



Distinguishing

The Kingdom of God

The Family of God

The Church of God

Mark W. Fenison, Ph.D.

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*The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens,
And his Kingdom ruleth over all – Psa. 103:19*

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Kingdom-Family-Church

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Preface

There is very little literature available which deals with the topic of this book. I know of no singular book devoted to this topic. There are books that deal with either the church or the kingdom and perhaps provide passing statements that deal with differences in regard to time and sphere. I believe this lack of available literature is primarily due to the fact that the vast majority of Christendom confuses the church with the kingdom and family of God, classifying them together under salvation.

The first chapter in this book provides a great deal of apparent differences between these topics. However, this first chapter is not set forth to prove such difference, but only to provide *prima facie* evidence that such evidences exist. The chapters that follow this initial chapter are provided to demonstrate why the kingdom, family and church cannot possibly be synonymous with each other, or equally synonymous with salvation. Indeed, the most significant evidence provided in the following pages is the fact that the greatest flaw of confusing the church with salvation is the impossibility to harmonize it with the most basic level of salvation which is spiritual union with God through Christ. Indeed, the whole universal invisible church theory hinges on the idea that the baptism in the Spirit is essentially bringing a person into spiritual union with Christ. A careful examination of this central factor will demand a complete repudiation of the universal invisible church theory.

Perhaps the best and oldest book that devotes a significant chapter to the distinctions between the kingdom, family and church of God is the book *Why be a Baptist* by H. Boyce Taylor printed by Bryan Station Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky.

Mark W. Fenison
January 29, 2015

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Some Apparent Differences

Eph. 3:15 *Of whom **the whole family** in heaven and earth is named,*

1 Cor. 1:13 *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into **the kingdom** of his dear Son:*

1 Cor. 1:2 *Unto **the church of God** which is at Corinth,*

In this chapter you will discover many prima facia differences between the kingdom, family and church of God. Even if you might disagree with some of these noted distinctions, there are so many listed that make it impossible to view the kingdom, family and church as synonyms. Many of these noted distinctions are not merely based upon proof texting. Furthermore, the following chapters will sustain these are to be distinguished from one another rather than interpreted as synonyms.

1. The difference of terminology and meaning:

- a. "**Family**" - Greek "*patria*" - those fathered – lineage
- b. "**Kingdom**" - Greek "*basilea*" - the rule and realm and Person of a king
- c. "**Church**" - Greek "*ekklesia*" - congregation, assembly

2. The different applications

- a. The Bible speaks of the "***gospel of the kingdom***" but never uses such language for the family or church.

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- b. The Bible speaks of the “*keys of the kingdom*” but never uses such language for the church or family of God.
- c. The term “*member*” is never used in scripture to describe those in God’s kingdom or family but only those in churches.
- d. The church is called a “*body*” and “*building*” but the kingdom and family are never thus called.
- e. Jesus says “*tell it to the church*” but never says tell it to the kingdom or family.
- f. The terms “*kingdom*” and “*family*” are only found in the singular but the term “*church*” is found in the plural (36 times) and in the singular (79 times).
- g. A “*brother*” can be placed outside the church membership by other brethren exercising church discipline, but no human disciplinary action can remove any “brother” outside the kingdom and family of God. – 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thes. 3:6,14.
- h. The professing kingdom contains “*tares*” (Mt. 13:41) and the church contains persons like Judas, but the family of God only contains true born again believers.
- i. The Kingdom and family contain persons without water baptism (all pre-New Testament believers and unbaptized believers in this age), but church membership is for only water baptized professed believers – Acts 2:41-42
- j. We read of “*elders*” and “*apostles*” in the church but no such officers are ever used to describe those in the kingdom and family.

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- k. Geographical names are given to the church – “*the church of God at Corinth*” but no such geographical language is ever used for the kingdom and family of God.
- l. The church is described as being “*built*” and “*fitly framed*” but the kingdom is announced as “*near at hand.*” Neither the kingdom or family are said to be “*built*” or “*fitly framed.*”

3. The Difference in Nature

- a. The church conveys an autonomous democratic body
- b. The kingdom conveys a sovereign rule
- c. The family conveys a paternal relationship

4. The difference in relationship to God

- a. “*Family*” - relationship is defined as “*children*”
- b. “*Kingdom*” relationship is defined as “*citizens*”
- c. “*Church*” - relationship is defined as “*members*”

5. The difference in size

- a. “*Family*” includes all saints in heaven and presently on earth
- Eph. 3:15
- b. “*Kingdom*” –Is God’s rule over the entire universe but in regard to his spiritual kingdom on earth it includes only “*the seed*” presently on earth at any given time - Mt. 13
- c. “*Church*” – includes baptized believers gathered out of God’s kingdom and family on earth who actually assemble together - Acts 2:41

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6. The difference in entrance

- a. "*Family*" is by birth "*born*" a child of God - I Jn. 3:18
- b. "*Kingdom*" is by translation power - Col. 1:13
- c. "*Church*" is by water baptism - Acts 2:41

7. The difference in origin

- a. "*Kingdom*" began with creation of this universe (Psa. 103:19) while the spiritual kingdom on earth began with the first person saved from the fall (Adam) in Genesis thus born into the kingdom of his dear son (Col. 1:13; Gen. 3:15; Acts 10:43). The professing kingdom begins with the professed saved (true seed and tares) – Mt. 13
- b. "*Family*" began with new birth of first child of God – Gen. 3:15 (new birth prior to Pentecost – Jn. 3:3-11; Ezek. 44:7)
- c. "*Church*" began with Christ's First Advent and with the materials prepared by John the Baptist – Acts 1:21-22; Lk. 1:17; – and first gifted officers set in the church – 1 Cor. 12:28. First members and Foundation of church are found in the New Testament, not the Old Testament (Eph. 2:20).

8. The difference in internal relationships

- a. "*Family*" persons can exist outside of the church - 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thes. 3:6; Acts 10:43
- b. "*Kingdom*" persons can exist outside of the church - Acts 10:43; 2 Thes. 3:6
- c. "*Church*" persons can be removed from the church but not

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from the family or kingdom by discipline - 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thes. 3:6

9. The difference in location

- a. "*Family*" persons are located in heaven and on earth - Eph. 3:15
- b. "*Kingdom*" persons are located throughout the world - Mt. 13:38 - "the field is the world"
- c. "Church" located in one geographical spot - 1 Cor. 1:2 "*The church of God WHICH IS AT Corinth*"

10. The difference in what unites

- a. "*Family*" unity is by common birth, common Spirit, and common Father. – Rom. 8:9; Jn. 3:3-6
- b. "*Kingdom*" unity is by common professed allegiance to the same King. – Mt. 13
- c. "*Church*" unity is by common doctrine, profession and baptism. – Acts 2:41-42

11. The difference in relationship to the gospel and salvation

- a. "*Family*" All who are genuinely saved by the same gospel, same way, same savior in connection with new birth
- b. "*Kingdom*" All the saved and professed saved – Mt. 13:38
- c. "*Church*" All who publicly profess to be already in God's

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family and Kingdom BEFORE they can be received into church membership by water baptism - Acts 2:41-42

12. There is a contrasting kingdom, family and church

- a. Kingdom of darkness – Col. 1:13 – “*the world*” – Jn. 17:9
- b. Family of Satan – Jn. 8:44; Gen. 3:15 “*seed*”
- c. Church of Satan – Rev. 17:5; 18:4 – “*synagogue of Satan*” – Rev. 2:9; “*corrupted*” virgins (2 Cor. 11:3-4)

13. There is a difference in the New Creation

- a. “*Family*” many “*saved*” will live outside the New Jerusalem on new earth - Rev. 21:24 and be guests at wedding - Rev. 19:8-9 and have the “leaves” of the tree of life – Rev. 22:2
- b. “*Kingdom*” many “*saved*” will live outside of New Jerusalem on new earth - Rev. 21:24 and be guest at wedding - Rev. 19:8-9 and will have the “leaves” of the tree of life – Rev. 22:2
- c. “*Church*” is the bride dressed in white (Rev. 19:6-7) and will eat of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7) and live inside the city (Rev. 22:1-3)

In the following chapters, these distinctions will be demonstrated.¹

¹ Of course, proof texts or numbers of proof texts are not offered as final proof.

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The Kingdom of God

*The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens,
And his Kingdom ruleth over all – Psa. 103:19*

The term “*kingdom*” refers to the rule/authority, domain and person of a king. For example, Daniel describes the fourth “*kingdom*” as the head of gold, but says it represents Nebuchadnezzar as its “*king*” with power, strength, glory and rule over all.

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. – Dan. 2:37-39

Likewise, the kingdom of God is God’s rule or government over His creation, personified in God’s “*power, and strength, and glory.*” Remember how the model prayer ends:

*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever. Amen.* – Mt. 6:13

God’s theocratic kingdom in this world has a long history. It begins in Eden and concludes in the new heaven and earth. From the time of Eden, until its conclusion, it has always been two dimensional (spiritual/internal and physical/outward).

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A. God's Theocratic Kingdom in this world

*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. – Gen. 1:26*

From the very beginning God established His theocratic kingdom through man over the whole world as his vice regent. He made man “*upright*” (Eccl. 7:29). It is that “*upright*” inward condition of man that qualified man to manifest God’s righteous rule through his words and actions over this world.

The fall of man destroyed the theocratic rule of God *within* man, and therefore, destroyed the theocratic rule of God *through* man over all the earth. The essence of the fall of man was spiritual separation from God. God is the source of life, light and holiness. Separation from God is separation from the source of life, light and holiness, which is immediate spiritual death. Hence, in the day Adam sinned he immediately died spiritually due to spiritual separation because of sin. Immediate spiritual separation (spiritual death) gave eventual rise to physical (separation of material part of man from his spiritual part) and ultimately eternal death (eternal separation). Therefore spiritual death was immediate and instantaneous at the point of Adam’s sin, physical death was progressive, and eternal death would be the ultimate result after final judgment.

Without spiritual union with God, the heart of man existed in a state of spiritual separation from life, light and holiness, thus existing in a state of spiritual darkness, spiritually death, and void of righteousness. Therefore, the deliberations (motives, thoughts,

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choices) of the heart were manifested by words and actions that were without life, light or holiness. It is this inward condition of the heart manifested by such words and actions that the Bible defines as “works” (Mt. 15:19) that cannot “please God” (Rom. 8:8). The heart in the state of sin (spiritual separation from the life, light and holiness of God) can only produce sinful actions.

Thus sin corrupted man at his core – his heart, so thereby corrupted his manifest life of words and actions. Therefore, in the fall, the rule of God within man was destroyed, as sin spiritually separated fallen man from God. In so doing, the manifest rule of God through man was equally destroyed.

Instead, the fall introduced a conflicting spiritual kingdom or rule on earth by Satan, in and through man, making Satan the “god” of this world. Instead of the rule of God within man, Satan ruled within man and that rule was manifested through man by his words and actions (Jn. 8:44-45).

God’s restoration of his rule in and through man was revealed in the Gospel promise of the “seed” of the woman, which “seed” would destroy Satan and his kingdom in the coming of the “Second Adam,” and thus, eventually restore God’s manifest kingdom in, and through a redeemed human race.

However, this promised restoration is a process that initially begins with the restoration of God’s spiritual rule within man followed by a progressive and partial manifest rule of God through man, but which is only brought to completion at the point of the Second Coming of Christ when sin is completely removed from both man’s nature and from this world.

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Just as spiritual death had an immediate (spiritual death) progressive (physical death) and ultimate eternal death, the restoration reverses this condition. God restores his rule through an immediate spiritual act (new birth) and then progressively (sanctification) and ultimately eternally glorification of the whole man.

For example, in the Garden God sought out Adam and Eve through an effectual call (Gen. 3:8-9) wherein their sins were personally confronted by God in connection with the gospel (Gen. 3:15). Their conversion was then manifested by an outward ceremonial act (Gen. 3:20; Heb. 13:20; Jn. 1:29; Rev. 13:8) which provided an external “witness” (Heb. 11:4) that the righteous rule of God had been internally restored (new heart) manifested by Godly words and actions (“good works”).

