Daniel 3:18).

Worship is a distinctive action reserved for God alone. It was not a vague concept that permeated a person's life. Washing dishes is not worshiping God. Watching TV is not worshiping God. Playing the guitar is not worshiping God. Worship is a specification which involved detailed descriptions of particular actions based on commands from God. God told Moses to *"come up to the Lord ... and worship from afar"* (Ex. 24:1). After the death of his son, David *"went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house ..."* (2 Sam. 12:20). The wise men came to Bethlehem to worship Jesus (Matt. 2:2) and when they found him, they *"fell down and worshiped Him"* (Matt. 2:11). The Ethiopian eunuch came to Jerusalem *"to worship"* (Acts 8:27ff). Paul told Felix that he went up to Jerusalem *"to worship"* (Acts 24:10ff). John *"fell at his feet to worship"* the angel (Rev. 19:10; 22:8). The Bible clearly teaches that worship has a beginning point (Matt. 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 28:9,17; Mark 5:6; John 9:38; Heb. 11:21) and an ending point (Luke 24:52) and that worship does involve a "when" and a "where" (John 12:20; Acts 8:27; 24:11) AND A HOW TO (Jn. 4:23). Worship by the patriarchs or by priests involved specific acts, done in specific ways, at a specific time, at a specific place, and by specific people. It cannot be done accidentally or unintentionally.

So what is worship? Worship is something a man does that is giving praise and honor to God. Worship is limited to things that God has told man to do to worship Him. Moreover, worship requires a proper attitude by man towards God while doing what God has directed. Therefore, everything a Christian does in serving God in life cannot be considered worship.

### **Does God Even Care How I Worship Him?**

The Bible says YES. Yes, God does care how we worship Him. Consider just a few examples:

- ▶ Cain and Abel, Gen. 4:1-8
- ▶ The Golden Calf, Ex. 32
- ▶ Nabad and Abihu, Lev. 11:1-3
- ▶ King Saul, 1 Sam. 15
- ▶ King Jeroboam, 1 Kings 12:28-33
- ▶ King Uzziah, 2 Chron. 26:4; 16-21
- ▶ Snake Worship, 2 Kings 18:4

God not only rejected their worship, but in some cases severely punished the worshipers for failing to worship Him properly.

Since God does care how we worship Him, how can we learn what to do to worship Him? What is the standard for determining acceptable worship?

Is it what I like? No. I am trying to worship God, not myself. If I were to worship myself then what we did in worship would be determined upon my own personal likes and dislikes. When men make up their own worship it invariably involves things that please them, such as, dancing, sex, human sacrifice of their enemies, beautiful idols, etc. If what one likes determines right and wrong in worship than anything goes? Because we all have different likes and dislikes. Maybe when it comes to worship we should consider what God likes. After all, He is the One we are worshipping.

Is the standard of worship anything that makes me feel good? Worship does involve emotions. These feelings are real, but they do not determine what is right. There has been several times in my life that I felt I was so very, very right. Then I read God's Word and discovered that I was so very, very wrong. Feelings do not determine truth. If someone called you up and told you that your best friend had just been killed in a car accident you would feel great sorrow. However, an hour later your best friend rings your door bell and it is discovered that he or she is all right. There had been a mistake made. The information about their death was wrong. This does not mean your feelings were not genuine or sincere. It means your feelings cannot determine what is true. Your feelings of loss did not prove that your friend was dead. Feeling that your worship is okay with God does not make it so.

If it is not what we like or what feels right to us, then what is the standard of acceptable worship. Jesus said, *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4:23,24). God is seek worshipers of just the right type. They are those who worship in both spirit and truth. Where does truth come from. In a prayer to the Father Jesus said, *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth"* (Jn. 17:17). By studying the Bible I can learn to worship God in Truth. God helps me to become the kind of *"true worshiper"* that He is *"seeking ...to worship Him"*.

When we study the Bible we learn that there are things God wants us to do in worship unto Him. One of these is to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:18ff). He tells when: On the first day of the week. He tells us where: when the congregation is gathered together. He tells us what to use: fruit of the vine and unleavened bread. This is the Truth. I know because God's Word told me so. If I do these things God will be pleased with my worship.

Now lets say that I decided to improve upon God's plan and let my wisdom, likes, and feelings change the Lord's Supper. First, I am going to change the menu from fruit of the vine to unleavened bread to what I like: cheeseburgers and Dr. Pepper. Furthermore, I feel that God would be pleased with me if I just partake of it at home by myself every day. This way I can feel better about my worship. If I did this, would I be worshiping in spirit and in truth? Would I be worshipping God or myself? Is God seeking such to worship Him? The answers should be clear.

