

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

In the book of Ephesians the Apostle Paul warned his readers against “the wiles of the devil,” and the “fiery darts of the wicked.” “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph. 6:16).

Satan has always, of course, bitterly opposed both the work and workers of God. His battle with Jesus began in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15) and continued without pause throughout the Old Testament. With the advent of the incarnation, life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the intensity of the struggle increased a thousandfold. During the first few centuries of church history, the devil attacked the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Then (after a terrible defeat in A.D. 325) he moved against the doctrine of justification by faith. But he had not counted on the actions of one Martin Luther. Again, turning in another direction, he lashed out against the inspiration of the Scriptures. This reached its high point during the final years of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century, about the time God was raising up great schools of the Scripture, such as the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and other Bible centers to counteract this satanic attack.

Finally, in a desperate effort to corrupt and confuse the work of God (before the coming of the Son of God), Satan has boldly and brazenly declared all-out war upon the very bride of Christ, the church itself. Perhaps the most disturbing factor about this attack, unlike all others, is that the devil has been successful in deceiving a number of both professing and possessing Christians into joining his ranks.

The author once wrote an article entitled “If I Were the Devil.” The following is taken from this article:

If I were the devil I would viciously attack those four divine institutions so graciously given by God to man, namely, the institutions of marriage, human government, the nation Israel, and the church.

Concerning the church, I would continue to attack it from the outside (just to keep in practice), but would concentrate the bulk of my evil efforts from within. “The church is dead” would become my creed and cry. Christians that the local church is finished! Not weak, not ineffective, but dead and decaying! I would encourage them to dig a hole, carve an epitaph, and bury it as quietly and quickly as possible. “Christianity” could then proceed to new glories where private cell groups would replace Sunday assemblies, and sermons would be set aside for buzz sessions! (*Baptist Bulletin*, Dec. 1971)

Today one need only scan the horizon of Christendom to discover just how successful Satan has been along these lines. There is a desperate need for the study of and subsequent return to the scriptural teachings of the church. This must be, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11).

I. The Meaning of the Word *Church*

The Greek word in the New Testament for our English word *church* is *ekklesia*. It is derived from the verb *ekkaleo*. The compound *ek* means “out,” and *kaleo* means “to call or summon.” Thus, the literal meaning is “to call out.”

Charles Ryrie, however, cautions, “If the word is going to be translated on the basis of etymology, then it should be translated “called together,” not “called out” (*Basic Theology*, p. 394).

A. Its connection with the Hebrew world of the Old Testament – The New Testament Greek word *ekklesia* has a loose connection with the Hebrew word *qahal*, which is found some 100 times in the Old Testament. It is translated by the English words *congregation*, *assembly*, *company*. *Qahal* may refer to those assemblies gathered for purposes of:

1. Evil counsel – “I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked” (Psa. 26:5).
2. Civil affairs – “That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying..., If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever” (1 Kings 12:3, 7). In this passage, Israel’s elders had gathered together at Shechem to discuss a very important civil affair, the coronation of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, as their next king.
3. War – “And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword” (Judg. 20:2). This

relates to the sad meeting of Israel's 11 tribes who had gathered to go to war against the twelfth tribe, Benjamin.

4. Religious worship of God – “And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court” (2 Chron. 20:5).
- B. Its connection with the secular Greek world – In secular Greek, *ekklesia* referred only to an assembly or meeting and never to the people which composed that assembly. Even a wild and ignorant lynch mob could be referred to as an *ekklesia* (Acts 19:32).
- C. Its connection to the theological world of the New Testament – The New Testament reveals a development of the word *ekklesia* from the simple nontechnical meaning of “assembly” to the full-blown technical and theological designation for “the people of God.” Of its 114 occurrences in the New Testament, with but five exceptions (Acts 7:38, 19:32, 39, 41; Heb. 2:12), the *ekklesia* church is presented in this light.

Note these exceptions:

1. “This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us” (Acts 7:38).

This passage deals with Stephen's address before the Sanhedrin during which he described the nation Israel at Mount Sinai as “the church in the wilderness.”

2. “Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together” (Acts 19:32). “But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly” (Acts 19:39). “And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly” (Acts 19:41).

These three verses occur in reference to the wild Greek mob at Ephesus.

3. “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Heb. 2:12).

This passage apparently describes Christ's song of praise to the Father concerning all the elect, both Old Testament and New Testament saints.

II. The Origin of the Church – When and where did the church actually begin? Here we are confronted with several different views

- A. It began with Adam in Genesis 3 – In a discussion of this question, Dr. Earl Radmacher quotes R. B. Kuiper, who says:

And if we assume, as undoubtedly we may, that Adam and Eve believed the promise of God that the seed of the serpent would indeed bruise the heel of the woman, but that the woman's seed would bruise the serpent's head... then it may be asserted that they constituted the first Christian church. (*The Nature of the Church*, pp. 193 – 194)

- B. It began with Abraham in Genesis 12 – This is the position of most covenant theologians. The logic behind this view is the belief that as Israel once functioned as God's church in the Old Testament, so the church now functions as God's Israel in the New Testament.
- C. It began with John the Baptist in Matthew 3 – Here the argument is that John was Scripture's first baptizer, and inasmuch as Christ later commanded his church to practice this worldwide (Matthew 28:19), the conclusion is that the church began with John: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19).
- D. It began with Christ – Here four different time periods are advocated by those who believe it began with the Savior.
 1. At the call of the 12 apostles in Matthew 10 – Thomas P. Simmons holds this view. He writes:

In locating the founding of the church we must find a time when something that answers to the description of the church came into existence. This rule points us to the time when, after a night of prayer, Christ selected the twelve disciples. With this selection, these twelve men, for the first time, became a body. They had a head – Christ. They had a treasurer – Judas. They were supposed to be baptized believers. They banded together to carry out Christ's will. What more than this did they become...? (*A Systematic Study of Bible Doctrine*, p. 354)

2. With Peter's confession in Matthew 16 – Advocates of this position place the church at this point for the simple reason that it is first mentioned by Christ here: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

3. With the Last Supper – (See Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 13.) Those who defend this view believe that it was at this time that Christ instituted the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, indicating the church now existed.
 4. On the first Easter night after Jesus’ resurrection (John 20) – “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:21-22). Here it is argued that the final element necessary for the composition of the promised church is now given, namely, the person and power of the Holy Spirit.
- E. It began at Pentecost in Acts 2.
- F. It began with Paul – Here, as in the case of Christ, several time periods are offered.
1. At the time of his conversion in Acts 9 – Proponents of this position remind us that the church could hardly have begun until the conversion of its most famous theologian and epistle writer, the Apostle Paul.
 2. At the time of his first missionary trip in Acts 13 – Some are convinced that the assembly at Jerusalem, even though referred to as a church, was in reality not one, but rather a group of mainly Jewish believers operating under a modified Old Testament economy. However, in Acts 13 Paul begins his lifelong ministry of establishing 100 percent Christian local churches.
 3. At the time of his Roman imprisonment in Acts 28 – During this (his first) Roman imprisonment, Paul wrote Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians. Disciples of this last view feel these four New Testament church epistles alone (later to include Paul’s two letters to Timothy and Titus) compose God’s message to local churches, thus their Acts 28 church origin position.
- G. Here, then, are the theories. Which are we to believe? Godly and able men may be cited to support each view, but the bulk of Bible students hold the position that the church began at Pentecost. This view has been amply defended by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dr. Charles Ryrie, and Dr. Robert Lightner. These men write:
1. Chafer:

Apparently for want of due consideration of all that enters into the case, some theologians have sustained the idea that those things which characterize the Old Testament revelation are carried forward without change into the New Testament. The necessity of observing dispensational distinctions arises in connection with the abrupt abandonment of existing features and the introduction of new features which mark the transition from one dispensation to the next. This line of demarcation is especially clear between the present age and that which preceded it, and between the present age and that which is to follow. Certain events which serve to reproduce these changes are properly styled age-transforming. Things cannot be the same in this age as they were in the past age, after the death of Christ has taken place, His resurrection, His ascension, and the advent of the Spirit on Pentecost. In like manner, things cannot be the same in the coming age as they are in this age, after there is brought about the second advent of Christ to reign on the earth, the binding of Satan, the removal of the Church, and the restoration of Israel. Those who see no force in this declaration have hardly considered the measureless meaning of these age-transforming occurrences. In the light of these determining issues, it may be seen (a) that there could be no Church in the world – constituted as she is and distinctive in all her features – until Christ’s death; for her relation to that death is not a mere anticipation, but is based wholly on His finished work and she must be purified by His precious blood. (b) There could be no Church until Christ arose from the dead to provide her with resurrection life. (c) There could be no Church until He had ascended up on high to become her Head; for she is a New Creation with a new federal headship in the resurrected Christ. He is, likewise, to her as the head is to the body. Nor could the Church survive for a moment were it not for His intercession and advocacy in heaven. (d) There could be no Church on earth until the advent of the Holy Spirit; for the most basic and fundamental reality respecting the Church is that she is a temple for the habitation of God through the Spirit. She is regenerated, baptized, and sealed by the Spirit. (*Systematic Theology*, vol. IV, p. 45)

2. Ryrie:

That the day of Pentecost marked the beginning of the church seems evident for the following reasons:

- a. The Lord spoke of the church as being future in Matthew 16:18. This apparently means that the church did not exist in Old Testament times.
- b. The resurrection and ascension of Christ are essential to the functioning of the church. It is built on the resurrection (Eph. 1:19-20), and the giving of gifts is required for its operation, which giving of gifts in turn is dependent on Christ's being ascended (Eph. 4:7-12). If by some stretch of imaginative theology the body of Christ could be said to have been in existence before the ascension of Christ, then it will have to be concluded that it was an ungifted and inoperative body. The church's being built on the resurrection and ascension of Christ makes it distinctive to this age.
- c. But the principal evidence that the church began on the day of Pentecost concerns the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord declared that this particular and distinctive ministry of the Spirit was still future just before his ascension (Acts 1:5), On the day of Pentecost it first occurred (the record does not say so in Acts 2 but it does in Acts 11:15, 16). Now, what is it that Spirit baptism does? The answer to this is found in 1 Corinthians 12:13; it places the believer in the body of Christ. Since this is the only way to enter the body (i.e., by the baptizing work of the Spirit), and since this work of the Spirit first occurred on the day of Pentecost, then the conclusion seems obvious that the church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost. (*A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, pp. 157 – 158)

3. Lightner:

The beginning of the church is definitely related to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). First, the Spirit's baptism is future from the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:5). Second, the day of Pentecost is the time when the promise in Acts 1:5 was fulfilled. Third, we know this because of Peter's reference to prophecy and his discussion of what happened in the house of Cornelius (Acts 11:15-16). Fourth, Paul declared that as a result of the baptism of the Spirit the body was formed (1 Cor. 12:12-13). Fifth, we are told that the body formed by the Spirit's baptism is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). (*Evangelical Theology*, p. 241)

III. The Nature of the Church – Before attempting to determine what it *is*, let us consider some things the church *is not*.

A. The church considered from a negative viewpoint

1. It is not a new name for Israel – Covenant theologians teach that the church has become God's elect people, as Israel once was. But this is not the case, as seen by the following arguments:
 - a. The promises are different.
 - (1) The promises and provisions concerning Israel were basically earthly in scope – “And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee” (Exod. 15:26). (See also Deut. 28.)
 - (2) The promises concerning the church are basically heavenly in scope – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:1-3).
 - b. The seed is different
 - (1) Abraham's physical seed refers to Israel – “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Rom. 9:7).
 - (2) Abraham's spiritual seed refers to the church – “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7).
 - c. The births are different
 - (1) Israel celebrated its birthday at the base of Mount Sinai. (See Exod. 19– 20.)
 - (2) The church celebrated its birthday at Pentecost. (See Acts 2.) The author of Hebrews brings out the great contrast between these two entities, (See Heb. 12:18-24.)
 - (3) Israelites became what they were by physical birth.

- (4) Believers become what they are by spiritual birth.
- d. The nationality is different.
 - (1) Israel belonged to this earth and to the world system.
 - (2) The church is composed of all nations and has no citizenship down here, but its members are strangers and pilgrims. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11).
- e. The relationship with the Father is different.
 - (1) God is never presented as the Father of individual Israelites in the Old Testament.
 - (2) God is presented as the Father of all New Testament believers – "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1).
 - (3) Israel is now under God's judgment – "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. 10:21). "(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day" (Rom. 11:8).
 - (4) The church is free from all present judgment – "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:13-15).
 - (5) Israel was God's servant – "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isa. 41:8).
 - (6) The church – each believer – is God's son – "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). (See also 1 John 3:1.)
- f. The relationship with the Son is different.
 - (1) Israel is pictured as an unfaithful wife – "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord..., Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (Jer. 3:1, 14). "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord" (Jer. 3:20). (See also Isa. 54:1-17; Ezek, 16:1-59; Hos. 2:1-23.)
 - (2) The church is pictured as a chaste virgin bride yet to be married in heaven – "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Rev. 19:7-9).
 - (3) Christ was a stumbling stone to Israel – "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Pet. 2:8).
 - (4) Christ is the foundation and chief Cornerstone of the church – "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-22), "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:4-5).
 - (5) Christ is Israel's Messiah and King – "Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49).

- (6) Christ is the church's Savior, Bridegroom, and Head – "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23).
- g. The relationship with the Holy Spirit is different.
 - (1) The Holy Spirit rarely came upon individual Old Testament Israelites.
 - (2) The Holy Spirit actually lives inside each New Testament believer – "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).
- h. The temple is different.
 - (1) Israel had a temple – "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8).
 - (2) The church is a temple – "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21).

The above contrasts should make it crystal clear that the church is not Israel. Paul carefully distinguished these two separate entities when he wrote: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32).

- 2. It is not the kingdom – The church is to be built up during this present time (Eph. 4:12), while the kingdom will be set up at a future time (Acts 15:16; Rev. 11:15). "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" (Acts 15:16). "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

Charles Ryrie aptly summarizes this aspect: "Much confusion exists because of the failure to carefully define, distinguish, and compare the church and the kingdom. Based on Augustine's *City of God*, the equation of the church and the kingdom resulted in the absolute authority of the church on earth. Postmillennialism builds the earthly kingdom on the growth and success of the church. The mistaken concept of theonomy sees the church's mission as establishing the Old Testament Law of God in the kingdoms of the world today. Reformed theology, less frontal than theonomy, builds on the concept of the lordship of Christ over all the structures of the world, and sees the church as a principal agent in accomplishing this. What is the relation between the church and the kingdom?"

- a. The meaning of the kingdom – "The dictionary defines kingdom as a politically organized community. It therefore involves ruler(s), ruled, and realm. To define a particular kingdom, one needs to ask several questions: Who is the ruler? Who are the ruled? When and where is the kingdom? The various kingdoms of Scripture can and need to be distinguished by asking such questions."
- b. The various concepts of kingdom
 - (1) The universal kingdom – "The Scriptures reveal God as Ruler of the whole world (1 Chron. 29:11; Psa. 145:13). As such He exercises jurisdiction over the nations of the world, appointing rulers of His choosing and judging the world (Psa. 96:13; Dan. 2:37). In Jewish thought this concept of the kingdom began with Adam, was disfigured when sin entered, yet continued on until Abraham who recalled people to the kingdom with only partial success (witness the rebellion of Sodom and Gomorrah). However, when Israel accepted the Mosaic Law, this kingdom was reestablished, though rebellion erupted almost immediately (with the golden calf) and repeatedly throughout Israel's history. Only the godly remnant revived the kingdom. Only Messiah would bring the full realization of this kingdom.
 "Christian theology acknowledges this concept of a universal kingdom (though usually including angels in it which Judaism did not). God is Ruler of the nations (Rev. 15:3), and ultimately they will answer to Him when He judges them (Psa. 110:6).
 "In summary, in the universal kingdom of God, God is the Ruler; He rules over all; and He does it in all time and eternity."
 - (2) The Davidic/Messianic kingdom – "Both Judaism and premillennial Christian theology give a major place to this concept of kingdom. It is Davidic in that the promises concerning the kingdom were made in the great covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:12-16). It is messianic since Messiah will be the Ruler. It will be realized at the second advent of Christ when He will establish His kingdom and fulfill those promises made to David.
 "In summary, in the Davidic messianic kingdom Christ is the Ruler; He will rule over the earth and its inhabitants during the 1,000 years that follow His second coming."