From Genesis 4 to Revelation 19 there is a spiritual war between two spiritual kingdoms. The internal spiritual rule of both God and Satan are manifested in conflicting external manifestation of words and actions by the citizens of their kingdoms and members of their spiritual families.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. – Jn. 8:44

That external manifestation is characterized by their walk. The “seed” of the Serpent walk in “*the way of Cain*” (Jd. 11) while the promised seed walk in “*the way of the Lord*.” Their internal allegiance to their own king is manifested in spiritual warfare as seen in their words and actions:

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Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.- Gal. 4:28-29

The manifest kingdom of Satan would dominate the world, and at times would seem to be on the verge of defeating God's spiritual kingdom on earth. At those specific times, God would intervene in judgments. The first intervention was the world wide flood (Gen. 6). The second intervention was the confusion of Babel (Gen. 10). When Satan's kingdom infiltrated the manifest kingdom of God corporately (nation, of Israel), God intervened with a cleansing judgment in the conquest and captivity of the northern ten tribes of Israel. The fourth intervention was the conquest and captivity of Judah and Benjamin by Babylon. The fifth judgment was the overthrow and worldwide dispersion of Israel in A.D. 70. When Satan's kingdom begins to infiltrate and dominate the professing kingdom and churches of God, "and deceivers shall wax worse and worse" until the greatest deceiver arrives (the Antichrist) God will intervene a sixth time in worldwide judgment when Christ ushers in his worldwide kingdom over this present earth. The seventh and final intervention will be at the end of the Millennium with the overthrow of Gog and Magog and the Great White Seat Judgment throne (Rev. 20).

Between Eden and the Second Coming of Christ, the kingdom of God on earth is two dimensional (spiritual/internal and external/manifest). It is externally manifested by individual words and actions, and corporately manifested (nation, church) by words and actions.

That is precisely why the Sermon on the Mount uses both the present tense and future tense verbs to describe the kingdom of

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God. The present tense verbs describe the present spiritual and external nature of this kingdom, while future tense verbs (Mt. 5:3-12) look forward to the external manifestation of God's theocratic kingdom over all the world through men, especially by and through one man, Jesus Christ at his Second Coming as both King and Judge (Mt. 7:21-23).

When John the Baptist came preaching "*the kingdom of God.*" He came announcing the kingdom in the person of the King: He was preparing the way of Yahweh the King of Israel in the flesh:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.— Mk. 1:1-4

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.....He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. – Jn. 3:27-28,36

His baptism was called "*the baptism of repentance*" because John required repentance (Mt. 3:8-10) and faith (Acts 19:5; Jn. 3:36) in the coming king prior to baptizing them. He was calling men to first submit to the *spiritual* rule of God, which submission was manifest by "*fruits of repentance*" He preached repentance and

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faith in the same promised gospel preached in Genesis 3:15, which gospel, all the prophets had preached (Acts 10:43), but John announced to be “*at hand*” in the person of its King, as “*the lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8; Jn. 1:29).

The “*gospel of the kingdom*” is simply the call to submit to the authority of God in the Person of Jesus Christ over your life initially made manifest through repentance and faith, then outwardly evidenced by baptism. The only other alternative to repent and believe the gospel is to perish under the King’s wrath (Jn. 3:16, 36; Lk. 13:3, 6). This same gospel of the Kingdom is preached throughout the book of Acts to Jews and Gentiles alike as the prerequisite for baptism:

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. – Lk. 24:47

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..... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Acts 2:38,41

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: - Acts 17:30

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

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*And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone **preaching the kingdom of God**, shall see my face no more.* – Acts 20:25

***Preaching the kingdom of God**, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.* – Acts 28:31

Repentance is cessation from internal rebellion, or else there is no submission to His authority and rule. There is no good news (gospel) for those who exist in a spiritual state of rebellion against God, but only the wrath of God:

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. – Jn. 3:15-16

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. – Jn. 3:36

Therefore, the true gospel always contains “*repent or perish*” (Lk. 13:3; 6). The gospel always presents the negative aspect, with the promise of eternal life, as the positive aspect. Repentance is required to escape wrath, while faith is required for eternal life.²

² Repentance and faith are inseparable graces. The term “repent” has to do with a change of direction or thinking. One cannot change direction without turning to a new direction. Gospel repentance is inclusive of faith as it is a turning from sin to obedience. Intellectually it is turning from unbelief to belief in the gospel. Emotionally (affections) it is turning from the love of darkness to the love of light declared in the gospel. Volitionally it is turning from resistance to the gospel to submission to the gospel command to repent and believe. That is why

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In regard to the domain of God’s rule, The kingdom of God is the largest in scope in comparison with either the family or church of God, as His kingdom “*ruleth over all*” (Psa. 103:19) and reaches from everlasting to everlasting.

However, in regard to His subjects, not all of His moral creatures profess God as their King, or submit to His authority. Satan and the fallen angels are at war with God. Fallen mankind has a mindset of “*enmity against God and is not subject to the Law of God*” (Rom. 8:7) and therefore, both the spiritual (demonic) and physical (human) “*kingdoms of this world*” are at war with God and repudiate His authority over them.

God’s eternal purpose of redemption is designed to reclaim a great number of fallen mankind from rebellion against His rule, and restore this present earth from the effects of rebellion and bring the “*kingdoms of this world*” under His rule (Rom. 8:19-22; Rev. 19:5). He will vanquish sin, death, and Satan and create a new heaven and earth full of his subjects (Rev. 21:24) who willingly acknowledge Him as King forever. There is a “second Adam” and all who are “in Christ” as the second Adam are the new redeemed race that will ultimately populate a new heaven and new earth so that the kingdom of God will be manifested in and through man as God originally intended (Gen. 1:26).

However, God’s purposed redemption is not instantaneous, but progressive. Subjective salvation begins with the rule of God re-established *within* fallen man by impartation of a new heart. Subjective salvation is progressively, but imperfectly made

they are found one without the other in some passages while found together in other passages. They are inseparable graces, as one cannot believe in the gospel without turning from unbelief – Gospel repentance. God does the turning by new birth, but what God turns is turning (conversion) – Lam. 5:21.

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manifest in righteous words and actions throughout life. It is then climaxed instantly by glorification of the body at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 19-22).

Indeed, most of Christ's ministry dealt with the *internal spiritual* restoration of the "*kingdom*" (rule of God) within men in preparation for His Second Advent when the external manifest kingdom or rule of God would be ushered in over all the earth.

In the gospel Jesus spoke about the spiritual "*kingdom*" more than any other subject. The term "*kingdom*" can be found 119 times in the four gospels. In contrast, the term "*church*" can only be found 3 times (Mt. 16:18; 18:17).

In regard to God's overall kingdom **on earth** it can be neatly classified under three main topics:

1. A Present Spiritual kingdom on earth
2. A Present Professed kingdom on earth
3. A future manifest kingdom on earth

B. A Present Spiritual kingdom on earth

1. The Spiritual Problem

Since the time of the fall of man in Eden, man's problem has been the same problem with all men, in all generations. They are spiritually separated from God, as the source of life, light and holiness due to sin. Hence, their moral nature (heart) is deprived of God's life, light and holiness in this separated state of existence.

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This is precisely the threefold state of fallen man as described by Paul in Ephesians:

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

– Eph. 4:18-19

1. They are separated from God, who is light – “*darkened*”
2. They are separated from God, who is life – “*alienated from the life of God.*”
3. They are separated from God, who is holy – “*all uncleanness*”

This is also the consistent teaching of the Old Testament Prophets in regard to fallen man.

Jesus likened the heart of man to a “*tree*” (Mt.7:22-23; 12:33-35) that is made manifest by the nature of its fruit. The internal deliberations of the heart (motive and deliberating thoughts) are the source and cause for all manifest words and actions (Mt. 15:19 “*from the heart....evil thoughts*”). It is this combination of internal deliberations and external manifestations that the Bible defines as evil “*works*” or violation of the Law of God. Therefore, Jesus concluded that a person violated the law of murder and adultery even though no manifest act of murder or adultery was present, if there was unjust anger, or intent of adultery in the heart. Circumstances, fear or some other obstacle may have prevented the external act, but God looketh upon the heart. Therefore, in reverse

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“*good works*” comprise the internal workings of the heart (motive and deliberating thoughts)

Therefore, the Old Testament prophets said that from the heart come all the issues of life. He said an “*evil*” tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The nature of the tree must be changed from “*evil*” to “*good*” in order for a tree (heart) to bring forth “good” fruit. Man comes into this world with an “*evil*” heart due to the fall and the proof is that first birth heart does produce “*evil*” fruit proving natural born men are under “*the power of darkness*” because their fruits manifest it.

2. The Spiritual Solution

Just as the problem is the same for all fallen mankind - spiritual separation – so is the solution. The solution to spiritual *separation* is spiritual *union*. Indeed, without spiritual union restored within man, the heart continues to exist in a state of spiritual separation from the life, light and holiness of God. It is this act of spiritual union that transforms the human heart. It is that act of spiritual union that is inclusive in God giving a new heart, without which, no man can understand, see or obey the will of God:

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!
– Deut. 5:29

Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. – Deut. 29:4

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No man can give himself this heart. God must give it and that act of giving a new heart is what the Old Testament called “circumcision of the heart” (Ezek. 44:7; Col. 1:12) or God giving “a new heart” (Ezek. 36:26; 2 Cor. 3:3; 4:6). It is the renewing of the image of God within man restoring him to an “upright” moral condition of heart (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) and thus an inward regeneration and renewing by the Spirit of God (Tit. 3:5).

Hence, God’s rule is initiated within man first, by reversing this state of spiritual separation, thus restoring man spiritually to union with God, thus union with life, light and holiness.

*Who hath delivered us from **the power of darkness**, and hath translated us **into the kingdom of his dear Son**: - Col. 1:13*

Hence, the “*kingdom*” or rule of God on earth begins **within** a person:

*And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation**: Neither shall they say, **Lo here! or, lo there!** for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you**. – Lk. 17:20-21*

It does not come with “*observation*” because it begins with the invisible work of the Holy Spirit within you by new birth. Jesus, explaining to Nicodemus why a man must be born of the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God said:

*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but **canst not tell whence it cometh, and***

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whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

– Jn. 3:9

The kingdom of God comes to a person by new birth when they are confronted with the “*gospel of the kingdom*” in power and in the Holy Spirit (1 Thes. 1:4-5) or the effectual call to repent of rebellion against the King and submit to Him by faith for justification before God.

Hence, the present spiritual kingdom of God is not meat or drink (externals) but has its seat and power by the internal rule of the Holy Spirit within man.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. –

Rom. 14:16

Once the kingdom or rule of God is established within by conveying a new heart and new spirit (Ezek. 36:26) it is manifested by external words and actions that glorify God (Ezek. 36:27)

For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus UNTO good works...” – Eph. 2:10

Therefore, the internal rule of God in the heart is visibly manifested in the life. One writer explained God’s spiritual “*kingdom*” on earth in the following manner:

The Kingdom of God is a much wider concept than the Church. The Kingdom includes every area of life that is under rule and authority of God. If God rules a home it is part of the Kingdom. Where a business is run on biblical principles, it is also part of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of

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God includes every human activity that is done according to his will..... The Government of God becomes a reality when every sphere of authority, is ruled according to the Word of God. This happens when those with authority are Christians, and are submitted to the authority of God. He has delegated authority to various individuals and groups in society. When a sphere of delegated authority is ruled according to his will, it becomes part of the kingdom of God. Where authority is exercised contrary to his will, that sphere of authority is outside the kingdom. – The Kingdom Watcher - <http://www.kingwatch.co.nz/> (quoted 1/28/2015).

The child of God is to seek to expand the rule of God over every area of their life if they want to be blessed and have success with God. This is what Christ was referring to when he said:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God ,[the rule of God over every aspect of your life] and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. – Mt. 6:33

As the child of God puts on the new inward man “*created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) in his outward life, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, the kingdom/rule of God is made manifest to others.

This internal rule from inward to outward, ultimately has for its goal, the sanctification of the whole man:

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. – 1 Thes. 5:23

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God begins his rule inwardly by regenerating the “*spirit*” of man first, and then progressively manifests that rule through the “*soul*” of man, as the soul (intellect, affections, will) puts on the “*righteousness and true holiness*” of the regenerated spirit in the thinking, affections and will of man, which is made manifested in the words and actions that determine the manifest “life” of the believer before the world. Ultimately, at the coming of Christ, the physical body is brought under the perfect rule of God when this corruptible body puts on incorruption, becoming a “*spiritual*” body, as the indwelling law of sin is completely removed, and it comes under the complete rule of the Spirit in glorification.