So whether it is a concern about instrumental music in worship, women preachers, buildings, fellowship halls, microphones or restrooms, I must remember that it is God who tells us how we are to worship. So, again we ask: Who is Right? Answer: God is Right. And if I want to be right then I had better be right with God. To do so all I have to do is keep studying the Word of Truth and by the grace of God I will learn what He wants and humble myself in obedient worship unto Him.

### **True Worship Involves...**

Jesus spoke of God seeking a specific type of worshiper to worship Him. The kind of worshiper God wants is a "true worshiper." If there are true worshipers than there must be false or untrue or erroneous worshipers. In other words there are those who are the right kind of worshipers whom God is looking for and those who are the wrong kind of worshipers. What does it take to be the right kind of worshiper?

#### ■ **The Right Place - In Christ**

Where is the right place to worship? For Muslims, Mecca is the ultimate location for worship and the direction they must face when praying. For the Jews, God appointed first the Tabernacle and the Temple at Jerusalem. The Samaritans believed the correct location was that of the temple ruins upon Mount Gerizim on which God had placed a blessing (Dt. 11:29). The Samaritan woman wanted to know where people should worship. She said to Jesus, "*Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship*" (John 4:19-20). Jesus' answered, "*Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John 4:21-24). The hour Jesus was referring to was the time of His kingdom, the church. A Christian's worship is not confined to physical place. Geographical location is not bound upon Christians. Early disciples met down by the riverside (Acts 16:13); in a prison (Acts 16:15); in a three story building (Acts 20); in the temple (Acts 3); in a synagogue; in their own homes (Rom. 16:1-3); etc.

The only place required of a true worshiper of God today is that he be in Christ. This is a spiritual location which is not subject to the limitations of three-dimensional space. However, physical bodies need a physical location to worship in spirit. Such a location is left up to the expedient choice of the worshipers.

#### ■ **The Right Object - God**

Worship requires an object to worship. Throughout man's religious history many have been polytheist who worshiped many gods. This often included the use of man-made images of metal or stone or wood as the object of their devotion. However, Jesus made it clear to the woman at the well and to Satan when He said, "*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve*" (Matt. 4:10). According to Kittel's definition of worship, "When the NT used *proskuneo*, the object is always something - truly or supposedly - divine" (TDNT, vol. 6, 763). Worship is to be a God-centered activity. Worship is about how God wants man to show Him honor, praise, and worthiness. A key aspect of our worship is that it pleases God. Man has often deviated from true worship when he begins to focus his attention on the desires of the worshipers in contrast to the commands of God.

#### ■ **The Right Attitude - In Spirit**

Jesus requires true worshipers to worship in spirit (Jn. 4:23,24). "*Spirit*" is not "spiritedness" or excitement. Neither is the term used for the third person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Since there is no word "the" in front of the word "spirit" this text is speaking about our spirit. Worship is to come from the very heart of the worshiper. It must be done in the proper spirit. The heart is the mind and includes our rational thinking. When Jesus condemned the Pharisees' vain worship He quoted from Isaiah, "*these people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matt. 15:8,9). This verse also shows the close connection between worshiping in spirit and also worshiping according to the Truth.

#### ■ **The Right Authority - In Truth**

Worship must be done in truth (as God commands). The first worship recorded in the Bible was that of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4). Abel offered acceptable worship by faith (Heb. 11:4). Where did his faith come from? "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). Jesus prayed for His disciples asking God to "*sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth*" (John 17:17). Abel's worship was based on faith. His faith came from God's Word (at this time it was the unwritten

Words of God). The Word of God is Truth. Therefore, Abel worshiped God in Truth according to the Word of God.

In contrast, two priests, Nadab and Abihu, did not worship God according to the Word or Truth. *“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord”* (Lev. 10:1,2). Regardless of their motives their actions in worshiping God were not according to the Word of God which required them to obtain the fire for the altar.

#### ■ **The Right Purpose**

The primary purpose of worship is an expression of feelings of honor toward God from the heart according to the truth. Christians are to express feelings from the depth of their soul. They do not worship so that they can get something, but so they can give. Worship is not about entertaining our fellow man or even saving the lost. Worship is not some means to another end; it's an end in itself. Worship is to glorify God.

The secondary result of worship is the edification of saints. When correcting the worship at the congregation at Corinth Paul said, *“let all things be done for edification”* (1 Cor 14:26). When Christians worship God with music they are not only *“singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* but they are also *“teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”* (Col 3:16). Preaching is done in honor or respecting God's Will revealed in His Word, but also to *“convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Tim 4:2). Christians are to willingly give back to God on the first day of the week, *“for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Cor 9:7). They are to pray to God and for one another.