- (3) The mystery form of the kingdom – “In Matthew 13 Christ revealed mysteries concerning the concept of the kingdom (v. 11). In accord with the meaning of ‘mystery,’ this means He told the disciples some things about the kingdom which were previously unknown. This idea of the kingdom, then, began when the Lord was teaching and will end at His second advent (vv. 39-40). In other words, it is the concept of kingdom used to encompass the period between the two advents of Christ. The Ruler is God. The ruled are people on the earth who have related themselves in a positive, neutral, or negative way to ‘Christendom’ (including true believers, professing people, rejecters, and even opponents). The time is the period between His comings.”
 - (4) The spiritual kingdom – “Spiritual may not be the best label (I take it from James Buswell, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.], 2:346), but nothing seems better to characterize this concept of kingdom. It refers to the kingdom into which all believers have been placed (Col. 1:13), and it is entered by the new birth. The Ruler is Christ; in this concept of the kingdom He rules over believers only; and the relationship exists now.”
- c. The relationship of the church to these kingdoms
- (1) To the universal kingdom – “In the sense that the church is in the world it is part of God’s universal kingdom. He designed it, brought it into being, and rules over it, as He does all aspects of His universe.”
 - (2) To the Davidic/messianic kingdom – “The church is not a part of this kingdom at all. When this kingdom is established the church will have been resurrected and will reign with Christ over the millennial kingdom.”
 - (3) To the mystery form of the kingdom – “Since the church is part of Christendom, she is part of this concept of kingdom.”
 - (4) To the spiritual kingdom – “The true church, the body of Christ, is equivalent to this concept of kingdom.

“If one were to try to summarize the relationship of the church to the kingdom, he would have to say that it is related but not equivalent to certain concepts of the kingdom; it is unrelated to another concept; and it is equivalent to another. The concept of kingdom must be defined before one can determine the relationship of the church to it” (*Basic Theology*, pp. 397 – 398).

3. It is not a building structure composed of wood, bricks, nails and mortar.
4. It is not a state or national organization – Earl Radmacher writes:

It is common today, especially in European countries, to witness a close connection between the state and the church so that one particular church is governed and supported by the state. It is interesting to note that all of the leading reformers, who so heroically freed the church from the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope, fastened a state church upon the people wherever they went and the churches which stood for absolute religious liberty were persecuted by these state churches. (*The Nature of the Church*, p. 149)

5. It is not a denominational organization – Again, Radmacher writes: “People often speak of the various denominations or churches, as, for instance, the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church; but this use of *ekklesia* is never found in the Scriptures” (Ibid., p. 150).
6. It is not what the Roman Catholic theologians say it is.

It has been seen that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the church falls into two divisions, namely, the mystical body of Christ and the church on earth. These do not refer to two different churches, for the constituency of each one is the same; but they refer to two aspects of the church. Because of the identification of the mystical body with the visible church, their conclusion is that there is no salvation outside of the visible church. Although there are numerous books on the Protestant-Catholic dialogue and their ecumenical interests, it has been noted that any “return” of Protestants to Rome must involve the recognition of the Pope as the viceregent of Christ. (Ibid., p. 368)

7. It is not what the liberal theologians say it is.

Liberalism, being strongly influenced by the social gospel, saw little need for the local churches, which simply impeded the progress of the transformation of society by feverishly clinging to their ecclesiastical dogmas and traditions. The church was regarded as being extraneous to the Christian faith, and a strictly human, mundane organization. (Ibid., p. 369)

8. It is not what the neo-liberal theologians say it is.

Neo-liberalism, reacting against the worldly, human organization of the liberals, brought in a new sense of the importance of the church. They have come to believe that there is a church over and beyond the split denominations. It is a living society, begun in the work of Jesus and continuing that work through the ages. Thus, it is not simply a social organization; it is a divine institution, founded by God. This institution is often referred to by neo-liberals as the *koinonia*, the spiritual fellowship of all those who have committed themselves to the reign of God. One must not be deceived by the seeming orthodoxy, for in reality it is a subtle form of existentialism in which the church is simply a subjective state of being as regards the I-Thou encounter. Neo-liberalism denies that the organized church was in the plan of Christ. (Ibid., p. 369)

9. It is not what the neo-orthodox theologians say it is.

Neo-orthodoxy has some striking similarities to neo-liberalism as regards the doctrine of the church, especially concerning the fluid nature of it. The church is an "event," that is, "The church is not constituted once for all, but that it is continually being recreated by renewed divine activity." There are striking differences, however. Not only does Barth give much greater place to the Holy Spirit as Creator of the church, but, whereas neo-liberalism tends to think of the organized church as a necessary evil, Barth feels that it is *the church*. Finally, he believes that the one, holy, universal church exists in each of the local congregations. (Ibid., p. 369)

10. It is not what the neo-evangelical theologians say it is.

Neo-evangelicalism finds one of its most serious differences with fundamentalism in its doctrine of the church. Neo-evangelicalism tends to sacrifice the purity of the church for the peace and unity of the church. It is their opinion that heretics and unbelievers within the church do not affect the nature of the church. Thus, they are willing to sacrifice purity for unity and opportunity. The job of separating the wheat from the tares, they say, will be Christ's at the second advent. Little attention is given to the New Testament passages demanding definite discipline and purgation in the church. Because the neo-evangelicalist believes that rapprochement can be effected with liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, he is willing to subordinate doctrinal particularity, (Ibid., p. 369)

- B. The church considered from a positive viewpoint – We have briefly examined some 10 things that the church is *not*. Now the question: What *is* the church?

1. The concepts involved – Here three distinct positions may be seen:

- a. First position – This view holds that the *ekklesia* of the New Testament refers only to those geographical groups of baptized believers who regularly assemble, led by pastors and deacons, for the purpose of worship, instruction, fellowship, and evangelism. This position, of course, would categorically deny the existence of a universal and invisible church.

Thomas Paul Simmons holds this view. He writes:

Now the imaginary universal, invisible church never functions collectively. It holds no services, observes no ordinances, sends out and supports no missionaries. It is simply a colossal nonentity, without function, purpose, or reason for existence. It is the local church that functions for Christ. And it is the local church alone that can rightly be called the body of Christ. (A *Systematic Study of Bible Doctrine*, p. 353)

The extreme of this view is the bride-of-Christ position that says only a select group will compose the Savior's bride. Robert Lightner observes, "The view of the above is not too dissimilar from Roman Catholicism, which also denies the universal church. It teaches that no one can be a part of Christ's mystical body who is not a member of the visible Roman Catholic church" (*Evangelical Theology*, p. 237).

- b. Second position – This view holds that the *ekklesia* of the New Testament refers primarily (if not only) to that invisible body of Christ, composed of all believers, saved from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture. The extreme of this view is to downplay, if not actually deny the worth of local church assemblies, substituting instead swimming pool baptismal parties, coffee house evangelism, and ecumenical religious dialogues and buzz sessions.
 - c. Third position – This view holds that the *ekklesia* of the New Testament embraces both the total body of Christ (including living and departed believers) and individual local assemblies, with the main emphasis being placed on the latter meaning. This position is held by most Bible students.
2. The conclusion involved – Assuming the third position is the correct one, consider the following:
- a. The references:
 - (1) Passages describing the universal church – Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 15:9; Galatians 1:13; 3:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:25-32; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 19:6-9. Note especially the following:
 - (a) “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).
 - (b) “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).
 - (c) “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:9).
 - (d) “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).
 - (e) “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).
 - (f) “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:23).
 - (g) “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7).
 - (2) Passages describing the local church – There are some 27 specific local churches referred to in the New Testament. Here are but a few of the biblical passages referring to the local church: Acts 11:26; 13:1; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 2; Revelation 1:4.
 - (a) “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).
 - (b) Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2).
 - (c) “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers” (1 Thess. 1:1).
 - (d) “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne” (Rev. 1:4).
 - b. The requirements – In a certain sense of the word it may be stated there is a twofold requirement imposed by the Scriptures for belonging to both the universal and local church. These have to do with the subjects of the new birth and baptism. Consider:
 - (1) Universal church requirements
 - (a) That a person be born again – “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).
 - (b) That a person be baptized – “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into

one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). The baptism here, of course, is spirit baptism into the body of Christ. (See also Rom. 6:3-5; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12.)

(2) Local church requirements:

- (a) That a person be born again – “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:44, 47).
- (b) That a person be baptized – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

The baptism in mind here is water baptism, a public testimony to one’s faith in Christ. Charles Ryrie asks:

What constitutes a local church? Does a church exist wherever and whenever two or three believers are gathered in the name of Christ? If so, then every Christian home would also be a Christian church. How much organization is necessary to have a local church? Some say the less the better while others opt for a developed organization.

The New Testament does not contain a formal definition of a local church. However, it does describe the normal features of a local assembly. On the basis of these features we can formulate a definition of a local church. It is an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to carry out God’s will. Notice the important facets of that definition. (1) Those who do not make a profession of faith are excluded. The profession may not be genuine, but it must be made. (2) Without debating the mode of baptism, it is clear that the New Testament knows nothing of unbaptized church members. (3) A church always has some kind of organization, and in the New Testament organization was instituted as soon as possible (Acts 14:23). (4) A church exists for a purpose – to do God’s will. This includes a number of things: observing the ordinances, evangelizing, building up believers, worship, giving, ministering to all age groups, etc. A specialized ministry to a particular age group cannot be a church even though it may have features and activities similar to a church. But because it does not open its doors to all professing believers it is not a church. (*Basic Theology*, p. 405)

IV. The Purpose of the Church

A. Its purpose considered from a negative viewpoint

1. The purpose of the church is not to save the world – The leaven of Matthew 13:33 is certainly not a picture of the gospel permeating and purifying society, thus turning it into the golden age of the Millennium. To the contrary, world events will sour and become much worse before they get better.
“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:1-7). (See also 2 Pet. 3:1-5.)
2. The purpose of the church is not to serve the world – Nowhere in the New Testament is the church told to lobby for stronger pollution laws, or march for civil rights, or stage “pray-ins” for unpopular wars. This is not, of course, to say that individual believers cannot be involved in social action.
3. The purpose of the church is not to fight the world – All too often Bible believers fall victim to this error. Although there are those special occasions when local churches simply must stand up and thunder out against immorality and sin, the church’s job is not to expend all its energies and resources fighting dictatorships and alcoholism.
4. The purpose of the church is not to imitate the world – It has been sadly observed that today the church is so worldly and (on occasion) the world so churchy that angels themselves could not separate the

- two. For the first three centuries of its history, the church was bitterly opposed by Satan from without. Then, with the advent of Constantine and “Christendom,” the devil abruptly changed his tactics, put on his Easter Sunday clothes, walked the church aisle, and applied for church membership. The church is in the world, but not to be of the world.
5. The purpose of the church is not to isolate itself from the world – This is the opposite error from that of imitation. About the time of Constantine there arose a new religious movement known as “monasticism.” The philosophy of monasticism was that one could escape the perversions of the world by removing himself from the peoples of this world. From this interesting but totally unrealistic belief came the monks and monasteries of the Middle Ages. But the job of the church is not to spend its life in silent contemplation high in the mountains somewhere.
- B. Its purpose considered from a positive viewpoint – One of the great Bible teachers of this century was C. I. Scofield, author of the Scofield Reference Edition of the Bible. But many cannot agree with him concerning the purpose of the church. Scofield writes:

Much is said concerning the “mission of the church.” The “church which is his body” has for its mission to build itself up until the body is complete (Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 2:19), but the visible church, as such, is charged with no mission. The commission to evangelize the world is personal, and not corporate. So far as the Scripture story goes, the work of evangelization was done by individuals called directly of the Holy Spirit to that work. Churches and individuals helped the work of these men, but there is no trace of any corporate responsibility attaching to “the church” as such. (*Bible Correspondence Course*, III, p. 431)

It is almost inconceivable to read these words from the pen of such a scriptural giant. Surely Paul would not have agreed with him. The driving force behind his evil actions prior to conversion was to destroy every single local church. “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3). The burning purpose after his salvation was to start local churches. “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

The sole reason for his second missionary trip was to establish those churches. “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches” (Acts 15:36, 41). (See also Acts 16:5.)

One of his heaviest burdens was for the welfare of those local churches. “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28). Of his 13 known New Testament epistles, 9 are directly written to local churches, and 3 to pastors of local churches. In these epistles he gives detailed instruction concerning the worship services (see 1 Cor. 11:1-16), communion (see 1 Cor. 11:17-34), gifts (see 1 Cor. 12), and officer responsibilities (see 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1) for local churches.

In view of the above, it is difficult indeed to conclude that Paul looked upon the church as an institution without program, plan, or purpose. The facts are that Christ has literally loaded down his church with many and manifold responsibilities and tasks.

1. Responsibilities concerning the Savior
 - a. It is to love God – “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4).

During the heyday of Hollywood in the forties and fifties, there developed in our country the concept of the fan club. These gatherings consisted of admirers of a Hollywood movie star. The basic purpose of the fan club was thus to propagate the name and fame of that one so honored. In a very real sense local churches may be viewed in this light. They are fan clubs to elevate and exalt, promote and praise the name of Jesus that “name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9).
 - b. It is to glorify God – “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.... [The Holy Spirit] is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:5-6, 11-12, 14). (See also Eph. 3:21.) “That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:12).

How do we glorify God?

- (1) Through our praise and prayer – "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God" (Psa. 50:23). "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15).
 - (2) Through our fruit bearing – "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).
 - (3) Through our giving – "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18). "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16).
 - (4) Through our preaching and ministry – "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11)
 - (5) Through our loving – "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:5-6).
 - (6) Through our acknowledging of God's Son – "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).
 - (7) Through our believing of God's Word – "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20).
 - (8) Through our suffering – "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me" (John 21:18-19). "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:14, 16).
 - (9) Through our witnessing – "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you" (2 Thess. 3:1).
- c. It is to display God's grace – "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:6, 10). "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).
2. Responsibilities concerning the Scriptures
 - a. It is to read it – "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13).
 - b. It is to heed it – "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16).
 - c. It is to deed it – "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:1-2). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).
 3. Responsibilities concerning the saints
 - a. It is to baptize believers (Matt. 28:19).
 - b. It is to instruct believers – Paul Enns writes:

Teaching is an important factor in edification, and it made up a vital part of the New Testament church. Members of the early church steadfastly devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42). They taught the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:2); they taught continually, as they had opportunity (Acts 5:21, 25), to the extent that the entire city of Jerusalem was saturated with the teaching about Christ and His atonement (Acts 5:28). The heart of their message was that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (Acts 5:42; 17:3). Teaching the new believers resulted in their maturity (Acts 11:26; 15:35).

The goal of Paul's teaching was to present a believer mature in Christ (Col. 1:28); hence, teaching was to be an ongoing practice to succeeding generations (2 Tim. 2:2). Failure to do so or failure to respond to teaching resulted in spiritual babyhood (Heb. 5:12). A simple concordance study will reveal the importance of teaching as a New Testament emphasis.

Teaching is the antidote to false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3); it produces love among believers (1 Tim. 1:5); it provides spiritual nourishment (1 Tim. 4:6); godliness (1 Tim. 4:6-16); submission (1 Tim. 5:17; 6:2); and a proper focus on life (1 Tim. 6:17). Paul instructed Timothy to teach others in order to reproduce himself (2 Tim. 2:2; cf. 1 Tim. 4:14, 16; 6:20). (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, pp. 353, 365)

- c. It is to edify believers – “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor. 14:26). “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 Thess. 5:11). “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).
- d. It is to discipline believers – “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17).

Note: The reason for and recipients of church discipline will be discussed at a later point of our study.

- e. It is to provide fellowship for believers – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). “Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” (2 Cor. 8:4). “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13:14).

“And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal. 2:9). “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:3, 6-7).

John MacArthur, Jr., writes:

The New Testament word for fellowship is *koinonia*. It means communion or fellowship – intimate communication. God designed men for fellowship, In Genesis 2:18, God says, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” Man was not made to be isolated; being alone is not the will of God. People were made for fellowship. And the church, the body of Christ, is the epitome of fellowship. The church was never intended to be only a building – a place where lonely people walk in, listen, and walk out still alone – but a place of fellowship.

Bruce Larson says, “The neighborhood bar is possibly the best counterfeit there is to the fellowship Christ wants to give His Church. It's an imitation dispensing liquor instead of grace, escape rather than reality. But it is a permissive, accepting, and

inclusive fellowship. It is unshockable, it is democratic. You can tell people secrets and they usually don't tell others, or want to. The bar flourishes, not because most people are alcoholics, but because God has put into the human heart the desire to know and be known, to love, and be loved, and so many seek a counterfeit at the price of a few beers."