This aspect of the kingdom/rule of God on earth is invisible, as it is God’s reign within the unseen heart of man. It is universal as such people exist all over the world (Mt. 13:48).

Unfortunately, this Biblical truth of the invisible and universal rule of God within his subjects has been falsely called *the universal invisible church* by many, thus confusing this aspect of the kingdom of God with the church of God.

The very first time in recorded history that this “*kingdom of God*” teaching was applied to the church of God was by Augustine of Hippo. Augustine applied the kingdom teaching to the church by his interpretation and application of “*the field*” in Matthew 13:24 to the church. However, Jesus plainly says that the “*field*” is the “*world*” in Matthew 13:38 rather than the church. It is this interpretation which brought into existence the unbiblical theory of a “*universal visible church*” or the Roman Catholic doctrine of the church. Martin Luther and John Calvin using the very same text as Augustine brought into existence the theory of the “*universal invisible church.*” Hence, the concept of the *universal invisible*

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church is really the Biblical doctrine of the spiritual “*kingdom of God*” on earth, misapplied to the church.

While the church of God has its first members and foundation in the New Testament (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 12:28), the spiritual kingdom of God has existed with the preaching of the gospel from the first Old Testament prophets (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2). New birth or circumcision of the heart has existed from the time Adam was saved (Ezek. 44:7, 8; Jn. 3:11).

Although the spiritual kingdom on earth and the church are not the same, they are connected with each other, as the church is the “*house of God*” and visible representation of the Kingdom of God on earth wherein the laws and order of God’s kingdom can be visibly applied and seen in operation. The church is where the qualified and authorized ministry administers qualified ordinances to those kingdom citizens who submit to discipleship under the authority of the church. The “*keys of the kingdom*” or the authority to administer the laws of the kingdom, are given to the church (Mt. 18:15-18).³ Therefore, since the “*keys of the kingdom*” are given to the church, then the church could not possibly be the kingdom, any more than you could possibly be a car if the keys of the car were given to you. The church is the administrator of the keys of the kingdom, just as you would be the administrator of the keys of the car.

³ The nearest antecedent to the plural pronoun “you” in Matthew 18:18 is “the church” in verse 17 which is a collective noun that includes a plurality. Peter was given the keys in Matthew 16:19 as a representative of what constitutes a church member – water baptized believer. Discipline is not administered by an elder body but by the church body including its officers – 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6.

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C. A Present Professed manifest kingdom on earth

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one – Mt. 13:38

However, this is not the only point of confusion in regard to the kingdom of God on earth. Satan has, from the time of Cain and Abel, attempted to counterfeit and confuse people about the true spiritual kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus spent much of his time providing distinctions between true and false kingdom professors and how to discern true kingdom children (“*the seed of the kingdom*”) from the counterfeit kingdom children (“*the tares*”) within the professing kingdom of God on earth (Mt. 13:38).

Both Matthew 5-7 and Matthew 13 were teachings directed to the Lord’s church about the kingdom. The apostles had just been “set in the church” just previous to the Sermon on the Mount (1 Cor. 12:28; Mk. 3:12-15). The Sermon on the Mount was the Lord’s charge to these new church leaders in order to help them discern the difference between counterfeit and true professing kingdom children.

For example, the Sermon on the Mount begins with defining what kingdom citizens on earth “*are*” by nature, as well as what they “*shall*” obtain when he comes again. Their regenerate nature is like *salt* and *light* in this world. That light is increased when they are placed upon a candlestick (the congregation or assembly of candles) or gathered together in church capacity, as a city on a hill. He discourages candles abiding alone outside the assembly/congregation of candlesticks (Rev. 1:21). He defines

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the kind of righteousness that characterizes their righteousness to be better than false professors (Mt. 5:20) but equal to God's righteousness (Mt. 5:46) because it is God's own righteousness imputed to them by faith. He contrasts the worship of true kingdom citizens versus that of false professors (Mt. 6). He contrasts true spiritual discernment between true kingdom citizens and false professors (Mt. 7:1-12). The Sermon on the Mount then closes with final distinctions and separation between between true and false kingdom professors (Mt. 7:13-29).

Matthew 13 also provides the spiritual contrasts between true and false kingdom professors. Matthew 13 comes at a close of consistent rejection of John the Baptist and Christ by most of Israel and its religious leadership (Mt. 9-12) and closes by his home town and family rejecting him (Mt. 13:54-58). Hence, these parables are found in a context of rejection and designed to help his church understand why the bulk of the professing kingdom of God reject Him, His words, and ultimately will reject and treat them, his church in the very same manner. Understanding this frame of context is the key to properly understanding and interpreting these kingdom parables in Matthew 13.

In essence, Jesus is explaining and providing the causes for this rejection by those who profess God as their king. Their rejection is a heart problem (parable of four soils). The first three hearts are flawed while the final heart is called "good" and inclusive of Christians in various stages of spiritual production.

Their rejection of Christ, His Word and His church is due to the true internal condition of their heart (parable of four soils) and demonic and spiritual opposition (parable of the field) within the professing kingdom of God (parable of tares, mustard seed, and leaven). These rejecters that professed God as their king are either

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“*tares*” or deceived true born again children of God “*true seed*.” Their rejection is due to false doctrine that brings religious unregenerate into the professing kingdom, giving it an unnatural size and has leavened the whole lump of the professing kingdom (the parable of the leaven). The true professing kingdom of God is a treasure “*hid*” in the “*field*” (“*world*”) that must be sought out by its unique differences from false professors. Within that hidden treasure is especially a most precious pearl of great price (the church). Discovery of the true kingdom and the church institution will increasingly be more difficult as time progresses and the professing kingdom grows not merely in number but more confused and diverse before the coming of Christ (Lk. 18:8; 2 Tim. 3:11; Rev. 17:5; 18:4, etc.). In both cases, finding these “*hid*” treasures within this “*field*” (“*world*”) will require a preeminent desire for them above all else, or that person will be just another religiously lost or misguided Christian within the mass of confusion that characterizes the professed kingdom.

Ultimately, it is God that reveals these truths and he does not reveal them to all equally (Mt. 13:9-17). Who “*hath ears to hear, let him hear*” – Mt. 13:9.

D. The Future Physical Manifestation of the Kingdom on Earth

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. – Mt. 5:5

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. – Mt. 6:10

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The will of God is **not** done in this present earth, as it is in heaven because the kingdoms of this world have not yet become the kingdoms of His dear Son (Rev. 19:5). Christ has not yet put under his feet all the kingdoms of this earth. As of yet, not every knee has bowed and not every tongue has yet professed Christ as King of kings and Lord of Lords and won't until Jesus returns in power and in glory (kingdom rule) to earth to overthrow the kingdoms of this world and rule over them.

This ultimate kingdom of God is not this present world, as Jesus told Pilate that if His kingdom were of this present world then his subjects would fight right then and overthrow Rome and Christ would be exalted as its king:

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. – Jn. 18:36

His ultimate visible kingdom in this present world will not only be spiritual but physical, and will be ushered in at His Second Advent. That day will not arrive until all the Gentile elect is brought to salvation and the ethnic elect nation of Israel is redeemed (Rom. 11:25-28).

*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until** the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, **they are enemies for***

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your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. – Rom. 11:25-28

Romans chapter eleven is very simple to understand if you have no bias when approaching it.

1. God's promises to ethnic national Israel will be fulfilled – v. 1
2. God has always had a “*remnant*” within ethnic Israel according to the grace of election – Rom. 11:2-6. and the true promised children within national Israel (Rom. 9:6) or double born children (Rom. 9:7-10; Gal. 4:29) according to the elective purpose of grace (Rom. 9:11-13).
3. God has purposely blinded Israel (not the remnant) so that they have “*stumbled*” but have not completely “*fallen*” from his redemptive purposes in order that God may turn to his redemptive purposes among the Gentiles – Rom. 11:7-11
4. Ethnic national Israel (not the generational Jewish elect remnant) has been cut off and what has been cut off is what will be “*grafted back in again*” – Rom. 11:12-24.
5. This temporary cutting off continues “*until*” Gods redemptive work among the Gentiles is finished – Rom. 11:25
6. National ethnic Israel that has been cut off temporarily, stumbled temporarily and is presently “*the enemies of the gospel for your sakes*” (v. 28) is the same “*Israel*” redeemed at the Second Advent (vv. 26-27; Rev. 1:7; 7:1-8).⁴

⁴ The A-mil and Post-mil stumble over the fact that the same salvation promised Israel in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:33-34) is the same salvation

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We currently live in the day of fallen man where the kingdoms of this world are ruled by fallen man. However, there is a coming “*day of the Lord*” ushered in at His Second Advent when he subdues all the kingdoms of this world and reigns over them until all of those who oppose the kingdom of God are judged and the final enemy death is cast into the lake of fire with all His enemies (Rev. 20:12-15) and when that is accomplished he turns this earthly kingdom over to His Father who ushers in a new heaven and earth as an everlasting kingdom over his elect (Rev. 21-22:3; 1 Cor. 15:

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. – 1 Cor. 15:24-28

Therefore, although Christ sits now upon the throne of His Father in heaven and is currently ruling over the affairs of earth, his heavenly rule is designed to bring the current rule of man over this earth to its close by ushering in the “*day of the Lord*” at his return

promised to gentiles now (Heb. 8:12-15; 10:15-17). Instead, they conclude the church must be Israel simply because the same salvation promised Israel is promised to gentiles now. However, there never was any other kind of salvation promised or provided by God (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2). The same salvation before the cross is the same salvation after the cross for gentiles now and for the nation of Israel at his return (Rom. 11:25-28).

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from heaven to earth where he sits upon the earthly throne of David from Jerusalem ruling over this earth as “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” making the kingdoms of this world His kingdom on earth. This present heavenly rule has for its ultimate end the present spiritual rule within all the elect Gentiles on earth completed in his spiritual and physical rule over the elect ethnic nation of Israel on earth at His return from heaven to earth.

This earthly rule from Jerusalem upon the throne of David will conclude when all of his enemies are cast into the Lake of fire (Rev. 20:12-15) and then he will surrender this earthly rule over the earth unto His Father who ushers in the everlasting kingdom over a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21-22:3). In the coming everlasting kingdom in a new heaven and upon new earth, the citizens of God’s kingdom will be rewarded according to their works. Those outside his way of service now will dwell outside of the New Jerusalem upon the new earth (Rev. 21:24 “*the nations of the saved*”) and the “*leaves*” of the tree of life is their portion. Those who served inside his way of service (“the house of God”) before and after the cross will dwell within the city and partake of the fruit of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7). Israel will be the metaphorical wife of the Father and the church will be the metaphorical bride of the Son, thus, represented in the foundation (Rev. 21:14) and gates of the city (Rev. 21:12)

Therefore, the kingdom of God is the universal rule over all Creation. Within that universal rule there is the spiritual rule of God within His people on earth that is made manifest by words and actions in their individual lives and corporate entities (nation, congregations). However, due to demonic influences that spiritual rule will be increasingly “hid” among the stuff of the professing kingdom of God. The professing kingdom is composed of the true seed and tares. At His Second Advent the counterfeit will be

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separated from the true kingdom seed and His rule over the entire earth will be visibly manifested.

The kingdom of God, in all of its manifestations is larger than either the family or church of God.

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The Family of God

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named – Eph. 3:14-15

What is the family of God and how does one become a member of that family? How does the family of God differ from the kingdom and church of God? This chapter will reveal that the family of God overlaps with the internal spiritual dimension of God's kingdom. It does not overlap with the entire domain of God's kingdom (hell, Gehenna, heaven and earth).

We become a member of a family either by birth or by legal adoption. We came into the human family by being “*born of the flesh*” and therefore by the very nature of that birth we partake of, and exist “*in the flesh.*” Only after entering the human family by physical birth, can a person be legally adopted from one human family into another human family. Hence, adoption is only applicable to those already born of men and those already “*in the flesh.*” Adoption is a legal action, whereas birth is the natural action of becoming a member of a human family.

We come into the family of God by being “*born of the Spirit*”, and therefore, it is by birth we partake of and exist “*in the Spirit.*” Only after we come into the family of God by new birth can we be legally adopted. New birth provides the Spirit of adoption, but it is in justification we are legally adopted as “sons” and “joint heirs” with Christ.