#### ■ **The Right Actions**

Worship is a verb. It is primarily an action or activity, it is something which is done. God has prescribed specific actions in New Testament worship: 1) singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16); 2) praying (Acts 2:42; Acts 4:23-31; Romans 12:12); 3) observing the Lord's Supper ( Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34); 4) preaching or teaching (Acts 2:42; 14:27); and 5) giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). This list of “five acts” is sometimes ridiculed as being legalistic and ritualistic. If “acts” are no more than mindless, meaningless rituals then they cannot be classified as worship. Furthermore, if they are acts required by God's Word, one could not worship in truth without them. However, God desires true worshipers to worship Him in spirit and in truth as these are the true ways He wishes to be worshiped.

### **Conclusion**

God is not seeking just anyone to worship Him. God is looking for men and women who are willing to put aside their person preferences and desires and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Only these can be rightly called true worshipers.

### **Questions:**

1. What do some people in other religions and the world view as worship to God?
2. What four things does worship involve according to its usage in the Bible?
3. Give examples from the New Testament of individual worship of God?



4. Give examples from the New Testament of corporate worship of God?
5. In the New Testament in which local church can it be demonstrated had giving, preaching, singing, praying and partaking of the Lord's Supper in its congregation worship?
6. Is everything a believer does in service to God the same as worship? Explain.
7. Give some examples from the Old Testament which shows God does care how we worship Him.
8. Do personal feelings help one determine who to worship God acceptably? Explain.

Matching: True Worship Involves the...

- |          |                     |    |  |
|----------|---------------------|----|--|
| 9. ____  | The Right Place     | a. | In Truth                               |
| 10. ____ | The Right Object    | b. | In Spirit                              |
| 11. ____ | The Right Attitude  | c. | God                                    |
| 12. ____ | The Right Authority | d. | Reverence of God/Edification of Saints |
| 13. ____ | The Right Purpose   | e. | Lord's Supper, Singing                 |
| 14. ____ | The Right Action    | f. | In Christ                              |

**Application and Discussion:**

1. What role should feelings or emotions play in worshipping God?
  
2. What role should personal preferences play in worshipping God?

**Homework:** Prepare yourself for engaging in better congregational worship by taking time every day this week in personal worship.

## Worship of the Church - Part Two

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Worship is more than just a feeling. Worship as verb and verbs describe actions. There are five acts of worship Christians are to act upon when they come together for congregational worship.

### Giving

No one seems to like to hear sermons or even read about giving. However, the Bible talks a great deal about the importance of giving to God. Unfortunately, the work of the Lord is contingent upon the giving of the saints.

**When should Christians give?** Paul gave instructions to the church at Corinth telling them that *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come”* (1 Cor. 16:2). Two things about the timing of our giving are apparent from this verse. First, you are to give upon the first day of the week. This is the Lord’s Day, the day Christians came together with one another to worship God. It was a convenient time for them to give back to God into a common treasury so that funds could be quickly and easily gathered from there. Second, Christians are to give as they prosper.

**Who should be giving?** Paul said, *“Let each one of you.”* This includes the saints at Corinth. No evidence can be found that non-Christians were either coerced or solicited for funds in the New Testament. God is not charging or taxing His children. Giving is both a duty and a privilege. No one should be robbed of the right and responsibility of contributing to the work of the Lord.

**Where should this money go?** Again note Paul’s answer to the Corinthians: *“let each one of you lay something aside, storing up.”* A more literal translation ...would be ‘each one of you by himself lay up, or store up.’ The noun form of thesaurizo (from which we get thesaurus, a collection, or treasury, of words), ...represents a storehouse, treasury, chest, or the like where valuables are stored. It also sometimes was used metaphorically of the treasure itself (Matt. 2:11; 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 6:45)” (John MacArthur, Jr., 1 Corinthians, p. 453). The treasure collected from each giver should be gathered into a collection or treasury.

**How much should a Christian give?** Paul said, *“as he may prosper.”* Paul did not address these words to mere rich men but to all the saints in all the churches. Godly giving looks to God as the standard. What did God give? *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). The Christian considers Christ as the standard for his contribution. What did Christ give? When some ask the question, “How much to I have to give?”, they are really thinking, “How little can I give and still please God as a Christian?” The fact is, no matter how much one gives with that attitude they will not have God’s approval. What if Christ were passing the collection plate on Sunday morning?

**Why should a Christian give?** According to Paul’s command in 1 Corinthians 16, a Christian gives *“that there be no gatherings when I come.”* The church needed to have a treasury for ready access. In other places, we learn that the treasury is needed to help needy saints (Acts 4:33f) and to preach the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:14).