This need for fellowship is the genius of the church. (*The Church, The Body of Christ*, p. 169)

MacArthur goes on to discuss the basis, nature, dangers, and responsibilities involved within this blessed fellowship.

- (1) The basis of Christian fellowship: the person of Christ – “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).
- (2) The nature of Christian fellowship: sharing – “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:44-47).

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:32, 34-35).
- (3) The dangers of losing Christian fellowship: sin – “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. 10:16, 21).
- (4) The responsibilities of Christian fellowship:
 - (a) Confess our faults – “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (James 5:16).
 - (b) Rebuke sin in each other – “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:20).
 - (c) Forgive one another – “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many..., Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him” (2 Cor. 2:6, 8). “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13).
 - (d) Bear one another’s burdens – “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).
 - (e) Gently restore one another – “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).
 - (f) Prefer the weaker brother – “Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Rom. 14:13). “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1).
 - (g) Comfort and exhort each other – “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:18). “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 5:11).
 - (h) Pray one for another – “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

- (i) Edify one another – “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19). “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24); see also 1 Thess. 5:11
 - (j) Admonish one another – “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Rom. 15:14).
- f. It is to care for its own in time of need.
- (1) Those needy believers without the local church – This would include hurting Christians who are members of another local church. “And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea. Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:27-30).
 - (2) Those needy believers within the local church
 - (a) The poverty-stricken – “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (James 2:15-16). “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17).
 - (b) The fatherless (James 1:27)
 - (c) Widows – Charles Ryrie comments:

At the time of Christ there existed a fund in the temple which was used to support widows and orphans. When many Jewish widows were converted to Christianity the church undertook their continued support. However, Paul makes it crystal clear in the central passage on the subject that a widow’s family has the first and primary obligation to care for the widow. This is true of both younger, unenrolled widows (1 Tim. 5:4, 8) and of any older, enrolled widows (v. 16).

If there are no relatives to support a widow, then the church must assume that obligation, regardless of the age of the widow. A “widow indeed” is not necessarily an enrolled widow but one who is destitute in that she has no family to support her (v. 5). Therefore, her church family must underwrite her support. Younger widows are encouraged to remarry (v. 14); widows who qualify can be put on the church roll after age sixty (vv. 9-10).

What should a church do about this responsibility in a day of social security, insurance, annuities, and other financial provisions often made for a widow? The principles seem clear: to whatever extent her own family cannot support her (whether through living relatives or through the provision of relatives who have died), the church should assume the obligation whether it means partial or full support. Needs often exist today for widows of Christian workers who are left in need through no fault of their own. (*Basic Theology*, p. 435).
 - (d) Missionaries – “And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own” (2 Cor. 8:1-3, NIV).
4. Responsibilities concerning sinners – “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (Rom. 1:14-15).
- In a sentence, it is to evangelize the world. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19-20). “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to

every creature" (Mark 16:15). "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Gordon G. Johnson writes:

One day Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, medical missionary to Labrador, was guest at dinner in London, together with a number of socially prominent British men and women. During the course of the dinner the lady seated next to him turned and said, "Is it true, Dr. Grenfell, that you are a missionary?" Dr. Grenfell looked at her for a moment before replying. Then he said, "Is it true, madam, that you are not?" (*My Church*, p. 88)

5. Responsibilities concerning society

- a. It is to act as a restraining and enlightening force in this present world – "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16).
- b. It is to promote all that is good – "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

Henry Thiessen writes:

While the believer is to separate from all worldly alliances (2 Cor. 6:14-18), he is yet to support all causes that seek to promote the social, economic, political, and educational welfare of the community. Paul says: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10).

Here we note that we have a primary duty toward fellow believers, but that we also have a duty toward the rest of the world. In this day of social service it is necessary to be clear as to the place of this ministry toward the world. Jesus' practice is the best example to follow. He always subordinated physical and other material help to the spiritual. He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, though his principal mission was never lost sight of (Acts 10:38-43). We should devote ourselves to social service on the same principle on which a man picks up sharp nails that he finds in the street on the way to his work. It is one thing for him to devote his entire time to ridding the streets of nails, and another to remove such nails as he can without interfering with his main task. That is, the work of reformation must be definitely subordinated to the work of evangelization. So also in the case of philanthropy. The Christian should make all his benevolences bear testimony to Christ. Jesus may have fed the five thousand as a humanitarian act; but He certainly did it primarily as a testimony to His own power and deity. Clearly, He went to dinners and suppers in order to testify to the truth. It appears that he healed the man born blind in order to win his soul (John 9:35-38). In other words, the Christian must make all his good works testify to Christ, (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p. 436)

In summary, it may be said that the job of a local church is to make as many people as much like Jesus in the shortest time possible. God the Father is so much in love with his beloved Son that he desires to populate the entire universe throughout eternity with those individuals which resemble Jesus Christ. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). But he desires to start the work in repenting sinners down here right now.

An unknown poet has written the following:

I want my church to be a place, where I can meet God face to face.

*I want each worship hour so sweet, that I can feel each time we meet, the Lord
Himself will take His seat.
I want my church to be far more than table, window, pew and door, or carpet laid
upon the floor.
But oh, I know it cannot be more than that which is found in me,
So teach me Lord, to live for thee!*

6. Responsibilities concerning the seed of Abraham (Israel) – In essence, it is to provoke Israel to jealousy, Robert L. Saucy writes:

The extension of the blessings of salvation to those outside Israel during the age of the church when Israel is judicially blinded is designed by God to effect the final salvation of Israel and the fulfillment of her covenant promises. This in turn will bring the full Messianic blessing upon all nations (Rom. 11:11-15). The apostle explains this intent of God when he says of Israel, “They did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous” (v. 11, NASB: cf, 10:10). The apostle magnified his ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles according to his testimony that “somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them” (11:14, NASB).

Through the grafting in of the Gentiles into the root of the Abrahamic blessing which initially belonged to Israel, God purposes by the church to bring a jealousy upon Israel which will cause her to desire to return to the place of blessing through repentance and the acknowledgment of Christ as her true Messiah. (*The Church in God’s Program*, p. 89)

IV. The Founding of the Church – One of the most important events in the life of Christ prior to his crucifixion took place at Caesarea Philippi in northern Galilee perhaps at the base of mighty Mount Hermon.

A. The information involved

1. The probing of Christ – “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matt. 16:13)
 - a. The rumors – “And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?” (Matt. 16:14-15).
 - b. The recognition – “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).
 - c. The revelation – “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt 16:17).
2. The promise of Christ
 - a. What he would provide for his disciples – “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:19).
 - b. What he would present to his disciples – “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19).
3. The passion of Christ – “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt. 16:21).
4. The provoking of Christ – “Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt. 16:22-23).

B. The interpretation involved

1. Was Jesus building his church upon Peter and planning to make him its first pope? It may be clearly stated that he was not.
 - a. Because Christ later gave the same responsibilities to the other apostles that he here gives to Peter. (Compare Matt. 16:19 with John 20:22-23.)
 - b. Because the New Testament clearly presents Christ and Christ only as the Foundation of his church. (See Acts 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-8.)

- c. Because the New Testament clearly presents Christ and Christ only as the Head of his church. (See Eph. 1:20-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:18-19.)
 - d. Because of the Greek language – There is a play upon words here. Jesus said, "Thou art Peter [*petros*, a little stone], and upon this rock [*petra*, a massive cliff or rock] I will build my church."
 - e. Because of Peter's personal testimony. (See 1 Pet. 5:1-4.)
 - f. Because James, not Peter, later officiated at the Jerusalem church. (See Acts 15:13, 19.)
2. What then, was Christ doing? The answer is given in Ephesians. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).
 3. What did he mean by "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it?" J. Vernon McGee writes: "The gates of hell refer to the 'gates of death.' The word used here is the *hades* and sheol of the Old Testament which refers to the unseen world and means death. The gates of death shall not prevail against Christ's church" (*Matthew*, vol. II, p. 23).
 4. What were the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" that Jesus gave Peter? A key, of course, unlocks doors and makes available something that was previously closed. Jesus here predicts that Peter would be given the privilege of opening the door of salvation to various peoples. This he later did.
 - a. He opened the door of Christian opportunity to Israel at Pentecost (Acts 2:38-42).
 - b. He did the same thing for the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17).
 - c. He performed this ministry to the Gentiles at Cornelius's house at Caesarea (Acts 10).
 5. What did Christ mean by the binding and loosing of Matthew 16:19? This authority was given to all the apostles and even other believers. (See Matt. 18:18; John 20:22-23.) W. A. Criswell writes:

In Greek the future perfect tense is used to express the double notion of an action terminated in the past but whose effects are still existing in the present. "Having been bound and still bound," and "having been loosed and still loosed." The meaning is: if the disciples act in their proper capacity as stewards, they will be acting in accordance with the principles and elective purposes ordained beforehand in heaven. (*Expository Notes on Matthew*, p. 101)

In other words, all the actions of the Spirit-filled believer, whether positive or negative in nature, will carry with it the awesome authority of heaven itself.

- C. The illustration involved – Matthew 16 can be favorably compared with Genesis 11 and John 6.
 1. The Matthew 16/Genesis 11 comparison
 - a. Both chapters describe the beginning of a church – Genesis 11:1-9 records the origin of Satan's church. Archaeological evidence has proven the tower of Babel was in reality a religious temple, probably given over to the worship of the stars.
 - b. Both chapters describe God's dealings with those churches.
 - (1) Satan's church was punished by God (Gen. 11:8).
 - (2) Christ's church will be preserved by God (Matt. 16:18).
 - (3) Satan's church will be destroyed by the Antichrist during the great tribulation (Rev. 17:16)
 - (4) Christ's church will be delivered by the true Christ from the great tribulation (1 Thess. 4:16-17)
 2. The Matthew 16/John 6 comparison
 - a. Both chapters record the testimony of Peter
 - (1) The John 6 testimony – "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:66-69)
 - (2) The Matthew 16 testimony – "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).
 - b. Both chapters record the treachery of the devil.
 - (1) The treachery in John 6 – "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve" (John 6:70-71).

- (2) The treachery seen in Matthew 16 – “But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt. 16:23).

VI. The History, Growth, and Character of the Various New Testament Churches – In 1 Corinthians 10:11 Paul writes: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

Here, he refers to those Old Testament events. But we may with scriptural justification apply these same words to the events recorded for us in the New Testament. Present-day church leaders will profit greatly by examining the joys, sorrows, sins, and strong points of these early churches. The following is a brief summary of 27 such New Testament churches.

A. The church in Jerusalem (Acts 1 – 7, 11-12, 15; Epistle of James)

1. Its origin – It began on the day of Pentecost, 10 days after the ascension, in the Upper Room at the advent of the Holy Spirit. “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:8). And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:1-2).
2. Its duration – How long did it exist? It functioned for some 40 years. Jesus ascended in A.D. 30 and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. Just prior to its destruction, the Christians in Jerusalem escaped to an area east of the Jordan River.
3. Its size – To say the very least, the Jerusalem church experienced both a phenomenal, and probably, unprecedented numerical growth. Consider:
 - a. It began with 120 (Acts 1:15)
 - b. It soon jumped to 3,120 – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).
 - c. From there it leaped to 8,120 – “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand” (Acts 4:4). Note: The 5,000 figure here refers only to men. Doubtless many women and children were also added to the church, making the actual count much higher.
 - d. It continued to mushroom in its growth – “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 5:14; 6:7).
4. Its leaders – Perhaps no other Christian assembly in history has had the various kinds of leaders and leadership as did the Jerusalem Church. This included:
 - a. Pastor – There is evidence that James, the half brother of Christ and author of the New Testament book of James, served as pastor. Consider:
 - (1) For some reason he was afforded a personal, post-resurrection appearance by Christ himself. (See 1 Cor. 15:7.)
 - (2) For some reason his book was the first New Testament epistle to be written.
 - (3) Peter refers to him personally after being released from prison – “But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place” (Acts 12:16-17).
 - (4) Paul refers to him personally when describing his first trip to Jerusalem following the Damascus Road conversion – “But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.... And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal. 1:19; 2:9).
 - (5) It was James who presided over the Jerusalem Council and who announced its decision concerning whether saved Gentiles should be circumcised – “And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me.... Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God” (Acts 15:13, 19).
 - (6) It was James who welcomed Paul back to Jerusalem following the apostle’s third missionary journey – “And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present” (Acts 21:18).

- b. Apostles – In addition to the original 12 apostles (with Matthias replacing Judas Iscariot; Acts 1:23-25), there were several other men appointed to the high office of apostleship. These included:
 - (1) Joseph called Barsabas (Acts 1:23)
 - (2) Judas (Acts 15:22)
 - (3) Silas (1 Thess. 1:1; Acts 15:22)
 - (4) Barnabas (Acts 15:22)
 - (5) James (Gal. 1:19)
 - (6) Paul (Rom. 1:1)
 With the single exception of Paul all the apostles originally ministered in the Jerusalem church.
 - c. Prophets
 - (1) Agabus – “And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar” (Acts 11:27-28).
 - (2) Judas and Silas – “And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them” (Acts 15:32).
 - d. Priests – “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).
 - e. Elders (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 21:18) – These elders may have served as associate pastors along with James, the half brother of Christ.
 - f. Teachers (Acts 5:21, 25, 42) – Apparently the apostles themselves served in this capacity.
 - g. Deacons (Acts 6:1-6) – “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch” (Acts 6:3, 5).
 - h. Missionaries
 - (1) Philip, who was sent to Samaria and Gaza strip (Acts 8:5, 26)
 - (2) Peter and John, who were sent to Samaria (Acts 8:14)
 - (3) Barnabas, who was sent to Antioch (Acts 11:19-22)
 - i. Evangelists
 - (1) Stephen seemed to serve in this capacity (Acts 6:8-7:60).
 - (2) John Mark (nephew of Barnabas and author of the Gospel of Mark) may have become an evangelist.
 - (3) Philip became an evangelist (Acts 8:5, 26, 39-40).
5. Its accomplishments
- a. It observed the ordinances.
 - (1) That of baptism – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).
 - (2) That of the Lord’s Supper – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).
 - b. It enjoyed unity – “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:1, 46).
 - c. It practiced a form of commonism – Note, there is a vast difference between this and communism.
 - (1) Communism says, “What is thine is mine, if I can take it from you!”
 - (2) Commonism says, “What is mine is thine if you need it!” “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:44-45). (See also Acts 4:32-37.)
 - d. It was a praying church – “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). (See also Acts 2:42; 3:1; 4:24-31; 12:12.)
 - e. It was a Spirit-led church – “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).
 - (1) As reflected by a champion in the church – “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:55, 59).

- (2) As reflected by a conclusion by the church – “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28).
- f. It continually evangelized (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7) – “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14). “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).
- g. It preached a threefold message – “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).
- (1) His crucifixion (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:15; 5:30)
 - (2) His resurrection (Acts 2:24, 31-32; 3:15; 4:2, 33; 5:30)
 - (3) His ascension (Acts 2:33; 3:13; 5:34)
- h. It was a miracle-working church – “And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43). (See also Acts 3:8; 5:12, 15-16; 6:8; 8:6; 9:34, 40.)
- i. It was ministered to by angels.
- (1) An angel released the imprisoned apostles (Acts 5:17-20).
 - (2) An angel sent Philip to the Gaza desert (Acts 8:26).
 - (3) An angel delivered Peter from death row (Acts 12:7).
 - (4) An angel slew a bitter enemy of the church, Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:23).
- j. It rebuked sin (Acts 2:23; 5:3; 7:51-53; 8:20-21).
- (1) As demonstrated by Simon Peter – “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).
 - (2) As demonstrated by Stephen – “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:51-52).
- k. It displayed great boldness – “And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 4:18-20; 5:29).
- l. It experienced severe persecution.
- (1) It was ridiculed – “Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13).
 - (2) It was threatened (Acts 4:21).
 - (3) It was imprisoned (Acts 4:1-3; 5:18; 12:5).
 - (4) It was slandered (Acts 6:12-13).
 - (5) It was beaten (Acts 5:40-41) – “And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:40-41).
 - (6) It was scattered (Acts 8:2-3).
 - (7) It was stoned to death (Acts 7:57-60).
 - (8) It was beheaded (Acts 12:1-2).
- m. It hastened the first church conference (Acts 15).
- n. It anointed its sick with oil and prayed for them (James 5:14-16).
6. Its problems
- a. It backslid into legalism on occasion, especially in matters of circumcision.
- (1) Peter was criticized for ministering to and fellowshiping with uncircumcised Gentile believers (Acts 11:1-3).
 - (2) Some in the church felt believing Gentiles should be forced to circumcise themselves – “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).
 - (3) Peter himself was later rebuked by Paul for refusing to fellowship with uncircumcised Gentile believers (Gal. 2:11-13) – “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal. 2:11).
 - (4) Apparently both James, the half brother of Christ, and Barnabas were also guilty of this (Gal. 2:12-13).
- b. It was on occasion guilty of discrimination.