However, membership in the family of God can be more fully understood when contrasted with another family that has another father – Satan.

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As family members we bear the moral “*image*” or likeness of our father, which is made manifest by our attitudes, words and actions. Those who are born into the human family bear the moral image of their father Adam. Initially, Adam was created in the “*image*” of God (Gen. 1:26-27), but through the fall that moral likeness was destroyed by sin and he took upon the moral image of Satan - a sinful likeness. Our moral image is reflected in our attitude, words and actions. Fallen man reflects the moral likeness of Satan:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. – John 8:45

All who are “*born of the flesh*” are by that very action “*in the flesh*” and bear the moral likeness of their spiritual father Satan, and that is why all who are “*in the flesh cannot please God*” (Rom. 8:8). That is why Jesus said, “*That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, that ye must be born again*” (Jn. 3:6-7). The only way to please God is to be “*in the Spirit*” and that state is entered by being “*born of the Spirit*”, just as the state of being “*in the flesh*” is entered into by being “*born of the flesh.*” You partake of the source of your birth whether that source is flesh or Spirit. To be “*in*” the flesh or “*in*” the Spirit refers to your **union with** flesh or Spirit by birth.

Initially, Adam was created in spiritual union with God, and thus all of mankind existing in Adam prior to the fall was in spiritual union with God. Sin severed that spiritual union between God and mankind in Adam and that state of separation is called “*death.*” It

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is called “death” because it separates fallen man from God who is the source of life, light and righteousness.

1. Spiritual death

God told Adam that “**in the day**” he disobeyed (sinned against) God he would die. However, he did not **physically** die until 930 years later (Gen. 5:5). Physical death is separation of the material nature of man from his immaterial nature. However, **spiritual** death is the separation between his spirit and the Spirit of God due to sin:

But your iniquities have SEPARATED between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. – Isa. 59:2

Paul shows how **spiritual** separation/death precedes **physical** death. Writing to the physically alive Ephesians, he tells them they had been “*dead in trespasses and sins.*” Hence, this state of death was contemporary with being physically alive. Moreover, the perfect tense quickening was also contemporary with being physically alive.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; - Eph. 2:1

Hence, it cannot be their body that was dead or their body that was made alive. It must be their spirit that was dead while they were still physically alive and it was their spirit that was then quickened because Jesus says that what is born of the Spirit “*is spirit*” (Jn. 3:6).

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So Adam did actually die “*in the day*” he sinned. He died spiritually. or was immediately separated from spiritual union with God due to his sins, and then as a consequence he died **physically** 930 years later due to sin.

Hence, spiritual death is being separated spiritually from God (Who is spirit – Jn. 4:24) as the source of spiritual life.

However, God is more than life. He is light and he is holy, and to be spiritually separated from God, is separation from God’s life, light and holiness.

For example, when Paul describes the spiritual state of the lost man, he describes him according to these three conditions of spiritual separation from God as the source of life, light and righteousness:

*Having the understanding **darkened**, being **alienated from the life of God** through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, **to work all uncleanness** with greediness.*

– Eph. 4:18-19

When man is spiritually separated from God, who is **light**, the result is “*darkened....blindness*”. When man is separated from God, who is **life**, the result is being “*alienated from the life of God*”. When man is separated from God, who is **righteousness**, the result is being found in “*all uncleanness.*” This became the condition of mankind as they existed and acted in Adam at the moment he sinned (Rom. 5:12, 15-19). The whole human race existed and participated as one man in Adam, as Paul repeatedly says,

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*12 Wherefore, as **by one man** sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned....15 For if **through the offence of one many be dead**....for the judgment was **by one to condemnation**.....17 For if **by one man's offence death reigned by one**...18 Therefore as **by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation**.....19 **For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners**, - Rom. 5:12,15,17,18,19*

Therefore, this spiritual state of separation is already the condition of all human beings as they are naturally born into this world, as Jesus says they are “*condemned already*” (Jn. 3:17). This is why Jesus and Paul said “*there is none good but one and that is God*” (Mt. 19:17; Rom. 3:10-13).

This threefold (spiritual death, spiritual darkness, spiritual depravity) state of spiritual separation is the problem of all mankind since the fall of Adam. It does not matter if we are talking about Cain and Abel, or Paul and Barnabas. All mankind are “*born of the flesh*” and therefore, all mankind are “*in the flesh*” and all who are “*in the flesh cannot please God*” due to this state of spiritual separation from God as the source of life, light and righteousness.

2. Spiritual Reunion with God

Now, salvation is simply the reversal of this threefold separated state. The new birth is restoring spiritual union with God to spiritual life, light and holiness. Thus the new birth restores the moral image of God lost in the fall. The new birth is spiritual union with God or being “*in the Spirit*.”

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This restoration of man into the moral image of God is a creative act by God.

*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge **after the image of him** that created him: - Col. 3:10*

*And that ye put on the new man, **which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.** – Eph. 4:24*

For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus...”
– Eph. 2:10a

Paul had previously described this creative act of God as being “quicken” (made alive - Eph.2:1,5,10). The new birth is the past tense completed action of salvation where spiritual separation between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man is reversed so that man is once again in spiritual union with God or “**created IN CHRIST**” who is God the Son.

To be “**created in Christ**” is to be restored to spiritual union with God. The preposition “**in**” refers to the sphere of their spiritual relationship to their father.⁵ Those “**in**” the flesh are separated spiritually from God, but are “**in**” a spiritual union with their father the devil:

⁵ To be “**in the Spirit**” or “**in the flesh**” in regard to our spiritual relationship to God is different than to “**walk after**” the Spirit or after the flesh. Those who are “**in the Spirit**” ought to “**walk**” or live under the leadership of the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Only the regenerated man can “**walk after**” the Spirit OR the flesh, as he has both natures (Rom. 7:15-25). Therefore, to be “**in the flesh**” in relation to your spiritual state means that you are not born of God, and can only “**walk after the flesh.**” However, in the context of the unglorified state of the child of God, we are all still “**in the flesh**” or in the natural unglorified body.

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*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that **now worketh in** the children of disobedience: - Eph. 2:2*

*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is **he** that is **in** you, than **he** that is **in** the world. - 1 Jn. 4:4*

All who are not “*in the Spirit*” are “*in the flesh*” and all who are “*in the flesh*” are “*none of his*” family.⁶

*So then they that are **in the flesh** cannot please God. But **ye are not** in the flesh, but **in the Spirit**, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. - Rom. 8:7-8*

Therefore, all mankind since the fall of Adam are “in” either one of two spiritual conditions. They are either “*in the flesh*” which means they are natural born human beings, or they are “*in the Spirit*” which means they are born of the Spirit in addition to having been born of the flesh. God’s children are double born persons.

Therefore, to be “*quickened*” is to be made spiritually alive, or being brought into spiritual union with God, thus reversing the spiritual state of “*being alienated from the life of God.*” To be “*regenerated*” is to have your spirit renewed (Tit. 3; 5) in “*righteousness and true holiness*” or in the moral “*image of God*” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), as God is righteousness. To be “*born*

⁶ The “law of sin” is still operating within the body/flesh of the child of God (Rom. 7:15-25) so that he can “walk after” the flesh, but he is no longer “in the flesh.”

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again” is to be translated out of spiritual darkness into ”*the kingdom of light*” (Col. 1:13), as “*God is light*” (1 Jn. 4:16). This is the essence of true salvation that reverses the spiritual condition due to the fall of man. This is the only possible solution that exists for any fallen man, from Adam to the last living man on earth, to reverse their fallen condition. Salvation is having your spirit brought into spiritual union with life, light and righteousness. It is the fall of man that caused this condition, and that spiritual state is as true with Adam and Abraham in the book of Genesis as it is with Saul of Tarsus in the book of Acts.

Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and man because he is both fully God and fully man. Hence, there is no possible salvation for any fallen man at any time outside of spiritual union with Christ. One must be “*in Christ*” or they are still “in Adam” and still spiritually separated from God. To be outside of Christ is to be outside of spiritual union with God. To be outside of spiritual union with God is to be “*alienated from the life of God*” in spiritual “*darkness*” and in spiritual “*uncleanness*.”

Moreover, for any fallen child of Adam to be brought into spiritual union with God through Christ, they must have been “*chosen in him*” before the world began (Eph. 1:4) and then “*created in him*” by new birth (Eph. 2:1,5,10).

This is as true before Pentecost, as after Pentecost, as no other kind of salvation given unto men under heaven can resolve spiritual separation, because there is no other solution to spiritual separation from God than being brought back into spiritual union with God through Christ. There is no salvation outside of Christ.

Therefore, the kingdom of God and the family of God overlap in regard to the “*true seed*” (Mt. 13:38) on earth and in heaven (Eph.

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3:15). However, the kingdom is far more extensive than the family as it includes the whole domain of God's rule (heaven, earth and hell, Gehenna) as well as the professing kingdom on earth.

3. Salvation before Pentecost:

Before Pentecost Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me”* (Jn.14:6). Before Pentecost this was the proclamation of the gospel as Peter said, *“To him [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in his name shall receive remission of sins”* (Acts 10:43). Indeed, Peter said, *“there is no other name give UNDER HEAVEN and AMONG MEN whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). God's eternal purpose of salvation before the world began provided no salvation outside of Christ for anyone at any time but only those *“chosen in him before the foundation of the world”* (Eph. 1:4) who are those *“predestinated to be conformed to the image of his dear son”* (Rom. 8:30). There is no salvation for any fallen child of Adam, from Genesis to Revelation, outside of Christ, because only *“in Christ”* can anyone be restored to spiritual union with God unto life, light and righteousness.

Long before the baptism in the Spirit on Pentecost, Nicodemus was told he must be born again (Jn. 3:3-11) Although, Nicodemus was a *“master”* in Israel, he was ignorant of what Ezekiel knew and recorded in the scriptures long before Pentecost; and that was that God demanded a circumcised heart or new birth:

In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have

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broken my covenant because of all your abominations. – Ezek. 45:7

Although God promised that *the nation* of Israel would be given a “*new heart*” which would not occur until the future, *as a nation* (Ezek. 36:26-27) it was already demanded and already occurred with *individuals* in the Old Testament, as the words “*ye have*” prove in Ezekiel 45:7 above. They are being rebuked by God for allowing unregenerate, or those uncircumcised in heart to enter the house of God.

Paul reminds the Galatians that it is no new thing for those born after the flesh to persecute those born after the Spirit, as that was the case long before Pentecost:

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. – Gal. 4:28-29

He also reminds the Galatians that Abraham was already “*in Christ*” 430 years before the Law was delivered by God to Moses and over 2000 years before the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. – Gal. 3:16-17

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Indeed, the pre-Pentecost Abraham is provided by Paul as the pattern for all who are justified by faith in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 4:11, 16; Gal. 3:6-8).

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.....Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all – Rom. 4:11,16

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. – Gal. 3:6-7

Moreover, there is another practical problem with their theories. The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that no man “*in the flesh*” (referring to the natural man or the product of being “*born of the flesh*”) can please God (Rom. 8:8) because they are in a state of spiritual separation from the life, light and holiness of God. The only possible way for fallen mankind to please God is to serve and worship God “*in the Spirit*” or in spiritual union with God (in union with life, light and righteousness) manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. Furthermore, without the new birth or being born of the Spirit it is impossible to operate “*in the Spirit*” and manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

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Those who claim there was no actual salvation (spiritual union) provided before Pentecost, claim believers at death were preserved in the other side of Hades until after the resurrection of Christ, and then brought into spiritual union with Christ. But that means they were, in their life time, spiritually dead, in spiritual darkness, and without righteousness, as that is the state of being spiritually separated from God. In that state they could not please God (Rom. 8:8). However, both the New and Old Testament Scriptures clearly teach they were in possession of eternal life before the cross (Jn. 5:24 present tense) and their names written in heaven (Lk. 10:20) and they lived and walked “*by faith*” (Heb. 11) manifesting all the fruit of the Spirit.