**In what manner should a Christian give?** Again the apostle Paul through divine inspiration provides the answer: *“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Cor. 9:7). The Greek word for “cheerful” is *hilaros* from which we derive our English word “hilarious.” Believe it or not, God loves a hilarious giver. God loves a man who loves to give out of joy. This does not mean that giving makes us happy, rather happiness makes us give.

**How should a Christian give?** *“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart ...”* (2 Cor.

9:7). Christians are to give purposefully. This is not giving God the left-overs after we spend whatever we want on ourselves.

### Lord's Supper

Almost every denomination, with the exception of two (Quakers and Christian Scientists) observe something which they call the Lord's Supper. No doubt this memorial feast is the most significant practice throughout "Christianity".

The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20) is also referred to as "*the table of the Lord*" (1 Cor. 10:21); "*communion*" or "*fellowship*" (1 Cor. 10); and "*the breaking of bread*" (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16).

Those who may participate in the Lord's Supper are the citizens of the Kingdom. Those in the Kingdom or the church. Jesus placed the Lord's Supper in the kingdom (Mk. 14:25) and in the church (1 Cor. 11:18). We are baptized into the Kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5) and into the church (1 Cor. 12:13). So those who are members of the Lord's church. Those who have a spiritual relationship with Christ. Those who have remission of sins through the blood of Christ (Ac. 2:38)? How can a sinner have a communion with His body and blood (1 Cor. 10:16) if he has not been redeemed by the blood? Those who look forward to the Second Coming of Christ. The Lord's Supper is a proclamation by everyone who partakes that the Lord will come again and in this they hope. Why would a sinner want the Lord to come while he is in this lost state?

Although the Lord's Supper is offered to the saints, the early church did not teach a form of closed communion where only those who they deemed worthy were allowed to partake.

From Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-26; 16:2 is learned that the Lord's Supper should be partaken of on every Sunday. It was observed "*on the first day of the week.*" If a certain day of the year is commanded, that is, a specific month and day - the observance of was to be yearly (Lev. 23:27; Ex. 30:10. Independence Day is observed annually on the fourth of July. If the day of the month is given, the observance is month (Hum. 28:11); For example, "My rent is due on the tenth day of the month." If the day of the week is given, the observance is week. The Sabbath was observed once every week because every week had a seventh day (Ex. 20:8). The Lord's Supper is to be kept every week which has a first day.

Although this is all the proof and authority needed, it is interesting to note that there is post-Biblical evidence from early Christians. The following quotes are from the writings of Christians who lived shortly after the close of the New Testament. Their writings are not considered authoritative for us today, but they do give us some insight as to the worship of the early church. Their writings show that the early Christians observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week. "But every Lord's day do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving." (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, XIV, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 381). According to Justin Martyr, "on the day called Sunday, all who live in the cities or in the country gather together in one place,...Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgiving, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that of which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons" (Justin Martyr [114-165], FIRST APOLOGY, LXXII, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, p. 186). Many denominational scholars have support this truth. Thomas Scott (Presbyterian): "This ordinance seems to have been administered every Lord's Day; and probably no professed Christian absented themselves..." (The Holy Bible with Notes, Observations and References, Vol. 5, p. 729). F. F. Bruce when commenting on Acts 20:7 wrote, "to celebrate the eucharist (Lord's Supper, drv); probably it was their practice to do this each Sunday" (The New Bible Commentary: Revised, p. 1000). May the Lord's Church ever follow the Lord's Will and observe the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day.

The Lord's Supper is to be a commemoration of Christ's death. "*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me*" (1 Cor. 11:23,24). It is also a symbol of the authorization of the New Covenant. "*In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new*

*covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.*" (1 Cor. 11:25). The Lord's Supper is for the proclamation of the Gospel as it is partaken. *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes"* (1 Cor. 11:26). Every time the local church partakes of this memorial feast they are preaching. The word *"proclaim"* is from the Greek word *kataggello*. Vincent says *"The Lord's death is preached in the celebration..."* (Word Studies of the New Testament, Vol. 3, p. 252). It is in the present tense verb indicating that the preaching is continual or habitual. Thus, every time the saints gather to partake each Sunday, they by example are preaching. Also communion is observed as an anticipation of the Second Coming. The Lord's Supper is to last for a specified period of time - *"till He come."* When that time is, no one knows. Yet, one thing we know for certain, the Lord's Supper will end when He does come. Why? Because the Supper as a form of spiritual communion will become obsolete. The Lord's Supper is the greatest memorial ever made and a regular reminder of the Second Coming of Christ. According to the apostle Paul, whenever a local group of Christians assemble to observe the Lord's Supper they manifest the unity which they have with one another through the body of Christ. *"For we, though many are one bread and one body, for we all partake of that one bread"* (1 Cor. 10:17). Many view the Kingdom as something in the distant future. Premillennialists feel that Christ failed in his first attempts to establish the kingdom so as an after thought He established the church. One day, they say, He will come again and will establish His kingdom and rule on earth for a thousand years. This reign will take place at Jerusalem upon the throne of David. However, the Kingdom was established and the Lord's Supper proves it. We can partake of the memorial in the kingdom and the church today, because they are both one and the same. After all, Christ is the king of the kingdom and head of the church. Christians are citizens in the kingdom and members of His church. Those that believe that the kingdom is not the church, but is to be established in the future, can never observe the Lord's supper properly for we are only to partake of it with Christ in His kingdom, but this must cease when He comes again. Paul clearly told the Corinthian brethren that *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes"* (1 Cor. 11:26).