- (1) Favoring the Hebrew widows over the Greek widows – “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration” (Acts 6:1).
- (2) Favoring the rich over the poor (James 2:1-9) – “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that wareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” (James 2:1-4)
- c. It may have had members who were long on faith but short on works – “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). ‘What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:14-17, 26).
- d. It may have had members who continually gossiped and perhaps even slandered others – “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge” (James 1:26; 3:2; 4:11).

Note: These passages in James have been quoted on the assumption that the author was indeed the pastor of the Jerusalem church and that he was probably addressing various situations within that assembly.

B. The church in Samaria (Acts 8:1-25)

1. Its origin – The church was founded by those believers from Jerusalem who had been scattered following the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1-2, 4).
2. Its leaders
 - a. Philip – “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:5-8, 12).
 - b. Peter and John – “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John” (Acts 8:14).
3. Its importance
 - a. It signified a partial fulfillment of Christ’s final prophecy before his ascension – “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
 - b. It marked the first recorded instance involving direct Satanic opposition leveled against a local church.
 - (1) The person involved – “But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one” (Acts 8:9).
 - (2) The perversion involved – “And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:18-19).
 - (3) The punishment involved – “But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:20-23).

- c. It continued to grow and mature in the Lord (Acts 9:31).
- C. The church in Lydda (Acts 9:32-35) – “To the saints which dwelt at Lydda” (9:32b).
 - 1. Peter healed a man in Lydda named Aeneas who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years.
 - 2. This miracle led to the conversion of many in Lydda and also nearby Sharon.
- D. The church in Joppa (Acts 9:36-43)
 - 1. A godly believer named Dorcas died in Joppa.
 - a. She was always doing kind things for others, especially for the poor (9:36).
 - b. She had made many coats and garments for the widows (9:39).
 - 2. Upon being summoned, Peter arrived and raised her from the dead (9:40).
 - 3. This led to the salvation of many in Joppa (9:42).
- E. The church in Caesarea (Acts 10:1-48)
 - 1. Through a vision, Simon Peter was instructed to visit Caesarea and lead Cornelius, a Roman military man and a seeking sinner, to Christ (Acts 10:1-23).
 - 2. Peter arrived in Caesarea and related the gospel to Cornelius – “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly.... And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:38-40, 42-43).
 - 3. Cornelius and his household accepted the message and spoke in tongues (10:44-46).
 - 4. Peter baptized them and remained far awhile to instruct them in the faith (10:47-48).
 - 5. Philip the evangelist and his family would apparently assume a leadership role in the Caesarean church at a later date – Luke describes the visit he and Paul made to Philip’s home during the apostle’s final missionary journey. “And the next day we that were of Paul’s company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy” (Acts 21:8-9).
- F. The church in Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3)
 - 1. Its origin. The church was founded during the persecution that followed the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1; 11:19-20).
 - 2. Its early growth – “And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:21).
 - 3. Its leaders
 - a. Barnabas – “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord” (Acts 11:22-24).
 - b. Saul – “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:25-26).
 - c. Symeon, Lucius, and Manaen (Acts 13:1)
 - d. John Mark (Acts 12:25; 13:2,5)
 - e. Silas (Acts 15:30, 34)
 - 4. Its importance
 - a. This is where believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).
 - b. It was the first church where both believing Jews and converts from Gentile paganism came together to form a Christian congregation (Acts 11:19-20).
 - c. It was the first church to minister to the needs of another church. Believers in Antioch sent a love gift to those in Jerusalem suffering because of a famine (Acts 11:27-30).
 - d. It was a praying, fasting, teaching, worshipping, and Spirit-led church – “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3).

- e. It was the church from where Paul's three missionary journeys began and where two of them would end.
 - (1) His first trip (Acts 13:4; 14:26)
 - (2) His second trip (Acts 15:36; 18:22)
 - (3) His third trip (Acts 18:23)
 - f. It was where Paul would set Peter straight on matters of legalism – “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal. 2:11).
- G. The church in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14-50)
1. The origin – It was founded by Paul during his first missionary journey (Acts 13:14).
 2. The occasion
 - a. Paul and Barnabas visited the Jewish synagogue and were invited to address the congregation – “And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on” (Acts 13:15).
 - b. At this time Paul delivered his first recorded sermon (Acts 13:16-41) – “Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience” (13:16). Paul stressed two key points in this message:
 - (1) The preparation for the Messiah
 - (a) the Exodus stage (Acts 13:17-18)
 - (b) the conquest stage (Acts 13:19)
 - (c) the judges stage (Acts 13:20)
 - (d) the United Kingdom stage (Acts 13:21-22)
 - (2) The manifestation of the Messiah
 - (a) The forerunner involved (Acts 13:24-25) – “When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel” (Acts 13:24).
 - (b) The fruits involved – Paul concluded by talking about the death, resurrection, and saving ministry of Jesus Christ (Acts 13:26-41). “And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.... But God raised him from the dead. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins”(Acts 13:28, 30, 38).
 3. The opposition (Acts 13:45, 50) – “But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts” (Acts 13:50).
 4. The open hearts (Acts 13:44, 48-49) – “And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.... And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.”
 5. The outcome (Acts 13:45-47)-“But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”
- H. The church in Iconium (Acts 14:1-6)
1. The witnesses concerning the gospel – “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed” (Acts 14:1).
 2. The wickedness against the gospel – “But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren” (Acts 14:2).
 3. The wonders accompanying the gospel – “Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hand” (Acts 14:3).
- I. The church in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20)
1. The miracle – “And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked” (Acts 14:8-10).

2. The misunderstanding – “And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people” (Acts 14:11-13).
 3. The message – “Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:14-17).
 4. The malice – “And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead” (Acts 14:19).
 5. The man of God – “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Tim. 6:11). Paul later wrote these words concerning Timothy, whom he would select as a team member during the second missionary journey, Timothy’s Christian grandmother (Lois) and his mother (Eunice) lived in Lystra. All three were doubtless faithful members in the church there (Acts 16:1-3; 2 Tim. 1:5).
- J. The church in Derbe (Acts 14:6-7, 21) – “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch” (Acts 14:21).
- Note: A commonly held theory is that Paul originally wrote his first epistle, the book of Galatians, to the three churches in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. If this be true, then the following characteristics found in Galatians apply to the members in these churches:
1. They had been turned from the grace of God to the legalism of works by the Judaizers (Gal. 1:6-8; 2:1-3).
 - a. They desired to be back under the law (4:9, 21; 5:4).
 - b. They observed days and months, seasons and years (4:10).
 - c. They practiced circumcision (5:3).
 2. “The Galatians were noted for their impetuosity, fickleness, and love for new and curious things” (*New Scofield Bible*, p. 1264).
 3. They were guilty of slandering each other (5:15, 26).
 4. In spite of all this, they loved Paul and he dearly loved them (4:13-15, 19).
- K. The church in Philippi (Acts 16:12-40; 2 Cor. 8:1-6; 11:9; Philippians)
1. The circumstances involved
 - a. Paul went to Philippi as the result of his Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9-10).
 - b. He quickly led three people to Christ.
 - (1) A businesswoman named Lydia (16:14-15) – Note: It is possible he established the original church in her home. “And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us” (Acts 16:15).
 - (2) A demon-possessed girl (Acts 16:16-18)
 - (3) A jailor (Acts 16:19-34)
 - c. While in a Roman prison, he wrote a letter (book of Philippians) to this church.
 - d. It may have been his favorite church (Phil. 1:7-8).
 2. The characteristics involved – What kind of a church was the assembly in Philippi?
 - a. It was an evangelistic church (Phil. 1:5).
 - b. It had suffered for Christ (Phil. 1:29).
 - c. It repeatedly gave sacrificially to Paul’s support (Phil. 4:15-16; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 11:9).
 - d. It sent one of its most trusted members, Epaphroditus, to minister to the imprisoned Paul in Rome (Phil. 2:25).
 - e. It may have leaned toward legalism (Phil. 3:2).
 - f. It apparently had some selfish and complaining members (Phil. 2:3-4, 14).
 - g. Two of its leading women were at odds with each other (Phil. 4:2-3).
- L. The church in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9; 1 & 2 Thess.)
1. The circumstances involved

- a. It was founded during Paul's second missionary trip following three Sabbath days preaching in the Jewish synagogue (Acts 17:1-4).
 - b. The church may have first met in the house of Jason (Acts 17:5-7).
 - c. Many Greek men and important women in the city were among the early converts (Acts 17:4).
 - d. Paul was later hindered by Satan when he attempted to revisit this church (1 Thess. 2:18).
 - e. It was later ministered to by Timothy (1 Thess. 3:1-3).
2. The characteristics involved.
 - a. It was an example to the believers in Greece (1 Thess. 1:7).
 - b. It had a ringing testimony (1 Thess. 1:8-9)
 - c. It had a great interest in prophecy (1 Thess. 1:10) – It was, however, confused about certain aspects of prophecy.
 - (1) Concerning the nature of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13)
 - (2) Concerning the nature of the great tribulation (2 Thess. 2:1-3)
 - d. It had received Paul's message gladly (1 Thess. 2:13).
 - e. It had not, however, supported the apostle, as did the Philippian church (1 Thess. 2:9).
 - f. It had suffered persecution from its own countrymen (1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4-5).
 - g. The members were not the diligent Bible students, as were the Berean believers (Acts 17:10-11).
 - h. The church may have been tolerating immorality (1 Thess. 4:1-9).
 - i. It had some lazy members (2 Thess. 3:6-10).
 - j. It had some gossipers (2 Thess. 3:11).
 - k. It had some disobedient members (2 Thess. 3:14).
- M. The church in Berea (Acts 17:10-14)
1. It was founded by Paul during his second missionary journey.
 2. Some of its early converts consisted of several prominent Greek men and women (Acts 17:12).
 3. Its members were diligent Bible students – “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).
- N. The church in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)
1. The circumstances involved
 - a. It was founded by Paul during his second missionary journey.
 - b. Paul was invited to preach the gospel to the Epicureans and Stoics (Greek philosophers) on Mars Hill in Athens – “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.... Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:22-23, 31).
 2. The contempt – “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter” (Acts 17:32).
 3. The conversions – “Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (Acts 17:34).
- O. The church in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18; 1 & 2 Cor.)
1. The circumstances involved
 - a. It was founded during Paul's second missionary journey.
 - b. Its original members included Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2); a Gentile named Titus Justus (Acts 18:7); Crispus, the leader of the synagogue (Acts 18:8); and Sosthenes, the leader who succeeded Crispus (Acts 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:1).
 - c. Paul stayed here 18 months (Acts 18:11).
 - d. He would later write several letters to this church, two of which are included in the New Testament canon.
 - (1) The canonical letters: First and Second Corinthians
 - (2) The noncanonical letters – “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators” (1 Cor. 5:9). (See also 2 Cor. 10:9-10.)
 - e. Paul later sent both Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17) and Titus (2 Cor. 7:6-7) to help the church.
 - f. Apollos apparently pastored the church for awhile (1 Cor. 3:6).
 2. The characteristics involved

- a. It was filled with immaturity, carnality, and strife –“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.... And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Cor. 1:11; 3:1-3).
 - b. The church had degenerated into little cliques with membership dependent upon who had baptized them (1:10-17)-“Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:12-13).
 - c. Many were puffed up with pride, considering themselves to be intellectual giants (1 Cor. 3:18; 4:7, 19; 2 Cor, 11:19-20) – “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” (1 Cor. 3:18).
 - d. They felt in need of nothing (1 Cor. 4:8).
 - e. They tolerated gross immorality within the church (1 Cor. 5:1-2; 6:15-18; 2 Cor. 12:21) –“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Cor. 5:1-2).

Note: Some of this no doubt was a carry over from their past lives (1 Cor. 6:10-11).
 - f. They were taking each other to pagan courts (1 Cor. 6:1-6).
 - g. They were ignorant and confused about various issues.
 - (1) That of marriage (1 Cor. 7)
 - (2) That of eating meat sacrificed to an idol (1 Cor. 8)
 - (3) That of Christian liberty (1 Cor. 8-10)
 - (4) That of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12)
 - h. They were making a mockery of the Lord’s Table (1 Cor. 11:17-34).
 - i. They were abusing the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 14).
 - j. Some were denying the doctrine of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15) – “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen” (1 Cor. 15:12-13).
 - k. They were gullible (1 Cor. 11:3-4).
 - l. They were fickle and unstable
 - (1) They refused to remove from their fellowship an unrepentant member (1 Cor. 5:1-2).
 - (2) They refused to restore to their fellowship the same repentant member (2 Cor. 2:5-8; 7:11-12).
 - m. They were being influenced by false teachers (2 Cor. 3:1; 5:12; 10:12; 11:13-15) – “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13).
 - n. They tended to be critical of Paul, especially in matters involving money (2 Cor. 1:17; 7:2; 8:21; 10:1, 10; 11:7-9; 12:13-18).
- P. The church in Ephesus (Acts 18:19 – 20:1, 17-38; Eph.; Rev. 2:1-7)
1. The circumstances involved
 - a. Paul had visited this city at the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21), but probably established the church at the beginning of his third trip (Acts 19:1). Between these two visits, Apollos came to Ephesus and doubtless helped pave the way for the church (Acts 18:24-28).
 - b. Paul was there for three years (Acts 20:31).
 - c. During that time he went door-to-door telling people about Christ (Acts 20:20).
 - d. Twelve former disciples of John the Baptist may have been some of the original members of the church (Acts 19:1-7).
 - e. The first meeting place was at the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10).
 - f. God used Paul’s miracles in bringing many people in Ephesus to Christ – Thus the church experienced rapid growth. “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.... And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned

them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:11-12, 18-20).

- g. The work was at first violently opposed by Demetrius, an influential pagan silversmith (Acts 19:24).
 - h. This was the only Christian church ever to receive letters from two New Testament writers – Paul directed the book of Ephesians to them (Ephesians 1:1), and John the apostle would later direct a portion of Revelation to them (Rev. 2:1-7).
 - i. Paul wrote the Ephesian epistle while he was a prisoner in Rome (Eph. 3:1).
 - j. He had previously written them another noncanonical letter (Eph. 3:2).
 - k. Paul utters two of Scripture’s most beautiful prayers for this church (Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21).
 - l. Paul later sent Tychicus to help the Ephesian church (Eph. 6:21-22).
 - m. Timothy would later pastor the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3).
2. The characteristics involved
- a. It had many patient and hardworking members (Rev. 2:2).
 - b. The church possessed high standards and was intolerant of sin (Rev. 2:2).
 - c. It had exposed the false teachers and apostles in its own fellowship (Rev. 2:2).
 - d. Paul had previously warned of this – “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).
Note: Paul’s sad prediction had apparently later been fulfilled by two such “grievous wolves.” “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:17-18). (See also 1 Tim. 1:3-8.)
 - e. It hated the deeds of the licentious Nicolaitans. Ken Taylor observes, “*Nicolaitans*, when translated from Greek to Hebrew, becomes *Balaamites*; followers of the men who induced the Israelites to fall by lust (see Rev. 2:14 and Num. 31:15-16).” (*The Living New Testament*, p. 615, footnote.)
 - f. It had suffered for Christ without quitting (Rev. 2:3).
 - g. It had, however, left its first love (Rev. 2:4).
 - (1) It was therefore, to *remember* this first love.
 - (2) It was to *rekindle* this first love.
 - (3) It was to *return* to this first love.
 - h. This had resulted in its grieving of the Holy Spirit by various sins (Eph. 4:25-31; 5:3-4).
- Q. The church at Troas (Acts 16:8, 9; 20:6-12)
1. Paul had received his Macedonian vision at Troas during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:8-9).
 2. He revisited Troas at the end of his third missionary trip (Acts 20:6-12).
 3. He was here for only a week (Acts 20:6).
 4. The highlight of this visit centered in a midnight message and a midnight miracle.
 - a. The message – “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep; and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead” (Acts 20:7-9).
 - b. The miracle – “And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted” (Acts 20:10-12).
- R. The church in Rome (Acts 28:24; Rom.; Phil. 1:12-17; 4:21-22)
1. The circumstances involved
 - a. Paul was not the founder of this church
 - b. It probably was not begun by Peter either (compare Rom. 1:11 with 15:20).
 - c. Both Paul and Peter were, however, later martyred in Rome (2 Tim. 4:6; 2 Pet. 1:14).
 - d. The church was probably begun by those converts returning from Pentecost (Acts 2:10).
 - e. The membership consisted of both Jews and Gentiles, but mostly Gentiles (Rom. 1:13; 11:13; 15:16).
 - f. They probably met in several houses (Rom. 16:5, 10-11, 14).