Moreover, David claimed that God was continually with him. While he was on earth, God was with him by guiding him with His counsel and “*afterwards received into glory*” and he contrasts only two places “*in heaven....upon earth*” instead of three places (earth, hades, heaven) for soul of the saint.⁷

Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. – Psa. 73:23-25

⁷ Hades is the place of the dead. The dead bodies of saints are found in the “mouth” or upper hades which is the state of the dead body (Psa. 141:7; 49:14; 1 Cor. 15:57), the grave. However, the souls of the saints are delivered from the lowest hades (Psa. 86:13; Deut. 32:22). The KJV translates “sheol” half the time “grave” (31 times) and half the time “hell” (31 times). The dead bodies of the saints go to upper sheol, but the soul of the saints go to heaven.

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The Problem with the Universal Church Theories

However, the doctrines of the universal visible church (Roman Catholic) and of the universal invisible church (Reformed Catholic or Protestant) limit spiritual union to membership in their kind of churches. Instead of new birth, these theories teach that spiritual restoration with Christ is through some kind of baptism into their kind of church. Rome claims it is water baptism that brings one into spiritual union with Christ or into the mystical body of Christ, the Church. Reformed Roman Catholicism (Protestants) claim it is the baptism in the Spirit that brings one into spiritual union with Christ or into the mystical body of Christ, the Church.

1. The Roman Catholic Universal Visible Church Theory:

Rome is very clear there is no salvation outside the church and this is spelled out in their Catholic Catechism:

780 The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men.

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism explains: "For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained...."

"Outside the Church there is no salvation"

846 How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Father's? Re-formulated

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positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is His body:

Basing itself on Scripture and tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.”

The only exception to this church salvation doctrine by Rome is, for those due to no fault of their own, who are ignorant of this truth, and thus may be saved due to ignorance, if they are baptized and remain sincere in their devotion to God.

2. The Reformed Catholic Universal Invisible Church Theory:

Protestant (Reformed Roman Catholics)⁸ also deny the possibility of salvation outside membership in their kind of church, thus a church union salvation. They demand that the divine means for bringing people into this church union with Christ is the baptism in the Spirit:

⁸ Historically the Reformers were Roman Catholics and retained their Roman Catholic ordination and ordinances. Historically, the ordinations and ordinances of Protestants is derived from the same Roman Catholic Reformers.

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- **Dr. John L. Walvoord** - “*Salvation and [Spirit] baptism are therefore coextensive, and it is impossible to be saved without this work of the Holy Spirit* (p. 139). *A New Position: Intimately connected with the fact that baptism by the Spirit brings the believer into the body of Christ is the inseparable truth that baptism also places the believer in Christ Himself...Before salvation, the individual was in Adam, partaking of Adam’s nature, sin, and destiny. In salvation, the believer is removed from his position in Adam, and he is placed in Christ. All the details of his salvation spring from this new position. His justification, and glorification, deliverance, access to God, inheritance, are actual and possible because of the believers position in Christ.” – John Walvoord, **The Holy Spirit**. pp. 139,141*
- **Dr. Wayne Grudem** - “‘*Baptism in the Holy Spirit,*’ therefore, must refer to the activity of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Christian life when he gives new spiritual life (in regeneration) and cleanses us and gives a clear break with the power and love of sin (the initial stage of sanctification).” – Wayne Grudem, **Systematic Theology**, (“Baptism in and filling with the Holy Spirit”) p. 768 - Emphasis mine
- **Dr. John MacArthur** - “*If you take away the baptizing by Christ by the agency of the Holy Spirit, you destroy the doctrine of unity of the body of Christ because we then have some people who aren’t yet part of the body. Then where are they? How can you be saved but not be part of the body of Christ? How can you be a Christian but not be in Christ? That makes no sense. It is clear – we are all baptized.*” – John MacArthur, **The Baptism by the Spirit**

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As you can clearly see from the above quotations, Protestants⁹ deny any salvation outside of church union with Christ. They insist that the baptism in the Spirit is the divine means for bringing one into this spiritual union with Christ. Both Roman and Reformed Roman Catholicism interpret “*in Christ*” to mean the mystical body of Christ – the church. Hence, both equally deny there is salvation outside membership in their kind of church.

However, both the Roman Catholic and Reformed Roman Catholic (Protestant) views have three serious problems to their church salvation theories:

1. The “*foundation*” and first ones to be “*set in the church*” are New Testament in origin (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 12:28) as the church is a New Testament mystery and revelation (Eph. 3:1-5).¹⁰
2. The baptism in water did not occur prior to John the Baptist (Jn. 1:31).

⁹ These men properly represent the Reformation doctrine of the universal invisible church. This present system of doctrine was first formulated by the Reformers. Hence, this is “Protestants” historical source for this system of doctrine.

¹⁰ The Covenant doctrine of the universal invisible church theory asserts that from Genesis to Revelation all the elect were regenerated by the Spirit and made part of the universal body of Christ or were “*in Christ*.” However, the “*foundation*” (Eph. 2:20) and first spiritually gifted men set in the “*body of Christ*” are apostles, but not Old Testament prophets or saints (1 Cor. 12:28). Hence, the “body of Christ” Paul refers to has no existence prior to the first advent of Christ (Mt. 16:18). Furthermore, the baptism in the Spirit occurred on Pentecost not in Genesis. Hence, the Covenant interpretation is no better than the Dispensational interpretation.

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3. The baptism in the Spirit has no origin prior to the day of Pentecost (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-3).¹¹

Why are these serious problems? They are serious problems because their theories have no church prior to the first coming of Christ and therefore they leave all humans living prior to the first coming of Christ OUTSIDE THEIR CHURCH and therefore outside of any spiritual union with Christ.

Secondly, even if they attempt to argue the church of Christ existed before He came to build it (Mt. 16:18) they are still without baptism in water or in the Spirit prior to the coming of Christ. Therefore, they are without their own designated means for entrance into their kind of churches prior to Christ's coming.

Finally, they have redefined the very nature of salvation from restoring spiritual union to those spiritually separated from God by new birth unto restoration through baptism into some kind of church membership.

3. Their Trilemma

Since neither the church nor the baptism (water and Spirit) existed prior to the first coming of Christ, they are stuck with the following trilemma:

¹¹ Indeed, some clearly assert that Pre-Pentecost people were either saved by keeping the Law or really never saved at all, but adopt and revise the Roman Catholic purgatory theory where they claim Old Testament believers were held in a compartment in Hades until they could be brought into spiritual union with Christ after the cross.

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1. Either there is no salvation at all for those living prior to the foundation of the church and baptism in the Spirit OR,
2. There is another way of salvation other than spiritual union with God for those living prior to the church and the baptism in the Spirit, OR
3. Their church salvation by the baptism in the Spirit doctrine is a false doctrine that perverts the very essence of the fall and salvation, and confuses the church with the family of God.

In regard to the first option above, the Scriptures clearly affirm there was salvation provided for those living prior to Pentecost through faith in the coming Christ (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2; 11). Paul sets forth Abraham as the “*father*” or prototype for “*all who are of faith*” and as the primary example of justification by faith (Ro. 4:11,16) and believers in the gospel (Gal. 3:6-8).

In regard to the second option above, the scriptures clearly deny there is any other salvation prior to Pentecost outside of coming to the Father by faith in Christ (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 10:43).

In reality, their doctrine of the church is not only confusing the family of God with the church of God but abusing the doctrine of the family of God by limiting God’s family to post-Pentecost believers. They are confusing regeneration with baptism and confusing the family with the church. The family of God is established by birth, not by baptism.¹² Entrance into the family of

¹² John the Baptist was never baptized in water, but yet a child of God. Jesus was baptized in water but it did not make him a child of God. Hence, baptism in water does not literally save or remit sins for anyone. If it did, then John the Baptist died a sinner and Christ needed salvation, both of which are false.

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God is by being “*born of the Spirit*” which is spiritual union with God or being “*in the Spirit*” which is essential for all human beings from Genesis to Revelation. To be “*born of the Spirit*” is to partake or be “*in the Spirit*”, just as to be “*born of the flesh*” is to partake of the flesh and thus be “*in the flesh*.”

Therefore, it is the third option that is true. Neither *the baptism in water or in the Spirit* before or at Pentecost has anything to do with obtaining spiritual union with God. Nor does the church have anything to do with obtaining spiritual union with God, or anything to do with the new birth.

Just as the baptism in the Spirit is strictly a New Testament phenomenon, so is the church institution. The church did not exist between Genesis and Christ. The church originated with Christ and the first disciples he gathered around himself (Jn. 1:35-53 with Act 1:21-22). Its “*foundation*” and first gifted officers did not exist until the apostles (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 12:28; Mk. 3:12-15; Lk. 6:12-15). Therefore, spiritual union or “*in Christ*” cannot possibly be applied to any kind of *universal church* theory in any salvation sense, unless you want to assign all living beings prior to Pentecost to hell, as unregenerated people spiritually **outside** of Christ. There is no salvation outside of Christ for anyone at any time (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Hence, this theory must be wrong or else one must reject the fundamentals of the fall and of true salvation.

It is a system of thinking that necessarily perverts the true way of salvation into “*another gospel*.” For example, it preaches another gospel contrary to the gospel preached by all the prophets (Acts 10:43) and is therefore “*another gospel*” (Gal. 1:8-9) and it demands a fundamentally different kind of spiritual union salvation

Baptism in water saves figuratively through providing a public identification with the gospel of Christ symbolized in the act of immersion (1 Pet. 3:21).

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prior to Pentecost than after Pentecost. It confuses the family of God with the church of God and thus proclaims salvation is in the church or spiritual union is through church membership. In addition, it confuses baptism (whether in water or in the Spirit) with regeneration and thus preaches baptismal salvation. Hence, Roman and Reformed Catholicism proclaim spiritual union through the church and baptism and must be condemned and rejected.

Therefore, the doctrine of the universal invisible church is not only a result of confusing the family of God with the church, but it demands “*another gospel*” way of salvation prior to Pentecost, and proclaims a church and baptismal salvation after Pentecost.

The family of God includes all those who are “*born of the Spirit*” while the family of Satan includes all who are only “*born of the flesh*.” All who are “*born of the Spirit*” are “*in the Spirit*” (Rom. 8:9) or they are “*none of his*” family (Rom. 8:9). His family include all those “*in the Spirit*” presently on earth at any given time, plus all who are already in heaven – Eph. 3:15.

The Church of God

The following article is taken from Dr. J.B. Moody's book entitled **My Church**. Dr. T. T. Eaton is the author of the article, and Dr. Eaton gave this answer to a question by one of his readers:

Editor of the Western Recorder: Will you not give, briefly and clearly, your reasons for believing that the word ecclesia in Matt. xvi, 18, means the local assembly?

*Fraternally,
A Constant Reader.*

Most readily, We have seven reasons, but here we will take space for only three, either of which we believe to be decisive.

1st. It is conceded that, according to the usage of classic Greek, the word, ecclesia means a local assembly. It is also conceded that it means the same thing according to the usage of the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament, in use in Palestine in the time of Christ. Can it be believed that our Lord, in using this word for the first time, would, without any explanation, give it a meaning entirely different from what it would be understood to mean by those to whom He spoke? It is not ingenuous for a teacher, without a word of explanation, to use words to his pupils with a meaning entirely different from what they understand the words to have. Christ knew that the Disciples would understand Him to mean a local

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assembly by His use of ecclesia. Knowing that, He used the word to them, without a word of explanation. To charge Him with using the word with an entirely different meaning is to charge Him with disingenuous, and this is not to be considered for a moment.

2nd. The usage of our Lord Himself compels us to believe that He meant local assembly when He said: 'On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Christ used the word ecclesia, so far as the record tells us, just 22 times. We will set aside, for the sake of argument, this passage, Matt. xvi, 18, as doubtful, and look at the 21 passages, to determine our Lord's usage of the word. Whatever that usage is, must be applied to this passage. In Matt. xviii, 17, Jesus says: 'Tell it to the church, but if he neglect to hear the church.' This is the local assembly. In Rev. I, II and III Christ uses the word ecclesia 18 times, e.g., 'the seven churches,' 'to the angel of the church at Ephesus,' etc., and in every one of these cases there can be no sort of question that He means the local assembly. It is Christ that says this, because the one who told John to write what is here recorded, says of Himself; 'I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.' Again, in Rev. xxii, 16, we read: 'I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches.' Certainly here ecclesia means the local assembly.

Thus in every one of the 21 instances in which

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Christ uses the word ecclesia, there can be no question that He meant the local assembly. The probabilities, therefore, are twenty-one to nothing that He meant local assembly in Matt. xvi. 18 - the passage which, for sake of argument, we set aside as doubtful. A probability of twenty-one to nothing is a certainty. Hence, it is certain that Christ meant the local assembly when He said, 'On this rock I will build my church.'