The Christian must partake of the Lord's Supper in the proper manner. *"Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"* (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

Although feasts of men may contain several dishes, the Lord's Supper only has two elements: the fruit of the vine or literally, the juice from the grape and unleavened bread.

### **Praying**

Jesus was in the habit of praying with His disciples and teaching them to pray. After the church began on the day of Pentecost *"they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). After the apostles were persecuted the church gathered to pray for boldness (Acts 4:31f). The church selected faithful men to take care of the needy widows among them so the apostles could give themselves *"continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word"* (Acts 6:4). Later, *"Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church"* (Acts 12:5). When separating the Barnabas and Saul for the work of talking the Gospel to the Gentiles, the church at Antioch *"having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away"* (Acts 13:3). Later, on their missionary journey *"when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed"* (Acts 14:23). Paul prayed with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:35) and the congregation at Troas (Acts 21:5). Paul wrote to the church at Rome, *"now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me"* (Rom. 15:30). Brethren are commanded to pray with understanding (1 Cor. 14:15). The church at Philippi was commanded to *"be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"* (Phil. 4:6). And to the Colossian church Paul said, *"continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door"*

for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains” (Col. 4:2,3). Paul told the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing...Brethren, pray for us....Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you” (1 Thess. 5:17,25; 2 Thess. 3:11). James commanded Christians to pray for one another. *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”* (Js. 5:13-16). Jude points out the importance of prayer in edification of one another *“but you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit”* (Jude 1:20).

### **Singing**

Two passages outline the type of music and the role it plays in their worship to God. *“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Eph. 5:19). *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Col. 3:16). First, Christians are to sing not play. Instrumental music is excluded from worship because God specified He wants vocal music. The saints are to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs not secular songs. A psalm is found in the Old Testament book by the same title. A hymn is a song of praise to God. A spiritual song is determined by its content. God requires worshipers to sing with grace (Col. 3:16). Their heart is to be the instrument that makes the melody (Eph. 5:19). While singing Christians are praising God and teaching and admonishing fellow-saints. All singing is to be done in truth (Jn. 4:23,24) and with the understanding of what is being song (1 Cor. 14:15). Every Christian is commanded to sing not just a talented few.

The purpose of singing is multifaceted: to praise God (Acts 16:24); teach men (Col. 3:16); and express our emotions (Js. 5:15).

### **Preaching**

On the day the church was established it began with Peter preaching the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2). The preaching kept on as they met as a congregation at the Temple complex. *“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ”* (Acts 5:42). Paul reminded the elders of the church at Ephesus *“And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:25-27). He commanded Timothy who was later at the Ephesian church, *“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Preaching and teaching and reading of the scriptures is an important part of worship. Christians are to continue to the apostle’s doctrine (Acts 2:42).

### **Conclusion**

True worship is not just an act. Nor is it just a feeling. Worship must come from a heart that has reverence and thankfulness to God, but it must also be expressed by some divinely prescribed acts. It should not be assumed that the acts of worship which individuals find pleasing will be pleasing to God. New Testament worship was far less complicated than that of the Old Testament. Under the Law of Moses one could not worship God at any time, anywhere, with any amount of people and with no regard to their talents, abilities or genealogy.

**Questions:**

1. When should Christians give?
2. Who should be giving?
3. How much should a Christian give?
4. In what manner should a Christian give?
5. How else is the Lord's Supper referred to in the New Testament?
6. Who is commanded to partake of the Lord's Supper?
7. When and how frequently were Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper?
8. List several reasons why the church is to observe the Lord's Supper.
9. Why did the early church only use vocal music?
10. What is the purpose of singing in worship?
11. Why was church at Thessalonica to pray?

12. According to Jude what was is one of the purposes of brethren should pray together?
  
13. Why and how was Timothy to preach the Word?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. What does it mean to sing and pray with understanding (1 Cor. 14:15)?
  