- g. Paul was especially anxious to visit this church.
 - (1) He had expressed this to the church when he wrote them from Corinth – “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established” (Rom. 1:11).
 - (2) He repeated this desire when in Ephesus (Acts 19:21).
 - (3) He was later assured by God himself that this indeed would be the case – “And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11).
 - h. He knew many believers there. In fact, he sent greetings to 26 of his friends (Rom. 16).
 - i. Phoebe, a godly believer from Corinth, probably carried the epistle of Romans to the church (Rom. 16:1).
 - j. Onesiphorus and his family, who were members of the Roman church, ministered greatly to the imprisoned Paul (2 Tim. 1:16-18).
2. The characteristics involved
- a. Paul’s imprisonment had apparently served to identify the sincere and insincere church members – “As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains” (Phil. 1:13-17, NIV).
 - b. The church in general however, gave forth a ringing gospel testimony – “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8).
 - c. In fact, converts could be found in Caesar’s very household (Phil. 1:13; 4:22).
 - d. Some, however, had not consecrated their bodies to Christ (Rom. 12:1-2).
 - e. Others were confused concerning Christian liberty (Rom. 14:1-8, 14-15, 20-23).
 - f. The church also had its share of critics and faultfinders (Rom. 14:10-13).
 - g. A few were outright troublemakers – “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people” (Rom. 16:17-18, NIV).
- S. The church in Crete (book of Titus)
- 1. Titus was instructed by Paul to appoint the various pastors over local assemblies as needed (Titus 1:5).
 - 2. The Cretan church was plagued by the legalistic Judaizers (Titus 1:10-11, 14).
 - 3. The Cretans themselves tended to be dishonest, lazy, and carnal (Titus 1:12).
- T. The church in Colosse (books of Colossians and Philemon)
- 1. The church was founded by Epaphras during Paul’s third missionary journey (Col. 1:7).
 - 2. It apparently had a close relationship with the church at Laodicea (Col. 2:1; 4:16).
 - 3. Philemon may have been the pastor, as the church met in his home (Philem. 1-2).
 - 4. No doubt the converted runaway slave Onesimus who returned to his master Philemon became a faithful member (Col. 4:9; Philem.).
 - 5. Paul sent Tychicus to help in the church (Col. 4:7-8).
 - 6. The church was plagued by the legalistic Judaizers (Col. 2:20-23).
- U. The church in Babylon (1 and 2 Pet.) – “The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son” (1 Pet. 5:13).
- 1. Some feel Peter uses Babylon here as a code name for Rome.
 - 2. Whatever the location, Peter served as an elder (1 Pet. 5:1).
- V. The church in Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-13)
- 1. The church had suffered much for Christ.
 - 2. Some of this suffering involved poverty.
 - 3. They had been slandered by those from the synagogue of Satan.
 - 4. The devil had actually imprisoned some of them.
- W. The church in Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17)
- 1. The good things
 - a. It was located in a city that had become the center of satanic worship.

- b. In spite of this, the church had remained loyal to Christ.
 - c. Antipas, a godly member, had been martyred by the followers of Satan.
 - 2. The grievous things – Christ rebuked this church, however, in one major area: Some of the members were guilty of sexual immorality and had attended idol feasts. The church thus received a stern warning: “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Rev. 2:16).
 - X. The church in Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29)
 - 1. The good things
 - a. They were kind to the poor.
 - b. They were growing in love, faith, and patience.
 - 2. The grievous things – “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev. 2:20).
 - Y. The church in Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6)
 - 1. The good things – “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy” (Rev. 3:4).
 - 2. The grievous things
 - a. They had a reputation as a live and active church, but they were dead.
 - b. They were at the very point of death.
 - Z. The church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13)
 - 1. Even though weak, they had obeyed and had not denied Christ.
 - 2. Because of this, God would cause their enemies to acknowledge the relationship the church enjoyed with Christ.
 - AA. The church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22)
 - 1. This was the worst single church described in the New Testament.
 - 2. How the church viewed itself
 - a. “I am rich, with everything I want.”
 - b. “I don’t need a thing.”
 - 3. How God viewed the church
 - a. “You are wretched and miserable.”
 - b. “You are poor, and blind, and naked.” “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:19-20).
- VII. The Symbols for the Church – There are seven main symbols depicting the relationship between Christ and his church in the New Testament. These are:
- A. The Head and the body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12, 16; 5:23, 30; Col. 1:18)
 - “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23) “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:18)
 - Blessings resulting from this relationship: unity and direction.
 - 1. The unity of the body – “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). In 12:12-27, Paul links the body of Christ and its many spiritually gifted members to that of the body of man with its many physical members.
 - a. Each member in both bodies performs a vital task, appointed by God himself (12:18, 25).
 - b. No member is to be independent of the other members.
 - (1) The foot and the ear are not to show envy toward the hand and the eye (1 Cor. 12:15-17).
 - (2) The eye and the head are not to show pride toward the hand and the feet (1 Cor. 12:21).
 - c. Every member is to rejoice and suffer with the other members – “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor. 12:26).
 - 2. The direction of the body – As the human head both controls and guides its body, so Christ desires to direct his body.
 - B. The Bridegroom and the bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 3:19-21; 5:25-32; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9) – “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23). “Husbands, love your wives, even 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). “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev. 19:8).

Blessings resulting from this relationship: love and devotion. Paul Enns writes:

This illustration is apt because it reveals the magnitude of Christ’s love for the church (Eph. 5:2, 25). A second emphasis of the illustration is the exalted position of the bride. As in the Oriental wedding custom, at the engagement (betrothal) the bride receives the promise of future blessing with her husband. Similarly, the church today is an espoused bride, awaiting her husband’s return from glory. The second stage of the Oriental marriage was the wedding itself, when the husband came to take the bride to be with him. In an analogous figure, the church awaits the return of Christ, when she will be espoused to her husband (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). In Oriental weddings, the wedding feast followed; similarly the church, as Christ’s bride, awaits the husband’s return (Rev. 19:7-9) and the glory of the millennial kingdom to follow. (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, pp. 149 – 150)

- C. The Vine and the branches (John 15:1-16) – “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5).
Blessings resulting from this relationship: sustenance and fruit.
1. The source involved – “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (John 15:1).
 2. The steps involved
 - a. Abide in Christ – “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).
 - b. Study the Word – “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3).
 - c. Submit to pruning – “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:2, 6).
 3. The success involved – “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:7-8).
 4. The stability involved – “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).
 5. The summary involved
 - a. The believer, as a branch is to bear (not produce) fruit – A branch is useless for anything else. Its wood cannot be used for furniture, firewood, or building purposes.
 - b. The believer, as a branch, is to do what Old Testament Israel refused to do, namely, bear fruit – “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it” (Psa. 80:8). “Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images” (Hosea 10:1). “And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away” (Matt. 21:19).
- D. The Shepherd and the sheep (John 10:1-16) – “A Psalm of David, The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa. 23:1).
Blessing resulting from this relationship: provision and protection. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1). “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20). “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 5:4).
Thus, to his church, Christ is the Good Shepherd (because of what he has accomplished in the past, namely justification – see Psa. 22), the Great Shepherd (because of what he accomplishes in

the present, namely, Sanctification – see Psa. 23), and the Chief Shepherd (because of what he shall accomplish in the future, namely, glorification – see Psa. 24).

A beautiful, tender image depicting the relationship of believers to the Lord is found in John 10:16 where the church is called a flock (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3). Israel had a relationship to the Lord as sheep to a shepherd (Psa. 23) and was called a flock (Psa. 80:1; Jer. 13:17), but in the Old Testament that figure was restricted to Israel. The uniqueness about the church being a flock and Christ the Shepherd is that this flock is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus declared, “I have other sheep [Gentiles], which are not of this fold [Jews]; I must bring them also, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock [the church composed of Jews and Gentiles] with one Shepherd” (John 10:16).

The image emphasizes that members of the church as the sheep of Christ belong to Him. Jesus emphasizes that the flock is “My sheep” (John 10:26-27) and that they are secure in His hand. Moreover, the sheep respond to the Shepherd’s voice – there is intimacy for the Shepherd knows His sheep individually, and they recognize His voice and respond to Him. (Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 351)

- E. The High Priest and a kingdom of priests (Heb. 5:1-10; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6b) – “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8:1). “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:6)
- Blessings resulting from this relationship: intercession and service.
1. Intercession: Christ’s ministry for us in heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25-27; 9:24; 10:12-13) – “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34). “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).
 2. Service: Our ministry for Christ on earth – En route to the promised land God had on two occasions expressed his intention of accepting the firstborn son in all 12 tribes as a priest. Note these occasions:
 - a. Upon leaving Egypt – “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine” (Exod. 13:1-2).
 - b. Mount Sinai – “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exod. 19:6).However, during the tragic golden calf incident, only the tribe of Levi remained true to God (Exod. 32:26-29). “Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’s side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (Exod. 32:26). This resulted in God’s selection of this tribe alone to serve as his priests (Num. 8:14-18).
- The Old Testament priest was to offer up an animal sacrifice. The New Testament priest is to offer up sacrifices also, but of a different kind. He is to offer up:
- (1) The sacrifice of his body as a living offering – “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).
 - (2) The sacrifice of praise – “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15).
 - (3) The sacrifice of doing good – “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:16).
 - (4) The sacrifice of substance – “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Heb. 13:16, NIV).

- F. The Cornerstone and the living stones (Isa. 28:16; Dan. 2:34; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-7) – “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” (Eph. 2:19-22).
 Blessings resulting from this relationship: security and stability.
1. Passages relating to the Cornerstone (Isa. 28:16; Dan. 2:34; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4, 6-7)
 2. Passages related to the living stones (Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 2:5) – “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21).
 Note: There are two Greek words translated by the one English word “temple.”
 - a. *Naos*, referring to the holy place and the Holy of Holies
 - b. *Hieron*, having in mind the entire temple structure, outer courts, porches, porticoes, etc.
 The temple mentioned in Ephesians 2:21 is *naos*. While upon earth Christ never entered the *naos* area, which was restricted to the Levitical priests alone. He drove the moneychangers from the *hieron* temple, not the *naos* temple. But now his church has actually *become* that which he could not *enter* during his earthly ministry.
 Dr. Earl Radmacher writes the following concerning the role of Christ as cornerstone: “In Christ, Jew and Gentile have been united in one as the cornerstone by which the two partitions of the building are united. In Christ the building has coherence and stability in its structure. In Christ, the rest of the building finds its inner harmony, oneness, correspondence, and design” (*The Nature of the Church*, p. 262).
- G. The last Adam and the new creation (Rom. 5:11-21; 1 Cor, 15:20-50) – “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 15:22, 42, 49).
 Blessings resulting from this relationship: righteousness and resurrection.

VIII. The Old Testament Foreshadowing of the Church – The institution of the church, of course, was not revealed in the Old Testament. Paul makes this dear in Ephesians 3:1-12. However, there are two special brides mentioned in the Old Testament whose lives beautifully lend themselves as remarkable foreshadowing of the coming New Testament church. These two women are Eve and Rebekah.

- A. The bride Eve
1. Eve proceeded from Adam’s side as the church came from Christ’s side.
 - a. The (literal) creation of Eve – “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and dosed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen. 2:21-22).
 - b. The (symbolic) creation of the church – “But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19:34).
 2. Eve became espoused to the first head of creation, while the church will be joined to the final Head of creation.
 3. Both brides were to reign with their husband over all creation.
 - a. Eve’s joint-rule – “And God blessed them; and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28).
 - b. The church’s joint-rule – “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:17). “And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4).
 4. Both brides become bone and flesh of their spouse – “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:23-24). “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Eph. 5:30-31).
 5. Eve was deceived by Satan, but the church will be delivered from Satan.

- a. The deception – “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4).
 - b. The deliverance – “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Rom. 16:20).
- B. The bride Rebekah – Genesis 24 is the greatest single typical chapter in the entire Old Testament. The four key individuals involved in this chapter are Abraham, Isaac, the servant, and Rebekah.
1. Abraham sends his trusted servant to a distant land to fetch a bride for Isaac, his son – He becomes a type of the Father who has done the same for his Son. "But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac" (Gen. 24:4). "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come" (Matt. 22:2-3).
 2. Isaac, having been previously offered up on Mount Moriah, is content to await the arrival of his bride – He becomes a type of the Son who now awaits the arrival of his bride in heaven. "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming" (Gen. 24:63). "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:12-14).
 3. The servant arrives in that distant land for the sole purpose of taking a bride – He becomes a foreshadow of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Christ was sent by the Father – “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).
 - b. Christ came at Pentecost to take a bride – “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).
 - c. God elevates Christ as the servant did Isaac – “And Sarah my master’s wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath” (Gen. 24:36). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak and he will show you things to come, He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:13-14).
 4. Rebekah, upon hearing about Isaac, agrees to go with the servant – She became a foreshadow of the church.
 - a. Like the church and Christ, she loved her bridegroom even before seeing him – “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8).
 - b. Like the church and Christ, she received an earnest from the riches of Isaac – “And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things” (Gen. 24:53). “Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor. 1:22). "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:14).
 - c. Like the church and Christ, she began her long pilgrimage to meet her bride groom – “And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant, and his men" (Gen. 24:59). “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).
 - d. Like the church and Christ, she is prayed for by her bridegroom – “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming” (Gen. 24:63). “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34).
 - e. Like the church and Christ, she is received into the home of her father-in-law – “And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death” (Gen. 24:67). “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

IX. The Organization of the Church – Henry Thiessen writes:

There have been individuals and groups of believers who have taught that the Scriptures give no warrant for our present-day organized churches. It is held that believers should get together, observe the Lord’s Supper, study God’s Word, and cooperate in Christian service without anything resembling a formal organization. But that this is an extreme view of the matter is clear.

There are indications that very early in Jerusalem the Church must have had at least a loose kind of organization, and there is conclusive evidence that soon thereafter local churches were definitely organized.

That there must have been a simple organization even in the Church in Jerusalem is evident from a number of things. The believers adhered to a definite doctrinal standard (Acts 2:42; cf. Eph. 20); they met for spiritual fellowship (*ibid*) they united in prayer (Acts 2:4-2; Matt. 18:19-20); they practiced baptism (Acts 2:41) and observed the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42, 46); they kept account of the membership (Acts 2:14, 41; 4:4); they met for public worship (Acts 2:4-6); and they provided material help for the needy of their number (Acts 2:44-45). The Apostles were the ministers in this Church, but they soon added the seven men of Acts 6:1-7 to take care of the ministrations to the poor. On the day of Pentecost they were assembled in "the upper room" (Acts 1:13, 21; 2:1)... though for some services apparently they still visited the temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1). All these factors indicate the beginnings of organization in the Jerusalem Church.