3rd. Christ, in Matt. xvi. 18, promised to build His church, which certainly was very dear to His heart. He did not promise to build but the one. If He meant anything else than the local assembly, then we have this result, viz: He promised to build His church and then never made the slightest reference to it afterwards; but in speaking on the subject of church twenty-one times, He, in every case, referred to something entirely different from what he promised to build. That He should speak twenty-one times about the church He did not promise to build, and never make the slightest allusion to the church He did promise to build, is simply incredible. Can there be a reasonable doubt that the church Christ spoke of twenty-one times, and the only one He did speak of, is the church He promised to build?

*These are three of our reasons, each one of which, by itself, we think is decisive. We have four others we will not now give. 'A threefold cord is not easily broken. - T.T. Eaton as Quoted by J.B. Moody, **My Church**, pp. 69-71*

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Scholars admit that out of the 115 times the Greek term **ekklesia** is found in the New Testament that the vast majority of cases (97) refer to the common ordinary historical meaning of the word. The remaining 18 times are held in question because they are found in the singular with the definite article without any geographical designation (such as “*the church which is at...*”). Many believe these 18 cases are sufficient to invent a new meaning that is directly opposite to the established ordinary primary meaning. Instead of a visible congregation, they assume this provides sufficient reason to make it mean an invisible congregation in these 18 cases. Instead of a local congregation they assume this provides sufficient reason to make it mean universal in these 18 cases.

However, Dr. Eaton has already indicated that in Matthew 18:17 where the second and third use of **ekklesia** is found by Christ, it is also found in the singular with the definite article without any geographical location assigned to it. However, no scholar attempts to justify any other meaning than the ordinary common meaning in this text. Why? The immediate context makes it impossible for it to mean a *universal invisible* church. When Jesus says “**tell it to the church**” the only possible kind of church is the kind that actually administers the keys or authority to discipline that member and remove them from that local body of baptized believers (Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 2 Thes. 3:6). The kind of church Jesus built and gave the keys of the Kingdom unto, is the kind that can administer these keys as described in this passage. After directly addressing each geographically located church in Revelation 2-3 at the end of each letter, we never read:

*He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto **the church**.* (emphasis mine)

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Rather repeatedly seven times He says,

*He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto **the churches**.* (emphasis mine)

At the end of the book of Revelation when the Lord for the last time uses the term **ekklesia** he does **not** say;

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in **the church**.* - Rev. 22:16 (emphasis mine)

Rather we read;

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in **the churches**.* - Rev. 22:16 (emphasis mine)

1. The Institutional Church

The term “*church*” is found in the New Testament in the abstract as well as the concrete sense. The abstract use of terms can include the *institutional* and *generic* sense. In Matthew 16:18 the term “church” is found in the institutional sense.

T.T. Martin quotes Dr. B.H. Carroll, the founder of Baylor University with regard to the abstract use of nouns and the institutional and generic uses of *ekklesia* in the New Testament:

To this class necessarily belong all abstract or generic uses of the word, for whenever the abstract or generic

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finds concrete expression, or takes operative shape, it is always a particular assembly.

This follows the laws of language governing the use of words.

For example, if an English statesman, referring to the right of each individual citizen to be tried by his peers, should say, “On this rock England will build her jury and all the power of tyrants shall not prevail against it,” he uses the term jury in an abstract sense, i. e., in the sense of an institution. But when this institution finds concrete expression, or becomes operative, it is always a particular jury of twelve men, and never an aggregation of all juries into one big jury.

Or if a law writer should say, “In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the court shall be the judge of the law, and the jury shall be the judge of the facts,” and if he should add: “In giving evidence, the witness shall tell what he knows to the jury, and not to the court,” he evidently uses the term court, jury and witness in a generic sense. But in application the generic always becomes particular; i. e., a particular judge, a particular jury, or a particular witness, and never an aggregate of all judges into one big judge, nor of all juries into one big jury, nor of all witnesses into one big witness.

....As examples of the abstract use of ecclesia that is in the sense of an institution, we cite Matthew 16:18 and Epheseians 3:10, 21.

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Matthew 18:17 is an example of generic use. That is, it designates the kind (genus) of tribunal to which difficulties must be referred without restriction of application to any one particular church, yet it is not restricted to just one, as the church of Jerusalem, but is equally applicable to every other particular church. – T. T. Martin, *The New Testament Church*, [Emmaus, PA: Challenge Press, 2007)

Christ uses the term “church” a total of 23 times. With the exception of the very first time in Matthew 16:18 there is no disagreement that all following 22 instances refer to concrete actual congregations that existed in apostolic times. However, the universal invisible church advocate argues that the first time the Lord uses the term “church” in Matthew 16:18 he is speaking of something entirely different than his next 22 uses of the church. However, why would Christ use the first instance to describe something he would build but never refer to again in the next 22 times he uses that term? That makes no sense and it is a forced interpretation. What makes perfect sense is that in Matthew 16:18 he is referring to the church he is going to build in the abstract institutional sense. He distinguishes it from other institutional assemblies (e.g. secular city government type – Acts 19:32, 39; and Jewish and other religious institutions) by calling it “my” assembly, which is further distinguished by building it according to his own divine pattern (officers, government, mission, ordinances and faith and order).¹³

¹³ Matthew 16:18 does not use the term “church” in the generic sense, but in the institutional sense. The generic sense demands what is true of one in a class is equally true of all in a class. Every individual church was not built like the church at Jerusalem. Jesus did not come down from heaven and build each church. Nor is the promise that the gates of hades shall never prevail against every individual church true. He is speaking about “my church” as an institution.

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2. New Testament in Origin

Significantly, the church has its origin in the New Testament, but the spiritual kingdom and family of God have their origin with the first man saved from sin in the book of Genesis.

The Lord's church institution is described in building terms, such as "fitly joined together" or "building fitly framed" or "built up." However, the act of salvation is described in terms of procreation (e.g. "born" "created in Christ, etc.).

Anything that is described in building terms begins with a "foundation" and the "foundation" of the church is New Testament in origin (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 12:28). The metaphor of a "foundation" refers to the actual beginning point of a building.

In addition, the baptism in the Spirit is also New Testament in origin, as all scripture references prior to Pentecost point forward to Pentecost (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:4-5) while all the reference after Pentecost point backward to Pentecost (Acts 11:15-16).¹⁴

Its officers and ordinances are New Testament in origin and established by Christ prior to Pentecost (Lk. 7:29-30; Mt. 26:12-

⁷Since the baptism in the Spirit is the mechanism for obtaining entrance into the so-called universal invisible church or obtaining spiritual union with Christ, then the covenant view which has this church originating in Genesis is completely repudiated by the fact that the baptism in the Spirit did not occur until 4000 years later on Pentecost, leaving their church without any mechanism to add members or for spiritual union to occur between Genesis and Pentecost. To argue that Gods' eternal purpose was sufficient for entrance without the actual occurrence of the baptism in the Spirit is to repudiate the historical significance of their view of Pentecost since it was unnecessary to obtain the same results for the past 4000 years before Pentecost.

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30; Mt. 28:19-20). However, salvation preceded the earthly ministry of Christ (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2; 11; Jn. 14:6; etc.).

3. Distinct from the Kingdom and Family of God

Therefore, the church cannot possibly be synonymous with either the kingdom of God or the family of God as they both have their roots or origin in the Old Testament Scriptures.

One very prominent universal invisible church advocate candidly admits that the kingdom should not be confused with the church:

In the mind of this writer, however, there are some very important reasons why it is utterly untenable to equate the kingdom with either the visible or the invisible church. In the first place the term *ekklesia* is never used with reference to the kingdom. There are one hundred and fourteen occurrences of *ekklesia* in the New Testament, but in no instance is it equated with the kingdom. There are those who have attempted to equate the *ekklesia* with the “kingdom of heaven” of Matthew 16:19. Berkhof declares: “*it is quite evident that the term ‘church’ and ‘kingdom of heaven’ are used interchangeably here.*” More recently Hanke has boldly asserted that in Matthew 16:19 “*‘the kingdom of heaven’ is employed in such a way as to make the two expressions ‘church’ and the ‘kingdom’ synonymous and capable of translation into each other’s terms*” Close examination, however, reveals that there is nothing in the passage nor in its context that would even suggest such identification. In fact, the case is just the opposite. The *ekklesia* of Christ is qualified by the personal pronoun which contrasts it not only to the

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kingdom but to every other *ekklesia*. Furthermore, it is stated that the *ekklesia* is to be built and that “the gates of *hades* shall not prevail against it.” Neither of these particulars are expressly confirmed of the “kingdom of heaven.”

A second argument...It has been demonstrated previously that the basic idea of an *ekklesia* was that of an autonomous physical assembly of the citizens of the local community met to transact business of common concern on democratic principles. The word *ekklesia* would bring to mind a conception not only not identical with, but in every particular the antithesis of, that suggested by the word *basilea* (kingdom). – Earl D. Radmacher, **The Nature of the Church**, [Portland, OR: Western Baptist Press, 1972), pp. 154-155

Radmacher then proceeds to quote Jesse B. Thomas to prove that “*the ekklesia and the basilea may more properly be contrasted than compared*” (Ibid. p. 155). Thomas says,

Now, the summary form in which this pervading temper found most unique expression was the *ekklesia*. It was the organized assembly of the authorized voters of the local community met to transact business of common concern. It corresponded to the town-meeting of New England of later days. Even after the subjugation of Greece by the Romans, in the second century before the Christian era, the Greek cities retained nominal self-government. There remained in each an *ekklesia*, as its conspicuously central feature, at the time the New Testament was written.

Reference to the speeches of Demosthenes, the history of Thucydides, the comedies of Aristophanes, or other

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classical documents, will show how familiar and how uniform was the meaning of the word. Aristotle, in his "Politics," emphasizes the characteristics of the institution, as local and democratic, when he says that it is essential to the very nature of the city-state, of which it is the representative, that it should be small enough for all the citizens to know each other. Passing this limit, he says, it ceases to be properly a state, with a proper *ekklesia*. As a ship, only a span long on the one hand, or a quarter of a mile long on the other, has ceased to serve its appointed end, and so to be a ship at all, so an *ekklesia*, the extent of whose constituency forbids the normal interchange of opinion and discussion, ceases to be equal to its purpose, and therefore to be a proper *ekklesia* at all. The language of this authoritative exponent of Greek ideas has an obvious bearing on the question whether the term *ekklesia* can ever be extended to cover a world-body, or a body governed otherwise than democratically.

It may properly be added that the word *ekklesia* seems after Aristotle's day to have been sometimes still more restrictively understood, bringing it into still closer parallelism with New Testament usage. For Dr. Hatch, in his "*Organization of the Early Churches*," cites, from lately recovered inscriptions, frequent instances in which it is applied to local self-governing secular clubs or associations. In these the titles given some of the officers are identical with those of officers of New Testament churches.

It will readily be inferred, from what has just been said, that the word *ekklesia* would call up, in the mind of an ordinary Greek, or Greek-speaking person, a conception

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not only not identical with, but in every particular the antithesis of, that suggested by the word *basileia*. The early Greek *basileus*, who had been an absolute local or tribal ruler, had long since vanished, as Aristotle explains in his “Politics.” The title was not restricted exclusively to the head of the Roman Empire – the one sole master of the “habitable world.” The word *basilea* had, therefore, come to carry with it the inevitable associated notion of world range and mastery. Our Lord’s allusion to a new *basilea*...must suggest instantly and logically the idea of rivalry with Caesar, and not of local insurrection or insubordination only; for two world-empires could not exist together (Acts 17:7)...Had the word *basilea*, used by him as describing the new regime to be set up, meant to the ordinary hearer only a local and subordinate regime, its threatened establishment would have been insubordination only – a less serious offence. But if the broader meaning necessarily attached to the word, he could not escape the charge afterward actually made of attempted world rivalry with Caesar.