2. Compare worship under the Law of Moses with the worship of the early church. What are some comparisons and contrasts?

**Homework:** Take a few minutes each day from Monday to Saturday to meditate on the acts of worship from the previous Sunday to contemplate how much you were edified by the experience.

# Church Discipline

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An elder once said, "We all know that we ought to improve church discipline, but nobody seems to know where to begin and how to do it." Through lack of knowledge many souls who might have been restored through church discipline have been lost. Not because such is not taught in the Bible, but because this has been a neglected subject in many places. Little is taught on it and less is practiced.

Church discipline is one of the most abused and unused responsibilities in the church today. Much of this is because of ignorance, confusion, false teaching, the emotional difficulty involved, lack of love and concern for erring brethren, weak faith that God's plan will work; past failures to apply discipline, belief that it will do more harm than good, fear of the church being sued, etc.

## **The Necessity of Church Discipline**

To our society, the term "discipline" is a dirty word, cruel, and barbaric. Without discipline in society chaos would result. Without discipline families break up. Without discipline the New Testament Church will have adultery, homosexuality, incest, violence and crime against society and God's law fill church pews. Sinners are not afraid to sin because they are not afraid of sin, do not fear God, and have no fear that brethren will discipline them. The church is God's family (1 Tim. 3:15), school (1 Tim. 3:16), army (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3), kingdom, etc. and like all these requires discipline.

## **Definition of Church Discipline**

Our English word "discipline" comes from the Latin "discipulus" meaning "pupil, disciple." Thus, "discipline" originally referred to "teaching", and the idea of punishment was only secondary. Discipline is training someone in the doctrine. It is a training process with correction by punishment as only one part of it, and then if it becomes necessary. The primary meaning of discipline is not punishment.

The New Testament uses the Greek words *paideia* and *paideuo*. "*Paideia*: 1) the whole training and education of children, Eph. 6:4... 2) Whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing passions; hence a. instruction which aims at the increase of virtue, 2 Tim. 3:16...b. acc. to bibl. assuage chastisement, chastening...Heb. 12:5..." (Thayer). "*Hymeneus and Alexander Who I delivered unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme*" (1 Tim. 1:20).

Usually people only think of the extreme action of withdrawing when they talk about church discipline. Yet, the New Testament speaks of two types of discipline: instructive discipline and corrective discipline. Instructive discipline is preventive in nature. It is designed so the Christian can learn God's Will in order to apply it to his life and please God. The church has been designed to edify itself (Eph. 4:12,16; Rom. 14:19) by the teaching in regular assemblies, plus gospel meetings and special classes. Corrective discipline is needed when instructive discipline fails. It is reformatory or punitive in nature. We cannot escape the idea that corrective discipline is punishment.

Simply stated, "scriptural church discipline should be defined as the total process through which saints in Christ's body help each other grow toward spiritual maturity 'unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' (Eph. 4:13)." (Robert S. Usrey, *Church Discipline for Caring Christians: The Key To Church Growth*, p. 37).

## **Procedure of Church Discipline**

The plan of salvation is a process. It has a set of procedures or steps which must be taken in the proper order so that the process be completed and salvation can be procured. By studying all the cases of conversion and related passages we come to a clearer understanding of the plan of salvation.



Church discipline is a process. By studying all the cases of church discipline and related passages we can come to a clearer understanding of the correct procedure use to restore an erring brother and save his soul (Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:3-11; and 2 Thess. 3:6-15).

▶ **Public and Private Instruction and Exhortation**

God commanded the church to assemble for worship (Heb. 10:25). Instructive discipline is to be used in these public assemblies (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Tim. 2:2). Not only did Paul teach publicly, but also "from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

▶ **Private Rebuke and Admonishment**

Rebuke private sin privately (Mt. 18:15). "Go to him" requires action on our part. Jesus did not say, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go tell his fault to others."

▶ **Confirmation of Sin**

The certainty of the guilt of innocence of the accused must be ascertained (Num. 35:12,30; Dt. 13:14; 17:2-6; 1 Tim. 5:19). Sometimes a sin is so public that it is already openly confirmed (Gal. 2:11-14). Nevertheless, this step must be taken before the local church can be involved collectively (Mt. 18:16). The purpose of witnesses is two fold. First, it is to confirm what took place when the sinner was confronted with his sin. Second, it is to give more force in restoring a brother.

▶ **Public Admonishment**

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church" (Mt. 18:17; cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-26). The sinful brother might be recalled because of the very diversity of individual members who try to correct him. The disorderly will be warned and vividly impressed about his wrong (1 Th. 5:14; Tit. 3:10,11).