- A. They had church officers. There are, besides the example of this first Church, many other indications that the Scriptures teach the propriety and necessity of organizing local groups of believers into churches. Paul, when retracing his steps from Derbe on his first journey, "appointed for them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23). The original indicates that this was done by a show of hands and not by apostolic authority. He definitely asks Titus to "appoint elders" (Titus 1:5). We have already seen that the Jerusalem Church appointed stewards to look after the needs of the poor (Acts 6:1-7). There must have been a way of ascertaining the sentiment of the people, and a regulation that stated who was entitled to vote on the question (Acts 6:2-6). In the Church at Ephesus there were "elders" (Acts 20:17), in the Church at Antioch, "prophets and teachers" (Acts 13:1), and in the Church at Philippi, "bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).
- B. They had stated times of meeting. We are informed that the disciples met on the "first day of the week," immediately following Christ's resurrection (John 20:19, 26). In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul instructs the readers to lay by them in store as the Lord has prospered them on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2). That is, on that day the collection was to be taken. On Paul's last journey to Jerusalem he stops at Troas and meets with the disciples there on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). And in the Revelation John tells us that he was in the Spirit on the "Lord's day" (1:10). We have already referred to Canright's work, in which he proves that Sunday observance originated with the apostles. There must have been an action taken with regard to the day to be observed and business transactions presuppose an organization.
- C. They regulated church decorum (1 Cor. 14:34) and exercised church discipline. Jesus had given instructions that in the case of a believer who refused to bow to private admonition, the dispute was to be referred to the church for discipline (Matt. 18:17). Paul requests the Corinthians most definitely to exercise church discipline (1 Cor. 5:13). He gives similar instructions to the Church at Rome (Rom. 16:17). In 3 John 10 we are told that Diotrophes acted high-handedly in church discipline. Here again organization is presupposed; for it is necessary to draw the line in such matters.
- D. They raised money for the Lord's work. Writing to the Corinthian church from Ephesus, Paul says that he has already given orders to the churches of Galatia, and then gives them instructions to contribute to the collection for the saints (1 Cor. 16:1-2). They are to give systematically (on the first day of the week), proportionately (as each may prosper), and purposefully (for the saints). In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians he urges them to give liberally (2 Cor. 8:7-9; 9:6) and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7). He commends the Macedonian churches for their great liberality in this connection (2 Cor. 8:1-5) and urges the Corinthian church to follow their example (2 Cor. 8:6-9:5). In his Epistle to the Romans he tells of the offering which he is taking to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-28). Before Felix, Paul refers to this offering which he had brought to his nation (Acts 24:17). It is clear that he thinks of this contribution as coming from the "churches of Galatia" and the "churches of Macedonia." The same thing is implied when Paul says that the Corinthians began a year ago (2 Cor. 8:10; 9:2). They did this as individuals composing the church; and yet he addresses them as a group. Organized effort seems to be implied in his exhortation to carry out their earlier intention (2 Cor. 8:11; 9:3-5).
- E. They sent letters of commendation to the other churches. This was done when Apollos left Ephesus and went to Corinth (Acts 18:24 - 28). It is also implied in Paul's sarcastic question, whether he will have to bring letters of commendation when he returns to Corinth (2 Cor. 3:1). Romans 16:1-2 is probably a sample of such a letter with regard to Phoebe. Insofar as this practice grew, it must have become necessary to ascertain the mind of the church as to who was worthy of such a letter. Organization is to be presupposed in such a procedure. The Council at Jerusalem rendered a decision with reference to the conditions on which

Gentiles might be admitted into fellowship (Acts 15:22-29). This, too, presupposes an organization of some sort or another. (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, pp415-417)

X. The Government of the Church – Within the confines of organized Christianity today, four separate church systems of government exist. These are:

- A. The papal form – Here the pope of Rome functions as the supreme religious authority. When he speaks from the chair of St. Peter in matters of faith and morals, his words, like the Scriptures themselves, are infallible. The pope thus governs the faithful through the College of Cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests assigned to pastor local churches. The basis for this form is said to be given by Christ himself.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19).

John Davis observes however: “The Roman Catholic Church points to these verses as the foundation of the papacy. Note, however, that nothing whatsoever is mentioned here concerning a *succession* of ‘bishops’ following Peter. And in John 20:22-23, the ‘power of the keys’ is given not just to Peter, but to all the disciples” (*Handbook of Basic Bible Texts*, p. 114).

- B. The Episcopal form – This approach is espoused by the Orthodox church, the Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist churches. It is a government by bishops, aided by priests and deacons. The essential concept is that the right to consecrate other bishops and ordain both priests and deacons belongs only to the bishops themselves. This provides a succession of bishops and their rulership over the two subordinate ministries.

Scriptures used to support this form are Acts 6:6; 14:21-23; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1; 2 Timothy 1:6; Galatians 1:19; 2:9. It would seem from these cited biblical references that this form has ample Scriptural support. However, note the evaluation by Paul Enns:

In evaluating this form of church government, the *episcopal* form is based partly on the authority of the apostles, which really does not have a counterpart in the New Testament church beyond the apostolic era. Christ had given a unique authority to the Twelve (Luke 9:1) that cannot be claimed by any person or group, nor is there a biblical basis for any form of apostolic succession. The authority Jesus gave to Peter (Matt. 16:18-19) was given to all the apostles (Matt. 18:18; John 20:23) but to no successive group. The episcopal form of church government can be seen in the second century but not in the first. (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 358)

- C. The federal, representative form – This is also known as the Presbyterian system, taken from the Greek word *presbuteros*. This word, found 62 times (in its noun form) is always translated by the English word “elder.” Its system of government is best illustrated by the Presbyterian and Reformed churches of today. The federal system operates somewhat similar to that of the U.S. government. Each local church duly elects ruling elders to represent them. This group forms the church session. A distinction is usually made in this session between those ruling elders who govern but do not teach, preach, or administer the ordinances, and those elders (the chief being the pastor) who do.

The next high-ranking body in this system is the presbytery, which includes all ordained ministers or teaching elders and one ruling elder from each local congregation in a given district. Although pastors are elected by their own congregations, they must be approved by the presbytery. Above the presbytery is the synod (from a Greek word meaning “company”), and over the synod is the general assembly, the Supreme Court of its kind. Charles Ryrie writes the following:

Arguments in support of the federal type include the fact that elders were appointed by the apostles (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), there were obviously rulers over the churches besides the apostles (Heb. 13:7, 17), in matters of discipline the leaders gave instructions as to what to do (1 Cor. 5; 1 Tim. 5:20), and ordination passages imply the federal system. (*A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, p. 146)

W. L. Lingle suggests that the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 illustrates this form of government. He writes:

If the church at Antioch had been entirely independent it could have settled this question for itself, and with such men as Paul and Barnabas present it was abundantly clear, to do so. As a matter of fact the Church at Antioch referred this question to a church council at Jerusalem....

Note well that it was composed of apostles and elders. It must have looked a good deal like a Presbyterian Synod or General Assembly. Note also that this council composed of apostles and elders, after full deliberations, settled the question authoritatively, and that the Church at Antioch and other churches accepted its decisions. (*Presbyterians: Their Ministry and Beliefs*, p. 16)

- D. The congregational, democratic form – This type of government is clearly seen in Baptist, Congregational, Evangelical Free, Disciples of Christ, and Independent Bible churches. Followers of this form believe no outside man or group of men should exercise authority over a local assembly. Therefore, the government should be in the hands of the members themselves. The pastor is considered to be the single elder in the church. He is called and elected by the church congregation. Deacons are then chosen to assist him in shepherding the flock.

Again, to quote from Charles Ryrie:

Arguments in favor of this form of government include the many passages that speak of the responsibilities of the entire church (1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:26), the passages which seem to commit the ordinances of the church to the entire group, not just leaders (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:2, 20), the apparent involvement of the whole church in choosing leaders (Acts 6:3, 5; 15:2, 30; 2 Cor. 8:19), and the fact that the whole church was involved in exercising discipline (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:14).

Under the congregational system, the pastor is usually considered to be the single elder in the church. This is supported by the fact that the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 apparently had a single leader (called the “angel” but referring to a human leader), and by the fact that in 1 Timothy 3 the first part of the passage speaks of *the* bishop (elder) while the latter part (vv. 8-13) mentions the deacons. This would seem to indicate that there was only one elder in each church although there were several deacons. (*A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, p. 147)

Scriptures used to support this position are Matthew 18:17; Acts 6:3, 5; 15:12, 22-25; 2 Corinthians 2:6-7; 8:19; Colossians 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Peter 2:9; Jude 2.

Paul Enns offers the following conclusion:

The *presbyterian* form of church government has strong support for its view of the elders; there are many New Testament examples. The New Testament, however, reveals no organization beyond the local church.

The *congregational* form of church government finds biblical support for all the people being involved in the decision-making of the church. It can safely be said that elements of both the presbyterian and congregational forms of church government find support in Scripture. (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 358)

XI. The Officers of the Church

Whatever be a person's or organization's preferences concerning the classes of leadership, no one can deny that leadership was considered necessary in New Testament churches. Recall a few facts. (1) Early in the life of the churches, relief funds were sent from Antioch to the elders in the churches in Judea (Acts 11:29). (2) Paul appointed elders almost immediately in the churches founded on the first missionary journey (14:23). (3) The council at Jerusalem was called, conducted, and concluded by leaders (chap. 15). (4) Elders and deacons appear as part of the normal picture of the life of various churches (20:17; Phil. 1:1). (5) Paul seemed to consider leaders a necessity for the proper functioning of churches (Titus 1:5). (6) Leadership is one of the spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:8) that functions in local churches (Heb. 13:7, 17). (Charles Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, p. 412)

- A. The designation of church officers (who they are)

1. Bishops – “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).

The Greek word for *bishop* is *episkopos*, and it refers to an overseer. Here Paul had in mind the office of the pastor. Another name found in the New Testament that may refer to this same position is

“elder” (*presbuteros* in the Greek). These two terms, *bishop* and *elder*, are often used interchangeably (Acts 20:17-28; Titus 1:5-7). The former term (*bishop*) speaks of his office responsibility, while the latter term (*elder*) refers to his spiritual maturity. (See 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.)

Robert Lightner asks:

Must there always be a plurality of elders, bishops, or pastors – whatever they are called – in every local church if it is to be true to the New Testament pattern? I do not believe so. Though the term “elder” does appear consistently in the plural, there are strong reasons why plurality is not always demanded, even though many evangelicals insist this is the case.

First, there were house churches rather than large public meeting places in New Testament times. Therefore the use of the plural need not mean that each and every church had a plurality of elders. It may be understood to refer to one elder for each of the house churches in the city. Second, there is an interesting switch from the singular bishop to the plural deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-2, 8). This change lends some support to the validity of having only one elder or bishop in some instances. Third, the “angel,” or messenger, in Revelation 2 – 3 most likely referred to the single elder of each of those churches. It would seem strange to give divine messages regarding human conduct to angelic beings. There are other instances where the same word obviously refers to humans (e.g., Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24; 9:52; 2:25). (*Evangelical Theology*, (pp. 241 – 242)

2. Deacons – “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:8), The exact nature and duties of this office are nowhere set forth in any systematic way in the New Testament. It seems almost certain that the office was created to solve the organizational problem of the early church, due in part to its rapid growth (Acts 6:1-8). The Greek word for “deacon” is *diakonos*, (See also Rom. 12:7, here translated “ministry,” and Phil. 1:1.)
- B. The description of church officers (how they qualify)
1. Bishop
 - a. He must be a male – It has been correctly observed that, without exception, the principle church offices in the New Testament were held by men. Especially is this true regarding the offices of pastors and deacons. One of the chief qualifications for each of these offices is that the individual involved be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2, 12) To say the least, a woman could scarcely meet this requirement.
 - b. He must be blameless – Note, it does not say sinless. In essence, he must be without reproach, that is, of such character that no accusation can be leveled against him.
 - c. He must be the husband of one wife – Few New Testament statements have been the object of so much speculation as verse 2: “The husband of one wife.” There are two main interpretations to the verse.
 - (1) The prohibition of polygamy view – According to this theory, Paul is simply saying no church member who had several wives in his home could qualify as a bishop. However, this view has serious problems.
 - (a) Paul had already forbidden this years ago (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:2).
 - (b) The Roman government had outlawed polygamy at this time.
 - (c) There is no evidence that the early church ever had this problem.
 - (d) This term literally says a “one-woman man” and is found again in 1 Timothy 5:9 (though here reversed) where it speaks of a widow as a “one-man woman.”
 - (2) The prohibition of divorce view – According to this theory a divorced and remarried man is prohibited from occupying the office of the pastorate, regardless of the circumstances that may have surrounded the divorce.

The vast majority of conservative Bible students hold to this view. Those opposing this second theory often accuse its advocates of simply underestimating the saving grace of God that totally wipes out the sinner’s past. Spiritually speaking, this is absolutely correct. However, it does not change in the least many earthly circumstances. For example, a man saved in prison remains a prisoner.

Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that Paul here in this chapter is not discussing the salvation of a sinner, but the qualification of an officer. Finally, of all the qualifications mentioned here, this is the only one that cannot be corrected in the closet of prayer. For example, if a bishop has problems with greed (a qualification mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:3), he

may confess this and rid himself of it. But he simply cannot pray away the existence of more than one living former wife.

- d. He must be vigilant (temperate).
 - e. He must be sober (serious-minded).
 - f. He must be of good behavior (orderly) – This would be reflected in his sermons, clothes, and life manner.
 - g. He must be given to hospitality (a lover of strangers).
 - h. He must be “apt to teach” (having the ability and love for teaching) – “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11).
 - i. He must not be given to wine.
 - j. He must not be a striker (not pugnacious).
 - k. He must not be greedy of money.
 - l. He must not be a brawler (not contentious).
 - m. He must not covet (not desire something belonging to someone else).
 - n. He must rule his own house well – “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Tim. 3:4-5).
 - o. He must not be a novice (a new convert) – “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6).
 - p. He must maintain a good report from without (a good public testimony in his immediate community).
2. Deacon (See 1 Tim. 3:8-13.)
- a. He must be grave (held in high respect).
 - b. He must not be double-tongued (two-faced, a talebearer).
 - c. He must not be given over to wine.
 - d. He must not be greedy.
 - e. He must hold forth the mystery of the faith (know, explain, and defend the great theological truths of the Bible).
 - f. He must maintain a pure conscience.
 - g. He must be tested and proven (his testimony within the church must be good).
 - h. He must be blameless (his testimony without the church must be good).
- C. The duties of church officers (what they do)
1. Pastors – “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).
 - a. He is to administer the ordinances (Matt. 28:19-20).
 - b. He is to be a man of prayer (1 Tim. 2:1).
 - c. He is to warn his flock (1 Tim. 4:1-6) – “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.... If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Tim. 4:1, 6).
 - d. He is to study the Word – “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).
 - e. He is to preach the Word – “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). (See also 1 Tim. 4:11-16; Acts 6:2-4.)
 - f. He is to exhort and rebuke (1 Thess. 5:12; Titus 2:15).
 - g. He is to watch over souls.
 - (1) His own – “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16).
 - (2) Those of others – “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb 20:28-31.)
 - h. He is to feed and lead his flock – “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking

the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Pet. 5:2).

- i. He is to be an example to all – “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).
Pastor John MacArthur, Jr., writes concerning Paul’s fourfold perspective of pastoral priorities in Acts 20:19-22 (*Leadership, God’s Priority for the Church*, p.15):
 - (1) A right perspective toward *God*, “Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and trials, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.”
 - (2) A right perspective toward the *church*. “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly.”
 - (3) A right perspective toward the *lost*. “And from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - (4) A right perspective toward *himself*. “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.”
2. Deacons – In Philippians 1:1 Paul writes to “all the saints in Jesus Christ which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”
Three well-known authors write concerning these officers and their duties.
The first is Dr. John Walvoord.

The mention of bishops and deacons indicates the advanced state of organization of the Church at Philippi now composed of mature and gifted believers from whom recognized leaders had come. As A. R. Fausset notes, “This is the earliest epistle where bishops and deacons are mentioned and the only one where they are separately addressed.” Of course, as early as Acts 6, men were appointed in the church to serve in a way similar to deacons. Although not called deacons, the prominence of this appointment of men to special service in Acts seems to recognize its significance. Elders were appointed in every church as early as Acts 14:23, and are mentioned in Acts 11:30; 20:27-28; 1 Thess. 5:12-13. (*Philippians, Triumph in Christ*, p. 24)

Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest writes:

The word bishop is the translation of a Greek word used in secular pursuits of an overseer in any capacity, for instance, the official in charge of the repairing of a temple or an officer in an army. The word itself means “to look upon.” Paul uses it as another name for an elder, the latter being the title of the office so far as statutes in the church is concerned, the former being the title that indicated the responsibility and activity of the office, that of over-seeing the spiritual welfare of the local church. He brings the two names together as designating one individual in Acts 20:17, 28.

The word deacon is the English spelling of a Greek word that was used as a general term to designate a servant. It covered both slaves and hired servants. It represented a servant, not in his relation to his master, but in his activity. The same word is translated “minister” in 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 3:7. Here it refers to a distinct class of officers in the apostolic church. The origin of the office is given us in Acts 6. (*Word Studies in Philippians*, p. 28)

As a final note here, consider the comments of J. Dwight Pentecost:

The word “deacon” comes from a compound Greek word that means “to stir up the dust.” It presents the picture of one who is moving so rapidly through the dusty lanes of the villages of Palestine to discharge his duty that his feet kick up dust as he goes. There was so much for the deacons to do they could not loiter nor tarry. They went about their ministry with such diligence that they were stirring up the dust; thus those who were set apart to this ministry were called “those who stir up the dust” or deacons. (*The Joy Of Living*, p. 114)

XII. The Ordinances of the Church – The meaning of an ordinance: An ordinance is an outward and visible symbolic rite commanded in the Bible to be practiced by the church that sets forth a central truth of the Christian faith. It is a memorial or reminder of some precious historical event of great significance.