But over against this single, comprehensive, world-extensive conception, the word *ekklesia* set up an idea as distinctly local, partitive and multiple. The empire was, and must be, one. But there might be as many *ekklesiai* as there were Greek cities.....The *basileia* was centered in the *basileus*, as its etymological form indicates, and was therefore necessarily monocratic; the *ekklesia*, from like etymological implication, must derive its central significance from the whole body of people assembled, and be democratic. The autonomy of the local group, as contrasted with individual lordship over it, was essential to the conception of the thing itself. – Jesse B. Thomas,

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The Church and the Kingdom, [Louisville: Baptist Book Concern, 1914] pp. 211-213, 214, 215

Another reason given by Radmacher that demands the church and kingdom are not one and the same, is that the kingdom of God is announced as being “at hand” but Jesus says “I will build my church.” The kingdom was a major theme of antiquity among the Jews but the church appears as something entirely new.

More importantly, the kingdom and family of God are inseparable from God’s spiritual union within man which is the most basic level of salvation. The fall brought spiritual separation between God and fallen man, thus leaving man without spiritual life, light or righteousness. Without spiritual union restored in fallen man there is no temporal or eternal salvation from the power of indwelling sin. The only possible solution to spiritual separation and indwelling sin is spiritual union and a new inward nature that opposes indwelling sin through the power of God’s Spirit. Both the church and the baptism in the Spirit are New Testament in origin, and therefore neither existed between the fall of man and the first coming of Christ.

Therefore, the idea that the universal invisible church is the “true” church and synonymous with being in spiritual union with God through Christ is absurd, as it demands there is **another way** of salvation **outside** of Christ and outside of spiritual union with God prior to the first coming of Christ. Not only is it absurd or irrational due to the problem of indwelling sin in man between Genesis and the first coming of Christ, but it is contrary to clear Biblical evidence to the contrary. Abraham is explicitly said to be “*in Christ*” 430 years prior to the giving of the Law by Moses:

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*And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God **in Christ**, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. – Gal. 3:17*

Moreover, Abraham is set forth as the pattern for “all who are of faith” in the gospel regardless at whatever point in history they live:

*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be **the father of all them that believe**, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: - Rom. 4:11*

*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham**. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, **preached before the gospel unto Abraham**, saying, *In thee shall all nations be blessed.*¹⁵ – Gal. 3:6-8*

Moreover, Abraham not only had “*righteousness*” imputed to him but had full remission of sin (Rom. 4:5-8), as did all the saints previous to the cross (Acts 10:43 “*for remission of sins*”), and was regarded as righteous and walked by faith, all of which are

¹⁵ The gospel was preached from Genesis 3:15 to Malichi (Acts 10:43; heb. 4:2) beginning with the promise of the “seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15) and followed by progressive revelation (Isa. 53) so that only the revelation of the exact personal identity and time of the Messiah/Christ was necessary to reveal by John the Baptist.

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impossible for fallen man indwelt by the law of sin apart from spiritual union with God.

The Old Testament saints were characterized as born of the Spirit in contrast to those born after the flesh just as we are today. Speaking of Isaac and Ishmael Paul tells the Galatians:

***But as then** he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, **even so it is now**. – Gal. 4:29*

The new birth was both required and taught by the Old Testament prophets:

*In that ye **have** brought into my sanctuary strangers, **uncircumcised in heart**, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. – Ezek. 44:7*

Unlike Nicodemus, Ezekiel did not have to ask “*what meaneth these things*” as he not only understood the new birth, but Israel was rebuked that “*ye **have***” already brought the uncircumcised of heart into his sanctuary.

Therefore, the church is not to be confused with the kingdom or family of God, but is clearly distinct and distinguished from them. The church is the divine institution for public worship and service within the professing kingdom of God on earth which requires a family of God profession of faith and water baptism as the prerequisites for membership.

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The church of God overlaps the kingdom and family with regard to being part of the visible manifestation of God's kingdom and family on earth.

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The Body of Christ

And ye are the body of Christ and members in particular – 1 Cor. 12:27

When the scriptures refer to the church as the “*body of Christ*” are we to understand that the church is the literal physical body of Christ or a metaphorical representation of the body of Christ? The literal physical body of Christ now is in heaven “*seated at the right hand of the Father.*”

Of all the metaphors used for the church there is none more abused and misunderstood than the metaphorical use of the human body.

When Jesus says “*I am the door*” are we to understand He is a literal wooden door or is He using the “*door*” as a metaphor to describe himself as the way to enter heaven? The failure to distinguish the literal from the metaphorical and properly understand what is a metaphor, and how metaphors are to be properly used has produced confusion and false doctrines.

A. Understanding the Metaphor

The key to understanding the proper use and application of a metaphor is to understand what a metaphor is and how a metaphor can and cannot be used. What will a metaphor permit?

E.W. Bullinger in his book *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* defines a metaphor by comparing it to a simile:

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*The simile says, “All we **like** sheep” while the metaphor declares that “we **are** the sheep of his pasture.” While, therefore the word “resembles” marks the simile: “represents” is the word that marks the metaphor. – p. 735*

As you can see, the simile makes a comparison (“like”) but the metaphor is more direct in stating that one thing is another thing (“are”).

The simile uses terms such as “like” and “as” whereas the metaphor uses state of being verbs such as “am” or “is” and “are.” The simile conveys **resemblance** whereas the metaphor conveys **representation**. Hence, one could simply replace the state of being verbs (“is” “are”) with the word “represents” and you would have the intended meaning.

For example, in I Corinthians 12:27, the term **represent** could be put in the place of the state of being verb “are” and the proper sense is conveyed:

*And ye **represent** the body of Christ and members in particular – 1 Cor. 12:27*

Obviously the church is not the **literal** body of Christ but only **represents** it.

However, what kind of representation is intended by a metaphor? Bullinger defines the restrictions placed upon metaphorical representations when he says,

Let it then be clearly understood that a Metaphor is confined to a distinct affirmation that one thing is

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*another thing, owing to some association or connection in the uses or effects of anything expressed or understood. The two nouns themselves must both be mentioned, and are always to be taken in their **absolute literal sense**, or else no one can tell what they mean. – Ibid., p. 735 (emphasis mine)*

In other words, the first noun, or the noun being used (“body”) must first be understood in its literal sense, because it is the literal characteristics of the first noun which are being used to metaphorically describe the second noun (“church”).

What are some literal characteristics found in his physical body that can be transferred metaphorically to his church? The physical body of Christ is **visible** and **local** (e.g. “the church which is at Corinth”). The physical body is composed by a diversity of members performing diverse functions but all working in **unity** (e.g. **1 Cor. 1:10**). The literal body works under the direction/authority of the head in an organized fashion. All these concepts can be directly transferred to the body of Christ as an institution or to the body of Christ in concrete form such as the one at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27). However, none of these things represent an invisible, universal, doctrinally divided state of Christendom, nor is it possible for such a concept to convey these characteristics. Neither can the body convey universality or invisibility as no such literal body exists or can exist in that condition.

Finally, although there are metaphors such as “*wind*” and “*spirit*” that express invisibility, and there are terms such as “*whole world*” “*heaven and earth*” that express universality, however, such terms are never once used to describe the church or used as a metaphor for the church. Every single term and metaphor used in Scripture for the church is by nature without the ability to convey

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either universality or invisibility. Every single one! These facts should be regarded as quite strange if the true nature of the church was invisible and universal! However, if the true nature of the church is local and visible then these things are very supportive of the institutional and concrete use of the term “church.”

B. Two Contextual Historical Facts

There are two historical and contextual facts that must be considered in regarding the true nature of the New Testament congregational body of Christ.

The first contextual and historical fact is that in all those epistles that deal with the metaphorical “*body of Christ*” in direct connection with the pronouns “*we*” and “*us*” refer contextually to the first century historical readers of these epistles. Paul is writing to congregations which he established in the common faith once delivered. Hence, they are “*we...us*” of like faith and order with Paul. They are **not** to be read or understood as “*we...us*” who are post-apostolic in origin and divided by faith and doctrine by diverse denominational divisions. Without exception, each reader is a member of a church that is like faith and order. Hence, each New Testament *body of Christ* (I Cor. 12:27) is “*one body*” in number as well as one in kind. From the historical individual readers or listeners perspective, that individual recognizes they are members of “*one*” body in both number and kind. In number they are members of “*one*” body, the one where their personal membership resides. They are members of “*one*” body in kind. It is the same in kind which can be found at Corinth as much as it can be found at Ephesus. It is the “*one*” where the reader’s membership resides, and it is the only kind which is New Testament in faith and order. Therefore, the contextual and historical “*we*” does not refer

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to post-apostolic Christians found within and without diverse denominations which are neither “*one*” in number nor “*one*” in kind.

The second indisputable fact is that in Romans 12:4 and in 1 Cor. 12:12 the literal physical human body first introduces the use of the metaphorical body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13-26). Significantly, in Romans 12:4 the same historical and contextual “*we*” is used in connection with the literal and physical human body:

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:- Rom. 12:4

The readers (“*we*”) all share in common one kind of literal physical human body wherein there are many members or body parts. How does each reader understand and apply this text? He applies it to the “*one*” physical body he possesses which is both “*one body*” in number (his own body) and “*one body*” in kind (the same kind that all the readers share in common with each other). He does not understand or apply such a statement to refer to “*one body*” which has its literal physical members spread out all over the world or are invisible. Nor does he understand it to be consisting of all human bodies or even consisting of two or more human bodies. The body in Romans 12:4 and in 1 Cor. 12:12 is the literal physical visible human body being set forth as the basis of the metaphorical use in Romans 12:5 and 1 Cor. 12:13-27.

Thus, when Paul makes the transition from the physical to the metaphorical the same understanding applies:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. – Rom. 12:5

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The historical readers (“we”) all share in common one kind of metaphorical church body wherein “*every one*” within that body is “*members of another.*” How does each reader understand and apply this text? He applies it the very same way as he does the preceding verse. He applies it to the “*one*” body where his membership resides which is “*one*” in number as well as “*one*” in kind.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that in I Corinthians chapter five and chapter ten where the metaphorical “*body of Christ*” is used in the Lord’s Supper the contextual “*we*” is used when Paul is teaching the general truth that equally applies to himself and his readers, but when Paul shifts to the specific application he drops “*we*” and uses “*ye*” or “*you*” (I Cor. 5:7-10 “*we*” and “*us*” versus I Cor. 5:1-6, 11-13 “*ye*” or “*you*”; I Cor. 10:16-17 “*we*” versus I Cor. 10:19-21 “*ye*”).

The historical and contextual “*we*” of the New Testament epistles always refer to their readers who are members in churches which are like faith and order with each other. So “*we*” share membership in the same kind of church body (Paul in the church body at Antioch where his membership resided, and the readers belong to the same kind of church body where their membership resided at Corinth, Ephesus and etc.).

C. One Body

Ephesians 4:4 says there is only “*one body.*” What is that “*one*” body? Many believe Paul is referring to a universal invisible body of Christ made up of all saints in all ages or at least all saints scattered all over the physical earth in all denominations. However, in the immediate context there is a practical application that Paul

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has in mind. In Ephesians 3:21 Paul tells the Ephesians that God is to be glorified in the church by Christ in all generations in this age and in all the ages to come. Ephesians 4:1-16 explains how God is glorified in the church by Jesus Christ.

First, there is our responsibility to glorify God due to the blessings that God has bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:1).

Second, in order for God to be glorified in the Church by Christ Jesus there must be a spirit or attitude of unity between the members of His body (Eph. 2:3). Third, this unity takes on a visible assembled expression of unity as the words “*bond of unity*” conveys the idea of a bundle of wheat actually bound together by a cord (v. 3). This practical assembled unity is obtained by the seven essentials in verses 4-6. These essentials for unity begin with the most obvious visible expression of unity “*one body*” (v. 4). Christians, who speak of unity or of being unified, but do not share the essentials to actually come together as one working congregational body is not in unity or unified. People who do not share the same essentials will not continue to meet together or assemble in unity because how can two walk together unless they are agreed in the essentials?

What is the “*one body*” which the reader of this epistle would identify with? Would it not be the one where the reader’s actual membership resides? Would it not also be the one which is like faith and order with every other New Testament congregational body found at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27) or Ephesus (Eph. 5:23-25)? Therefore, it would be “one” in number (where his membership resides) as well as “one” in kind (the same kind found in other cities mentioned in the New Testament).

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Third, for such unity to be obtained and sustained, not only must there be an attitude of unity (vv. 2-3) among its members, and essentials that obtain such unity (vv. 4-6), but there must be recognition and submission to the same leadership which provides and teaches those essential truths that provide incentive to continue to assemble together as “one body” (vv. 7-11).