▶ **Public Announcement**

Church discipline requires collective action. It is the duty of the whole church to support the action (1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Th. 3:14). Paul clearly told the church at Corinth: "when you are assembled together" (1 Cor. 5:4,5).

Discipline by the congregation involves public identification of sin and sinner. The sinner is to be marked or noted (Rom. 16:17; 2 Th. 3:14). "Mark" means "to look at, observe, contemplate, to mark...to fix one's eyes upon, direct one's attention to, anyone: Rom. 16:17; Phil. 3:17..." (Thayer, p. 579). Paul marked some by name: Demas, Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander the coppersmith.

▶ **Social Ostracism**

Each individual member of the congregation is to socially ostracize the rebellious member. The phrase "withdraw yourselves" means "to remove one's self, withdraw one's self to depart,...to abstain form familiar (social contact) with one" (Thayer, p. 587). The withdrawing oneself from the erring brother is to take place in the life of each Christian after the announcement has been made. The scriptures do necessarily infer that some kind of an announcement is to be made.

### **Treatment of the One Disciplined**

◆ **Do Not Socialize with Them**

Faithful members must quit keeping social company with the one who won't repent. No more hunting, fishing, golf, sewing, shopping, picnics, games, etc. until there is true repentance. We are to treat him as a heathen and a publican (Mt. 18:17). The way in which the Jews regarded Gentiles and publicans is illustrated in Lk. 5:30; Ac. 10:38; 11:2,3. They are not to throw out of the church or the building (3 Jn. 9,10). "To remove the wicked man from among you" (1 Cor. 5: ) is not referring to his physical presence in the church building but to our social agenda.

◆ **Do Not Eat a Social Meal with Them**

"But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person" (1 Cor. 5:11). Have no interchange of hospitality which would imply brotherly recognition. Whatever implies endorsement must be avoided. This of course, does not refer to incidental eating such as in the same restaurant, at school or work, etc. This is not referring to the Lord's Supper. Each man is to examine himself regarding the Supper (I Cor. 11:27-29). I Cor. 5:9-11 The phrase "no not to eat" is in apposition to "not to keep company" found in the same verse.

◆ **Treat Not as an Enemy**

*"Yet do not count him as an enemy..."* (2 Th. 3:15a). This does not suggest that we should refuse we would refuse help to him in trials and afflictions. We will still be interested in, and seek his salvation, just as we would a heathen man, yet in such a way as to leave no doubt regarding our attitude toward his life. It means no social or religious communion with him until he repents. If you tell him every time you see him that he should repent, he will soon repent, or start avoiding you.

◆ **Admonish Him as a Brother**

Paul continues *"...but admonish him as a brother"* (2 Th. 3:15b). Our association with the erring should be for spiritual reasons, not social.

### **Purpose of Church Discipline**

Proper procedure is one thing, but the correct motive behind the disciplinary action is just as important. A failure to understand the real purpose involved in corrective discipline is the real reason why so many members of the church raise objections.

The true purpose of church discipline has been abused and distorted by some congregations. Some has used it as a political move (3 Jn. 9); as retaliation; to cover up our own weaknesses through hypocrisy (Mt. 7:1-5) Some think discipline involves a "witch-hunt" mentality --looking under every bed and in every closet, just trying to catch someone making a mistake.

● **To Save the Sinner**

The highest motive in regards to the sinner is to save him from his sin (1 Cor. 5:5; Js. 5:19,20). The effect of discipline is to give the sinner a sense of shame over his sinful state (2 Th. 3:14). Discipline is to destroy the influence of the flesh (Col. 3:5,6; 1 Cor. 5:5). Discipline is to teach them the seriousness of sin (1 Tim. 1:19,20). Discipline lets the erring member know that he is in the grasp of Satan (1 Cor. 5:5). He is not in the kingdom of light, but the kingdom of darkness. It provides the means by which one can recover himself from the snare of the devil (2 Tim. 2:25,26).

● **To Protect the Church**

Discipline is to purge the church of its complacency toward sin (1 Cor. 5:5ff). Discipline preserves the purity of the Church. It protect it from the contagious, progressive, and contaminating effects of sin. Sin's contaminating effect is compared to leaven (1 Cor. 5:5,6) and gangrene (2 Tim. 2:17,18). A little sin allowed to remain in the body will destroy the whole body (Rev. 2:5; 18:4). Discipline is needed to preserve the influence of the church. It is the defense of the good name of the church. Corinth had a bad one (1 Cor. 5:1). The action of 2 Th. 3:6 suggests that we are trying to obey, protect, and defend all that God revealed through the Apostles. A church that does not discipline will lose the respect of decent people in the community and of those Christians who desire to follow Christ sincerely. Discipline will not destroy the influence of the church. (Ac. 5:11).