The distinction between an ordinance and a sacrament: “A sacrament is something presented to the senses, which has the power by divine institution, not only signifying, but also of efficiently conveying grace” (as

defined by the Roman Catholic Council of Trent in 1551). An ordinance therefore differs from a sacrament in that it is performed not to obtain grace, but because the one observing it has already obtained that grace.

The number of the ordinances: The Roman Catholic church teaches there are seven sacraments. These are: ordination, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, penance, baptism, the Eucharist (Communion). Of these seven the New Testament lists but two, and (as we have already seen) regards them as memorial ordinances and not sacraments. These two are the Lord's Supper and baptism.

A. The Lord's Supper – "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1)

1. The Lord's Supper – "And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.... And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:19-20, 26-28). (See also Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25.)

Note: The actual details of the Lord's Supper are not mentioned in John's Gospel. However, some believe Jesus referred to it during his Bread of Life sermon as recorded by John (see John 6:31-58; especially note 6:51, 53-56).

2. The names for the Lord's Supper
 - a. The *Eucharist* (Greek word for the "giving of thanks") – This name is taken from 1 Corinthians 11:24. "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."
 - b. The *eulogia* (Greek word for "blessing") – This name is taken from 1 Corinthians 10:16, "the cup of blessing." "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"
 - c. The *prophora* (Greek word for "offering") – This name came into being because gifts or offerings for the poor were made at the celebration of the Supper.
 - d. Communion – This name derives from 1 Corinthians 10:16, "the communion of the blood of Christ."
 - e. The breaking of bread – This expression is found in Acts 2 and is thought by some to refer to the Lord's Supper. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).
3. The views concerning the Lord's Supper
 - a. Transubstantiation – This Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ when consecrated by the priest during Mass, even though they still look and taste the same. Thus the one partaking literally eats Christ's flesh and drinks his blood. Needless to say, this is without scriptural support. In fact, it is totally refuted by the book of Hebrews.

Paul Enns observes:

There are several serious problems with this view. (1) It views the work of Christ as unfinished, the sacrifice of Christ continuing in the Mass. Yet Christ declared His work completed (John 19:30) as did also the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 10:10-14). (2) Christ's human body would have to be omnipresent if this teaching were true; however, Christ's human body is localized in heaven (Acts 7:56). (3) In instituting the Supper, Christ used a common figure of speech – the metaphor ("This is my body... my blood") – in referring to the bread and cup. He was physically present yet distinct from the elements when He referred to them as His body and blood. Similarly, in the John 6 passage, Jesus used a powerful metaphor ("eat my flesh... drink my blood") to vividly picture a saving faith-relationship to Himself. To insist that these expressions are literal language is to do violence to fundamental hermeneutical principles. (4) It was forbidden for Jews to drink blood (Lev. 17:10-16), yet this is what Jesus would be asking them to do if transubstantiation was what He intended. (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, pp. 360 – 361)

- b. Consubstantiation – This Lutheran doctrine teaches that, while the bread and wine remain the same, the presence of the body of Christ is nevertheless “in, with, and under” both elements. While this error is not as severe as the above, it too is unscriptural.
- c. Spiritualization – This is also known as the Reformed view. According to the Reformed position, Christ is not literally present in the elements (bread and wine), but there is nevertheless a spiritual presence of the Savior. Again, one searches the Scriptures in vain to find this position.
- d. Memorialization – This doctrine teaches that the bread and wine are mere symbols to remind and aid the believer in observing both the first and second comings of our Lord. This practice is both scriptural and sensible.

Paul Enns writes:

The memorial view has much to commend it in the Scriptures. An examination of the passages reveals the significance of the Lord’s Supper. It is a memorial to His death (1 Cor. 11:24, 25): the recurring statement, “in remembrance of me,” makes this clear, the bread symbolizing His perfect body offered in sin-bearing sacrifice (1 Pet. 2:24), and the wine His blood shed for forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). It is a proclamation of the death of Christ while waiting for His coming (1 Cor. 11:26): it involves a looking back to the historical event of the cross and an anticipating of His return in the future (Matt. 26:29). It is a communion of believers with each other (1 Cor. 10:17): they eat and drink the same symbolic elements, focusing on their common faith in Christ.” (Ibid., p. 362)

- 4. The Old Testament type of the Lord’s Supper – A beautiful type is seen in the Passover Lamb, the sprinkled blood of which saved the Israelite home from the death plague in Egypt prior to the Exodus.

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (Exod. 12:12-13).

“Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning” (Exod. 12:21-22). “And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped” (Exod. 12:26-27).

In the New Testament Paul connects the Passover Lamb with that of the Lord’s Table. Note: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

- 5. The rules governing the Lord’s Supper

- a. The person involved – The Lord Jesus Christ: It is not the church’s supper, or the elders’ supper, but the Lord’s Supper. Thus, the table of the Lord is to magnify the Lord of the table.
- b. The procedure involved – “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:23-25).
- c. The purpose involved – A threefold purpose is seen:
 - (1) It serves as a backward look to the Cross – “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death” (1 Cor. 11:26).

- (2) It serves as an inward look to the conscience – “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:28).
 - (3) It serves as a forward look to the crown – “Till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26).
 - d. The partakers involved
 - (1) Generally speaking – all believers, but only believers
 - (2) Specifically speaking – two groups are forbidden to partake:
 - (a) The unsaved sinners – they may qualify by obeying (John 3:16)
 - (b) The unclean saints – they may qualify by obeying (1 John 1:9)
 - e. The penalty involved – “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:29-30).

Here several words deserve our consideration.

 - (1) Unworthily – The word here is an adverb and not an adjective. Paul does not say, “If anyone who is not worthy partakes,” but rather, “If anyone partakes in an unworthy manner.”
 - (2) Damnation – In the Greek this is the word *krina* and should here be translated “judgment.” (See Rom. 11:33; 1 Pet. 4:17; and Rev. 20:4, where the same word appears.) This judgment may be manifested in a twofold manner:
 - (a) Through physical sickness (11:30)
 - (b) Through physical death – “And many sleep.” The Greek word for sleep here is *koimao* and refers to physical death. (See John 11:11-12; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:18, 20, 51.)
 - f. The profit involved
 - (1) It can be used for the judging of ourselves – “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:31-32).
 - (2) It can be used for the giving of ourselves – “So, dear brothers, when you gather for the Lord's Supper – the communion service – wait for each other” (1 Cor. 11:33, TLB).
- B. Baptism – “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19).
- 1. The theological meaning of baptism – Most Bible students would agree that the act of baptism is, in essence, the act of identifying with someone or something.
 - 2. The examples of baptism – Following is a list of eight kinds of baptism in the New Testament. Each may be correctly defined by the concept of identification.
 - a. The baptism of sin upon Christ at Calvary – “But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12:50).
 - b. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon believers at Pentecost – “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matt. 3:11). “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence,” (Acts 1:5). “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).
 - c. The baptism of all Christians by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ – “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).
 - d. The baptism of Israel unto Moses – “And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:2).
 - e. The baptism of John the Baptist (national baptism of repentance) – “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). “When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel” (Acts 13:24).
 - f. The baptism of Jesus
 - (1) With water by John – “And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him” (Matt. 3:15).

- (2) With the Holy Spirit by the Father – “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” (Matt. 3:16).
- g. The baptism for the dead – “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:29).
- Note: Whatever this verse teaches, it does not in the slightest even remotely support the “proxy baptism” position held by the Mormon church. This false view says, in effect, a living person today (Mormon believer) can be baptized in place of a dead friend or relative (who was not a convert to Mormonism) and thus impute the faith to the deceased one. In reality, Paul was refuting the senseless claims of some who denied the resurrection of the dead. Here (1 Cor. 15:29) he says (in suggested paraphrase fashion): “If there is no resurrection, then what is the logic of the living (current Christians) in picking up the fallen banners once held high by the dead (departed Christians)?”
- h. The water baptism of new converts in the book of Acts
- (1) At Pentecost – Here 3,000 were baptized by Peter and the apostles. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).
 - (2) At Samaria – Here many were baptized by Philip the Evangelist. “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).
 - (3) At Gaza – Here the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized by Philip. “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38).
 - (4) At Damascus – Here Paul was baptized by Ananias. “And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized”(Acts 9:18).
 - (5) At Caesarea – Here Peter baptized Cornelius and his friends. “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days” (Acts 10:48).
 - (6) At Philippi – Here Paul baptized Lydia and the Philippian jailor “And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there, And she constrained us” (Acts 16:15).
 - (7) At Corinth – Here Paul baptized Crispus, Gaius, Stephanas, and others, “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.... And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other” (1 Cor. 1:14, 16).
 - (8) At Ephesus – Here Paul baptized some followers of John the Baptist. “And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:3-5).
3. The importance of baptism – Charles Ryrie observes:

The importance of baptism is underscored by the following considerations.

- a. Christ was baptized (Matt. 3:16). Though the meaning of His baptism was entirely different from the significance of Christian baptism, nevertheless there exists a sense in which we follow the Lord when we are baptized. To be sure, we can never fully imitate a sinless Person; yet we are to follow His steps, and baptism was one of them (1 Pet. 2:21).
- b. The Lord approved of His disciples baptizing (John 4:1-2).
- c. Christ commanded that people be baptized in this age (Matt. 28:19). Clearly this command was not only for the apostles who heard it but for His followers throughout the entire age, since He promised His presence to the end of the age.
- d. The early church gave an important place to baptism (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). The early church never conceived of a believer remaining unbaptized.
- e. The New Testament uses the ordinance to picture or symbolize important theological truths (Rom. 6:1-10; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21).

- f. The writer to the Hebrews terms baptism a foundational truth (6:1-2). It is no more optional or less significant than the doctrines of repentance, resurrection, and judgment. (*Basic Theology*, pp. 421)
4. The various views concerning baptism
- a. That baptism is necessary for salvation (also known as baptismal regeneration)
- (1) This is totally erroneous – Dozens of key passages make it crystal dear that salvation is by grace through faith plus nothing. Note but a few: “What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (Rom. 4:1-6).
 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).
 - (2) The strongest refutation of baptismal regeneration is found in 1 Corinthians 1 – “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none elect” (1 Cor. 1:17).
 - (3) In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul explains what the gospel is, and baptism is definitely not a part of it – “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain, For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
 - (4) An oft-repeated “proof-text” for baptismal regeneration is Acts 2: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).
 The Greek preposition *eis* (here translated “for”) can also be rendered “upon.” In other words, Peter was saying in effect: “Repent and submit to baptism upon (showing evidence of) your new relationship with the Messiah.”
 - (5) Another favorite verse used by those advocating this false position is Acts 22:16 – “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Stanley Toussaint writes:

Two questions revolve about this verse. *First*, when was Paul saved – on the Damascus Road or at Judas’ house? Several factors suggest he was saved on the Damascus Road: (1) The gospel was presented to him directly by Christ (Gal. 1:11-12), not later by Ananias. (2) Already (Acts 22:10) Paul said he had submitted in faith to Christ. (3) Paul was filled with the Spirit *before* his baptism with water (9:17-18). (4) The Greek aorist participle *epikalesamenos*, translated “calling on His name” refers either to action, which is simultaneous with, or before that of the main verb. Here Paul’s calling on Christ’s name (for salvation) preceded his water baptism. The participle may be translated, “having called on His name.”

Second, what then do the words “wash your sins away” mean? Do they teach that salvation comes by water baptism? Because Paul was already cleansed spiritually (see comments in preceding par.), these words must refer to the symbolism of baptism. Baptism is a picture of God’s inner work of washing away sin (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 3:21). (In John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament ed., p. 418)

- b. That baptism replaces circumcision – Paul Enns states:

This is the view of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are "signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing by means whereof God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit... like circumcision in the Old Testament, baptism makes us sure of God's promises."... The act of baptism is both the means of initiation into the covenant and a sign of salvation. (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 363)

This cannot be, however, for several reasons.

- (1) Circumcision was performed upon male babies only, but in the New Testament we have the baptism of women mentioned – “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). (See also Acts 16:15.)
 - (2) Circumcision had nothing to do with the faith of the baby – Only his nationality was in mind.
 - (3) Baptism has nothing to do with the nationality of the believer – Only his faith is in mind.
 - (4) Circumcision continued to be practiced among Jewish believers even after the institution of baptism – “Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:3).
- c. That baptism serves as a sign of one's salvation – This is the position of Baptists and others. Stated another way, baptism becomes a public, outward testimony giving evidence to a personal, inward faith. This view is totally supported by all nine events recorded in the book of Acts where people were baptized. Without exception, immediately following their conversion they were baptized as a public testimony of their newfound faith. Note:
- (1) The converts at Pentecost (Acts 2:41)
 - (2) The converts at Samaria (Acts 8:12)
 - (3) The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-37)
 - (4) Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:15-18)
 - (5) Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:47-48)
 - (6) Lydia (Acts 16:15)
 - (7) The Philippian jailor and his household (Acts 16:33)
 - (8) Crispus (Acts 18:8)
 - (9) The 12 disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7) Note: Two key truths are clearly seen coming from these various baptismal experiences:
 - (a) That *all* believers be baptized – F. F. Bruce writes, "The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the New Testament" (*The Book of Acts*, p. 77). Baptism is therefore not a personal choice, but a divine command.
 - (b) That *only* believers be baptized – The two words *belief* and *baptism* are inseparably linked together in the New Testament. Belief is always assumed to be the *root* of which baptism becomes the *fruit*. In the light of Scriptures the practice of baptizing infants must be completely ruled out.
5. The mode of baptism – There are three main views concerning the mode of baptism.
- a. Sprinkling – A defense:
 - (1) Because of the logistical problems involved concerning pouring or immersion in various baptismal accounts, such as:
 - (a) The huge number baptized at Pentecost (Acts 2:41)
 - (b) The scarcity of water when the eunuch was baptized in the desert (Acts 8:38)
 - (2) Because various Old Testament cleansings involved sprinkling (Exod. 24:6-7; Lev. 14:7; Num. 8:5-7; 19:4, 8), and these are later classified as “baptism” in Heb. 9:10.
 - (3) Because Cyprian, a third century church father, approved of it.
 - b. Pouring – A defense:
 - (1) Pouring is permitted in the Didache (a second century manual devoted to moral instruction and church order).
 - (2) The early pictorial illustrations in the catacombs show the baptismal candidate standing in the water with the minister pouring water on his head.
 - c. Immersion – A defense:
 - (1) Lexical studies of the Greek word *baptizo* indicate it means “to dip, immerse.”

- (2) Secular employment of the word used it in regards to the sinking of a ship, to drown, to immerse something.
 - (3) The Greek words for sprinkle, *rontizo*, and pour, *ekcheo*, *hallo*, are not used in the baptismal passages.
 - (4) Proselytes to Judaism were self-immersed.
 - (5) Immersion was the mode practiced by the early church until the third century, when pouring was permitted in case of illness.
 - (6) The first record of the use of sprinkling was about A.D. 250, when Novatian lay sick in bed and thought he was to die. He had water poured all over him on the bed as an act of baptism.
 - (7) John Calvin and Martin Luther (two of the most famous non-immersionists) both freely acknowledged that the Greek word *baptizo* refers to dipping, or submerging something into water, oil, blood, etc.
6. The symbolism of baptism – What exactly does baptism symbolize? One’s interpretation of this will determine his view on the *mode* of baptism also. Here there are two views concerning the symbolism of baptism.
- a. The view of the affusionist – He is one who sprinkles or pours the baptismal water. The affusionist believes the object lying behind baptism is to represent the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the believer. He reasons that inasmuch as Calvary is represented by one ordinance (the Lord’s Supper) then there would be no need of a second ordinance representing the same event.
 - b. The view of the immersionist – He is one who requires the complete submerging of the believer in water. The immersionist relates baptism to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection on the ground of the fact that the believer is said to have been baptized into his death, burial, and resurrection, according to Romans 6:1-10 and Colossians 2:11-13.

While it is true that there is a similarity here to that of the Lord’s Supper, there are also important differences. Note:

- (1) The Lord’s Supper speaks primarily of Christ’s death.
- (2) Baptism speaks primarily of the believer’s death.
- (3) The return of Christ is seen in the Lord’s Supper.
- (4) The resurrection of Christ is seen in baptism.
- (5) Justification (the cross) and glorification (the crown) are in view in the Lord’s Supper.
- (6) Sanctification is seen in baptism –“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

XIII. The Worship of the Church –“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psa. 29:2). “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).

A. The definition of worship – There are three Greek verbs translated by the one English word *worship*. These words are:

1. *Proskuneo* – ““To bow or prostrate oneself in submissive lowliness and deep reverence,” “to kiss one’s hand.”
2. *Sebomai* – “To look upon with awe.”
3. *Latreuo* – “To render priestly service for.”

Andrew W. Blackwood has defined it thus: “Worship is man’s response to God’s revelation of Himself.” To worship God is therefore to ascribe to him the supreme homage of which he alone is worthy.

Charles Ryrie writes: “The worship of the church, then, consists of individual, corporate, public, and private service for the Lord which is generated by a reverence for and submission to Him who is totally worthy” (*Basic Theology*, p. 428).

B. The importance of worship –“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.... So God created man in his own image” (Gen. 1:26-27).

How was man made in the image of God? In essence, God fashioned a creature that, in some areas, would share similar experiences with the animal, such as breathing, sleeping, eating, etc. But this creature would be able to do something no dog, dandelion, or dinosaur could do, namely, to bow its head and thank God for the food it was about to eat.

The difference between Adam and all other creatures in the Garden was not in his size or strength, but in his ability (and command) to worship the Creator. God did not make the first man to build the largest

Sunday school in Eden or to “win that soul nearest hell,” but rather to fellowship with and follow after his Maker.

C. The reasons for worship

1. We are to worship God because of who he is – “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psa. 29:2). “And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.... And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great” (Rev. 7:11-12; 19:5). He and he alone is the only eternal, infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign, righteous, faithful, holy, gracious, and loving God.
2. We are to worship God because of what he has done – It can be said that everything God has already done, is doing, or will do, can be correctly placed under one of two categories, namely, his twin works of creation and redemption. These two works are highlighted by God through a sevenfold scriptural reminder:
 - a. The two heavens and earths
 - (1) The heaven and earth of creation – “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).
 - (2) The heaven and earth of redemption – “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Rev. 21:1).
 - b. The two gardens
 - (1) Creation’s garden – “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:8-9).
 - (2) Redemption’s garden – “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder” (Matt. 26:36). “When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples” (John 18:1)
 - c. The two marriages
 - (1) Creation’s marriage – Eve to Adam (Gen. 2:23-24)
 - (2) Redemption’s marriage – The church to Christ (Rev. 19:7-9)
 - d. The nine feasts in Leviticus 23
 - (1) Feasts reminding us of creation
 - (a) The weekly Sabbath rest
 - (b) The 7-year rest
 - (c) The 50-year rest
 - (2) Feasts reminding us of redemption
 - (a) The Passover (speaking of Calvary)
 - (b) The first fruits (speaking of the Resurrection)
 - (c) The seven-week feast (speaking of Pentecost)
 - (d) The Feast of Trumpets (speaking of Christ’s return)
 - (e) The Day of Atonement (speaking of the great tribulation)
 - (f) The Feast of Tabernacles (speaking of the Millennium)
 - e. The two special days
 - (1) Saturday, reminding us of creation – “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exod. 20:8, 11).
 - (2) Sunday, reminding us of redemption – “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils” (Mark 16:9).
 - f. The two special chapters
 - (1) Genesis 1 – The creation account, describing how man was made in the image of God.
 - (2) Luke 2 – The redemption account, describing how God was made in the image of man.
 - g. The two songs in Revelation
 - (1) The song of creation – “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

- (2) The song of redemption – “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

D. The aspects of worship – How do we worship God?

1. Through our handling of the Word of God
 - a. We are to read it.
 - b. We are to heed it.
 - c. We are to deed it (to our children).
 - d. We are to seed it (in the fields of society) – “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.... Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 1:13; 2:15). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren” (1 Thess. 5:27). “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:15).
2. Through our prayers (Acts 4:24; 6:4; 10:9; 12:5; 13:3; 1 Tim. 2:1-8) – “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:1, 8).
3. Through our obedience in observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-25)
4. Through our singing – “Speaking to yourselves 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). “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (James 5:13). Several New Testament passages may contain parts of hymns that the early church used. Example: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).
5. Through the offering up of sacrifices – According to 1 Peter 2:5-9 and Revelation 1:6, every New Testament believer is a priest unto God. The main function of the Old Testament priest was to sacrifice. So it is with the New Testament priests. Their priestly service toward God is fourfold.
 - a. The sacrifice of our bodies – “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).
 - b. The sacrifice of our praise – “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15).
 - c. The sacrifice of our good works – “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:16).
 - d. The sacrifice of our substance – “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18).

XIV. The Stewardship of the Church – “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18). “...As good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10).

In the New Testament world a steward was the manager of a household or estate. He was appointed by the owner and entrusted to keep the estate running smoothly. Both Paul and Peter write with this background in view, reminding us we are God’s stewards. The estate responsibilities entrusted to us are threefold.

- A. How we use our time – David Jeremiah writes: “There is a gift which comes to us from a royal source each day of our lives, bright and sparkling, absolutely untouched, unspoiled. What is this gift? The priceless gift of time. Each day we receive a fresh, new supply – 24 hours, 1,440 minutes, 86,400 seconds. Twenty-four hours we have never lived before – twenty-four hours we shall never live again” (*Biblical Stewardship*, p. 9).

The following Scripture passages point out the importance God places upon the stewardship of time: “For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding” (1 Chron. 29:15). “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope” (Job 7:6).

“LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah” (Psa. 39:4-5).

“Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?” (Psa. 89:47). “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psa. 90:12).

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Rom. 13:11-12).

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16). “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5). “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:14-15).

Yesterday is a canceled check Tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is the only cash you have.

- B. How we use our talents – “For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey” (Matt. 25:14-15).

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Cor. 12:1). “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. 4:7). (See also Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; Eph. 4:8-13.)

- C. How we use our money

In the New Testament there are thirty-eight parables. Twelve of these are about money. One out of every six verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke has to do with money. Because 100% of what we have comes from God, we are responsible to use it all wisely and in accordance with God’s will. Like every other area of stewardship, God is interested in the whole picture, not just a percentage. What we do with all our treasure is important to Him. (*Biblical Stewardship*, p. 23)

Perhaps the most accurate barometer to measure the spiritual condition of a man is to observe his relationship concerning money, Jesus dealt with money matters because money matters. We shall consider this vital area among the following lines of thought.

1. How do I feel about money?

- a. I must recognize that money comes from God – “But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (Deut. 8:18). “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all” (1 Chron. 29:11-12). “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

- b. I must recognize that money in itself cannot satisfy – “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” (Isa. 55:1-2).

It has been said that there are two kinds of unhappy people on this earth. The first group is unhappy because they didn’t get those things they wanted, while the second group is sad because they did.

- c. I must refuse to substitute silver for the Savior – “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13). “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.... Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:10, 17).

- d. I must believe that God will graciously supply all my needs that I cannot honestly provide for myself – “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Matt. 6:31-32). “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).
2. How do I secure my money? Money may be secured through three methods.
 - a. By earning it – “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:19). “In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury” (Prov. 14:23). “He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough” (Prov. 28:19). “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10).
 - b. By investing it – “Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury” (Matt. 25:27).
 - c. By inheriting it – “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just” (Prov. 13:22).
 3. How do I share my money?
 - a. The prerequisite of giving – The giver is first of all to have given himself. God desires the dedication of our wills before that of our wallets. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” (2 Cor. 8:5).
 - b. The percentage of giving – In the Old Testament there were two kinds of giving – required (Lev. 27:32, 10 percent) and free will (Exod. 25:1, 2; 36:5-7; 1 Chron. 29:9; Prov. 3:9, as much as desired). But what of the New Testament? Endless arguments have been advanced concerning whether New Testament believers are still bound to the law of Old Testament tithing. Whatever else may be said, it seems unthinkable that one under grace could possibly give anything less than one under the law had to give.
 - c. The place of giving – Does the Bible teach storehouse tithing? Again, good men have differed over this issue. A general rule is that one should pay his room and board bill. This means I am expected to support that local church from which my soul draws its weekly strength. Other ministries should not be neglected, but giving, like charity, still begins at home.
 - d. The pattern of giving
 - (1) The example of the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-3)
 - (a) They surrendered their bodies to the Lord.
 - (b) They surrendered their wills to the apostle.
 - (c) They sacrificially shared their wealth with the saints.
 - (2) The example of the Son – “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).
 - (3) The example of the Father – “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).
 - e. The paradox of giving – A paradox is an apparent (but not real) contradiction. Here is the paradox. If I have \$100 and give God \$15, I should wind up with \$85. But somehow that \$85 will, in the long run, pay more bills and buy more necessities than the original \$100 could possibly have done. The classic example of this is seen by the two small fishes and five barley loaves given to Christ by a little lad. (See John 6:9-13.) “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed” (Prov. 11:24-25, NIV).
 - f. The principles of giving
 - (1) It is initiated by God himself (2 Cor. 8:1; 9:8).
 - (2) It is to be done thoughtfully (2 Cor. 9:7).
 - (3) It is to be voluntary (2 Cor. 8:3-4, 8, 12; 9:7).
 - (4) It is to be liberal (2 Cor. 8:2; 9:6).
 - (5) It is to be preceded by a giving of self to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5).
 - (6) It is to come from our joy in Christ (2 Cor. 8:2; 9:7).

- (7) It is to be based on what we have (2 Cor. 8:12).
- (8) It is associated with the spiritual gifts (2 Cor. 8:7).
- (8) It is therefore to be regarded as a ministry (2 Cor. 9:1).
- g. The purpose of giving
 - (1) It serves as an example for others (2 Cor. 9:2).
 - (2) It shows our love for God (2 Cor. 8:8, 24).
 - (3) It guarantees our own spiritual growth (2 Cor. 9:9-10).
 - (4) It assures us our own needs will be provided (2 Cor. 9:11).
 - (5) It results in God giving us more that we might in turn give back more (2 Cor. 9:8).
 - (6) It provides for the needs of deserving saints (2 Cor. 9:12).
 - (7) It results in God receiving glory from those needy saints who have been ministered to (2 Cor. 9:12-13).
 - (8) It enriches the giver, as he is prayed for by the saints he has helped (2 Cor. 9:14).
- h. The privilege of giving – Whether we realize it or not, God does not need our money. “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psa. 50:12-15). But he has graciously allowed us to give back to him – and actually get credit for it – that which is already his.
- 4. How do I spend money?
 - a. I am to pay my debts – “Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest” (2 Kings 4:7). “And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?” (Matt. 17:24). “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8).
 - b. I am to provide for my family – David Jeremiah aptly summarizes this area as follows:
 - (1) We should prepare for the winter in the summer (Prov. 30:25).
 - (2) We should place our money where it will grow (Matt. 25:27).
 - (3) We should plan in light of our Lord’s imminent return (James 4:13-16) (From *Biblical Stewardship*, p. 29).

XV. The Discipline of the Church

- A. The definition of discipline – To discipline is to penalize an individual for breaking the laws of a unit of society to which he belongs with the view of restoring him back to those laws.
- B. The kinds of discipline – There are three kinds of New Testament discipline.
 - 1. Self-discipline – “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31).
 - 2. Sovereign discipline – “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32). “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17). “For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people” (Heb. 10:30). (See also Acts 5:1-10.)
 - 3. Sanctuary discipline – “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:17).
- C. The basis of discipline – The basis of discipline of a local church is the holiness of God. “Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, forever” (Psa. 93:5). “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16).
- D. The authority to discipline – The ultimate authority resides in Christ, who authorizes his church to exercise it when needed. “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 5:4).
- E. The recipients of discipline – Who deserves church discipline?
 - 1. Troublemakers and those who sow discord – “These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Prov. 6:16, 19). “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17).

2. The unruly, disorderly, and undisciplined – “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thess. 5:14). “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies” (2 Thess. 3:6, 11).
 3. Those who disobey the great doctrines of faith – “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thess. 3:14).
 4. Those who deny the great doctrines of the faith – “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;... Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1 Tim. 6:3, 5). “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:16-18).
 “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus 3:10). “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 10-11).
 5. The immoral – “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Cor. 5:1-2).
- F. The procedures in discipline – Church discipline is to be handled prayerfully, carefully, and justly.
1. First step – Note and mark those who are in need of discipline. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). (See 2 Thess. 3:14.)
 2. Second step – Arrange a private meeting with the offender, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Matt. 18:15).
 3. Third step – If this fails, set up a second meeting, this time with several others present. “But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matt. 18:16).
 During these preliminary private and semiprivate meetings the individual should be repeatedly admonished (Titus 3:10), rebuked (2 Tim. 4:2), and warned (1 Thess. 5:14).
 4. Fourth step – As a final resort, the unrepentant one is to be brought before the entire church. “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). (See also Matt. 18:17.)
 5. Fifth step – Upon refusal to submit to church discipline the guilty party is to be spiritually excommunicated. This constitutes two fearful things, a *denial* and a *deliverance*.
 - a. He is to be denied Christian fellowship.
 - (1) “Avoid them” (see Rom. 16:17).
 - (2) “Withdraw yourselves from” (see 2 Thess. 3:6).
 - (3) “From such withdraw thyself” (see 1 Tim. 6:3, 5).
 - (4) “Reject” (see Titus 3:10).
 - (5) “Have no company with him” (see 2 Thess. 3:14).
 - b. He is to be delivered over to Satan – “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20).
 What does it mean to do this? The Greek word for destruction in 1 Corinthians 5:5 is *olethros*, a reference to the act of spoiling or marring something. Apparently Paul was here saying, “If this fellow [the church member living in adultery] is having so much fun in his sin, then remove him entirely from your fellowship and let Satan kick him around a little! Let him taste what it’s like to face a hostile world without the prayers and ministry of a local church.”
 Thus, when a local Bible-believing church removes a person like this, it literally fulfills the divine command of Job 2:6: “And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life” (Job 2:6).
- G. The heart attitude in discipline

1. We are told to avoid both vengeance and arrogance – “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).
2. We are to view the individual as an erring brother and not a bitter enemy – “Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:15).
3. We are to approach him with sorrow and not sarcasm – “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you” (2 Cor. 2:4) when repentance occurs (2 Cor. 2:7; 7:10-11) – This last attitude is of supreme importance for two reasons.
 - a. “Lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (2 Cor. 2:7).
 - b. “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11).

H. The purpose of discipline

1. It is to maintain the standards of the church before a watching world – “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:13-16).

God does not want the church to have the same bad testimony as Israel once had. “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written” (Rom. 2:24).

One reason why the church has so little influence in the world today is because the world has so much influence in the church.

2. It is to keep sin from spreading throughout the church – “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:6-7).
3. It is to help the guilty person find his way back to God – “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him” (2 Cor. 2:6-8).
4. It is to escape God's twofold judgment upon habitually sinning saints.

Sickness – “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you” (1 Cor. 11:30a).

Physical death – “And many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:30b-31).

- I. The scope of discipline (1 Cor. 5:9-13) – The church is called upon to discipline (if needed) all believers, but only believers. It has no authority to judge individual worldly unbelievers for their smoking, swearing, sexual activities, etc. Its only duty to an unsaved person is to lead him or her to Jesus Christ. “But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:13).

- J. The reaction to discipline – How will the guilty person react when disciplined either by God himself or by a local church?

1. He can despise it, that is, treat it too lightly (as did Esau concerning his birthright) – “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb. 12:5).
2. He can faint under it, that is, treat it too seriously. (See Heb. 12:5.)
3. He can be exercised by it – “For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:10-11).

The real question is not so much what I have done wrong (though this, of course, is important), but what is my attitude about it.

XVI. The Destiny of the Church – Everyone likes a story that has a happy ending, Their story of the church has such a happy ending. The Bridegroom gets the bride, and together they live happily ever after

The glorious destiny of the church is as follows:

- A. To be caught up by the Bridegroom at the Rapture – “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

- B. To be examined and rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ – “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:10-12).

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:13). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

- C. To be united with Christ at the marriage service of the Lamb – “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev. 19:7-8).
- D. To be seated with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb – “And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Rev. 19:9).
- E. To reign with Christ during the Millennium – “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:6). “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21). “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).
- F. To share the new Jerusalem with Christ throughout all eternity – “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:1-2). (See also Rev. 21:9-27.)
- G. To illustrate the glory of Christ throughout all eternity – “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6). “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ” (Eph. 1:12). “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). (See also Eph. 2:1-7.)