● **To Respect the Will of God**

Proper discipline will maintain Christ's authority. Church discipline is done with His authority (1 Cor. 5:4).

● **To Strengthen Faithful Christians**

Discipline produces godly fear among the members (1 Tim. 5:19,20; Acts 5:1-11). It demonstrates to others that sin is not permitted (1 Cor. 5:13). When members are called upon to discipline a fellow member it puts their obedience to God's Will to the test (2 Cor. 2:8,9).

● **To Punish the Disobedient**

In his second letter to the Corinthian church Paul wrote, *"This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man"* (2 Cor. 2:6).

### **Subjects of Church Discipline**

■ **Those Specifically Mentioned**

Those who refuse to correct personal offenses against brethren (Matt. 18:15-17). Those who cause division (Rom. 16:17). False teachers are to be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17,18; 2 Jn. 9-11). False teachers have always tried to lead God's people astray (2 Pet. 2:1). Paul warned the Ephesian

elders about them (Ac. 20:28-30). We are not to tolerate them in the church (Rev. 2:20). We are to deliver them to Satan (I Tim. 1:20). They pervert the Gospel, let them be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9). They will cause the shipwreck of our faith (2 Tim. 2:17,18). Also, those who are guilty of the sins of the flesh (1 Cor. 5:11). Those who blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:19,20). And, elders who continue in sin (1 Tim. 5:17-20).

#### ■ **Those Generically Included**

There are some serious problems if we try to limit those who are to be disciplined collectively to those specifically mentioned above. In addition to the lack of authority for disciplining those who forsake the assembling of the saints, there would be no authority to withdraw from those who commit abortion, lairs, murders, gamblers, drug addicts, social drinkers, etc.

Paul includes all who *"walk disorderly"* as subjects of church discipline (1 Thess. 3:6). The congregation was commanded to withdraw from *"from every brother"* who so walks. *"Disorderly"* means "out of ranks, (often so of soldiers) irregular, inordinate, deviating from the prescribed order or rule." (Thayer, p. 83). They are walking disorderly by not following God's Will. *"Not after the tradition"* and *"obey not our word by this epistle"* (2 Th. 3:6,14).

Those who commit immorality in general. After Paul tells the Corinthian church to take disciplinary action on the fornicator, he gives a list of other sins that require discipline. The list closes with *toioutos* - *"such a one"* (1 Cor. 5:11). It is another way of saying "etc." Which reveals that these are not the only sins which can break the association of brethren; these are sins representative of any rebellion against God.

Corrective discipline involves any brother in Christ who commits any sin and refuses all attempts to encourage him to repent and to be restored.

A church cannot discipline a member of another church. A congregation can only discipline those among them (1 Cor. 5:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Th. 3:6,11). Since each congregation is independent and self-governing and cannot issue edicts for, or receive them from, other congregations church discipline must be limited to the local church..

#### **Conclusion**

Perhaps every member will not do their part in church discipline every time it is used. However, Paul did note when the church at Corinth practice church discipline it was done *"by the majority"* (2 Cor. 2:6). It may be that the greatest test as to the faithfulness and maturity of a local church is its ability to practice church discipline faithfully. Paul said, *"For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things"* (2 Cor. 2:9). If a congregation can accomplish this task together, they can do anything God has commanded of them.

#### **Questions:**

1. What are the two types of church discipline?
2. T F There are many occasions when corrective discipline should come before instructive discipline.
3. T F Church discipline is a process that includes various steps that are to be taken in a certain order.
4. What is the purpose of having witnesses when confronting a brother in sin?
5. When was the church at Corinth to take punitive action against the fornicator?

6. How did the Jews treat heathens (Gentiles) and tax gatherers (publicans)?
7. T F When a member is publically disciplined he is to be physically removed from the building or assembly.
8. According to 1 Corinthians 5:5 what is the immediate and what is the ultimate purpose of discipline?
9. Explain how sin is like leaven, gangrene or cancer.
10. How will undisciplined sin among a congregation's members harm its influence in the community?
11. What does "*walking disorderly*" mean?
12. Show how murderers are included in Paul's list in 1 Corinthians 5?

**Application and Discussion:**

1. What did the Good Shepherd do when the one lamb left the flock (Matt. 18:12-14)? How does this relate to church discipline?
2. What is to be withdrawn and who is commanded to do the withdrawing in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15? In this passage is withdrawing equivalent to "ceasing to attend"? Explain.

**Homework:** Find an unfaithful member of your congregation this week and begin efforts to restore them to the fold.