How do these listed gifted leaders provide and sustain such unity in the congregational body as an institution? First, it is the Apostles and prophets that provided the foundation of truth – the oral and written Word of God. Second, the evangelist first gospelized and then organized this body by the preaching and teaching of the Word. In many cases, the apostles who furnished the word were also the evangelist or mission that established and constituted the assembly (Paul’s missionary journeys). Third, the Pastor/teacher became the leader in this body to mature it and equip it and stabilize it, so that it is not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (vv. 12-14).

Last, these essentials (vv. 4-6) when expounded and expanded by these gifted leaders are called “the faith” (v. 14) which provides for the maturity and stabilization of that unity (vv. 13-15). Hence, the New Testament kind of congregational “body” was characterized by “the faith” once delivered (v. 14) and distinctly different from predicted post-apostolic apostate doctrinally divided Christianity. Such unity comes with teaching and equipping and maturing the members to work together in love and unity so that every member is being matured (vv. 15-16). These are practical necessities for unity in any given congregation. The “*one body*” in this context is “*one*” in number where the reader’s membership resides and “*one*” in kind where the readers are being taught to work harmoniously with the other members who are in practical doctrinal unity with each other.

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Significantly, this “*one body*” is also found in context with “*one baptism*.” Water baptism is the only baptism promised age long continuance (Mt. 28:19-20). The book of Ephesians was written (62 A.D.) long after the baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost (28-30 A.D.) was fulfilled. Water baptism is always in conjunction with the local church body of Christ (Ac. 2:41-42). The entire sevenfold oneness of Ephesians 4:4-6 is involved in building New Testament churches. The “*one baptism*” is the one that is administered by the “*one Spirit*” through human instrumentality (1 Cor. 3:4-9) into “*one body*” upon profession of the “*one faith*” in “*one Lord*” in keeping with “*one hope*” that was provided by “*one God and Father of us all*”. Which “*body*” is this? It is the numerical **one** where the reader of this epistle resides as a member. It is the **one** that is united by these sevenfold truths. It is the **one** where practical working unity among all of its members is possible and actual (1 Cor. 12:25-26). It is the **one** that is same in kind as “*the body of Christ*” at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27).

D. Compassionate Body

*...but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether **one member** suffer, **all the members** suffer with it; or **one member** be honored, **all the members** rejoice with it. – 1 Cor. 12:25b-26 (emphasis mine)*

The above passage has no practical or possible application to any other kind of “*body of Christ*” other than the local visible kind. How can “*all*” of the members of a so-called universal invisible body suffer or rejoice “*with one member*” if this body is scattered over all of the earth or Roman Empire? How can “*all the*

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members” even know of each other much less suffer “*with one*” of its members? That is impossible.

However, this is possible in each New Testament church body, as illustrated in the case of the church body located at Jerusalem:

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. – Ac. 2:44-45 (emphasis mine)

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. - Ac. 4:32 (emphasis mine)

This was true of the church at Rome (Rom. 15:14). At least this is possible for any local visible New Testament church body, but it has never occurred among all the members of the so-called universal invisible church body and never will on earth.

E. Organized Working Body

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. – Eph. 4:16 (emphasis mine)

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This description can and does fit many local visible church bodies now, and in the New Testament times, but it never has fit the so-called universal invisible church body. There have never been harmonious efforts between all of its members.

However, Paul praised the church at Thessalonica for their joint efforts for Christ one toward another in the local church body:

*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of **every one of you all toward each other** aboundeth – (2 Thes. 1:3) (emphasis mine)*

Paul encouraged the divided church at Corinth toward this same kind of unity (1 Cor. 1:10-11).

*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be **perfectly joined together** in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Cor. 1:10)*

The doctrine of the universal invisible body of Christ has been the source of division and confusion, but never unity.

F. Purged Body

*Know ye 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*

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Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. – 1 Cor. 5:6,7 (emphasis mine)

Preparation for the Lord's Supper is the subject discussed here in lieu of a publicly unqualified member to participate in the Lord's Supper (vv. 1-4). We know it is preparation for the Lord's Supper that is under discussion because the only "*feast*" kept by Christians where Christ "*is*" sacrificed "*for us*" as "*our Passover*" with use of "*unleavened bread*" is the Lord's Supper. Paul later informs them that when the Lord's Supper is improperly observed it ceased being the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 12:20). Obviously, there was an impropriety being addressed in this chapter in regard to eating with such a brother (v. 11).

Just as Paul later tells them "*ye are* [represent] *the body of Christ*" so he tells them here "*ye are* [represent] *unleavened*" bread. That is, the unleavened bread used in the Lord's Supper not only represents the literal body of Christ, but it also represents the church as the representative body of Christ. There can be no question that the bread represents the church of Christ in the Supper, as Paul explicitly tells them this in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

Notice that the church at Corinth is represented by "*the whole lump*" and that when one of its members is purged out it becomes a "*new*" lump. Just as the removal of only one member can make it a "*new*" lump, so also the refusal to remove such a member can "*leaven the whole lump.*"

How can only "*one*" member leaven the "*whole*" universal invisible church body? How can such a church body purge out one of its members so as to be a "*new*" lump? How can such a universal invisible church body purge out of its membership or receive back such a person (2 Cor. 2:6) into its body???

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This can only make sense if the body of Christ is a metaphorical representation of the local church body, such as the one at Corinth.

Some stumble at this because of the use of the plural pronoun “*we*” in such passages as 1 Cor. 10:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 12:13. However, the answer is quite simple. Whenever Paul is using the metaphor abstractly or generically he uses the plural pronoun “*we*” but whenever he makes a concrete application of this metaphor he always says “*ye*” and never “*we*.” Why? **As a general rule, all believers during the apostolic era were baptized members of such local churches.** Therefore when speaking of this metaphor abstractly he could say “*we*” as it applied to all members of this *kind* of church body concretely located and found at Corinth, Ephesus, etc. But when applying this abstract teaching to a specific church he could never say “*we*” as he was not a member of that particular church body. Hence, in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 he speaks of it abstractly and uses the plural pronoun “*we*” but in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 where he applies it to the church at Corinth he drops “*we*” and uses “*ye*.” Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 12:13-26, he speaks of the body metaphor abstractly for general teaching purposes and uses “*we*,” but when it comes to applying it concretely in 1 Corinthians 12:27, he drops “*we*” and inserts “*ye*.”

G. The Generic Body

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body. – Eph. 5:23 (emphasis mine)

The generic is a subclass of the abstract use of nouns. The generic use of a term is when the term is used in the singular with the definite article (the) but includes each and every individual of

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that kind or class. For instance, notice in the text above that “*the husband*” and “*the wife*” are used generically. No particular husband or wife is being addressed, but rather, it includes all who fit those descriptions. If the reader is “a” husband or “a” wife, it applies concretely to each as readers. No one would ever rationalize, that Paul must be referring to some new kind of universal, invisible husband, or wife, just because no specific husband, or wife, is identified. However, this is exactly the kind of rationalization used by those who embrace the universal invisible church theory.

Notice that Paul says “*even as*” the husband and the wife so is Christ and the Church. The contextual theme is submission to authority in the sphere of sanctification of the marriage sphere. The husband is the head over the wife. This does not mean that the torso of the wife has no literal physical head upon her own shoulders or that the literal physical head of the husband is somehow transplanted upon her or organically united to her. No, the term “*head*” simply refers to authority. The context is simply talking about the position of authority in the sphere of sanctification. There is no spiritual organic union between the “*head*” of the husband and the torso of the wife. Likewise, there is no spiritual organic union between Christ and the torso of the church. Indeed, just as the wife has her own literal head on her shoulders, so does the metaphorical body of Christ have those members within that body who are described as a metaphorical head (1 Cor. 12:20). Those members described as the smelling, seeing, and hearing all have their position in “the head” of a metaphorical body and thus places of leadership/authority under Christ as the ultimate metaphorical head.

These texts in their contexts have to do with progressive sanctification and not salvation. Church membership has to do with

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sanctification not salvation. In salvation there is spiritual union between Christ and the individual believer (obtained by regeneration spiritually and justification positionally) but the metaphor of the body is never used for that. The metaphor of a “*body*” infers practical working unity among members in a church body under the authority of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul tells them that the “*head*” of “*the woman*” is “*the man*” just as the “*head*” of every man is Christ. Again, Paul is not referring to a change in the physical anatomy of the woman or some kind of organic union between the physical head of Christ and the torso of the man. No physical head is being united to, nor transplanted upon the woman or the man. Neither is Paul implying that somehow the physical head of Christ is somehow transplanted upon billions of male bodies. However, this is exactly the rationale used by those who embrace the universal invisible church theory when we say that Christ is “*the head*” of each of his churches. However, the response of the universal church advocate to our position is that our position makes Christ a polygamist having countless wives and creates a monstrosity of many physical bodies all sharing the same literal physical head. They ignore it is merely a metaphor for authority over others, but must literalize it in order to make this argument against us. This is not only a failure to understand simple metaphors, but a clear demonstration of abuse of metaphors.

Christ is the authority over every man just as Christ is the authority over every one of his churches even as the husband is the authority over his own wife.

It is failure to understand simple metaphors used with the generic or abstract sense that distorts such passages as Ephesians 1:22-23:

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And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

Notice that Christ is “*the head*” not only to “*the church*” but also “*over all things*.” Universal invisible advocates interpret “*the head*” to convey spiritual union between Christ and the church. However, this would teach pantheism, as Christ is also said to be “*the head*” over “*all things*” as well.¹⁶ If **spiritual organic union** is what Paul intends by “*the head*” then this would teach that Christ is in spiritual union with “*all things*” thus making Christ and creation to be one and that is **pantheism**. This is what happens when simple metaphors are abused and misused.

The metaphor of “*the head*” simply means **authority** and when the term **authority** is substituted for “*the head*” it makes perfect sense:

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the authority over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. (emphasis mine)

He is the final authority over the church, as well as over all things. Some still stumble at the second phrase “*Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all*”. The church used generically, has reference to each and every one of His churches, each of which are a metaphorical “*body*” of Christ. Christ is the final authority over all his churches, as explicitly demonstrated in Revelation 2-3 where He addresses them as the final authority. They go about doing the work of the ministry in their own locality,

¹⁶ Much of these thoughts were borrowed from Charles L. Hunt’s excellent book, *The Body of Christ: Separating Myth from Metaphor* published by Grace Baptist Church Printing Outreach, Florence, KY in 2006

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just as Christ went about doing the work of the ministry when he was in his own physical body while on earth. What does it mean “*the fullness of him that filleth all and all*”? The subject is authority. The institutional church has been given authority by Christ in the administration of the “*keys of the kingdom*” (Mt. 18:17-18) and as such, has final administrative authority on earth in behalf of Christ. Therefore, in regard to church affairs, Christ says “*tell it to the church*” (Mt. 18:17) in direct connection with the administrative use of the “keys of the kingdom” (Mt. 18:18). The church acts in Christ’s behalf upon earth and is the final administrative authority. This is also made clear in Matthew 28:17-20 in the giving of the Great Commission. Hence, the meaning of the disputed passage above is that Christ is the final authority over his churches, as He is over all things, but the churches represent the fullness of His authority on earth in the administration of His kingdom affairs. Thus the authority of Christ “*filleth all in all*” over creation and in *the administrative church body within His kingdom on earth.*

Some still object to the generic use of “*the church*” in these passages because they never find the plural term **bodies** used in Scripture. They reason, if “*the church*” is used generically in such passages as Ephesians 1:22-23, then we should read of plural “bodies” of Christ, just as we read of plural “*churches*” of Christ. However, this is a failure again to understand the restrictive use of metaphors. Remember, the metaphor “*body of Christ*” can only properly transfer concepts that characterize the literal physical body of Christ. The literal physical body of Christ does not have a plurality of **bodies** or **heads**, and therefore such language as “*bodies of Christ*” or “*Christ is the heads*” violates the limitations of a metaphor. However, the generic sense grammatically provides a way for this metaphor to be applied to each church without violating the proper rules that govern the use of a

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metaphor. Each church is a body of Christ with members in particular, just as Paul explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 12:27.¹⁷

H. Baptized Body

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 above text is the most singularly used text by universal invisible church advocates to support their doctrine. However, will the overall context support their application of this text?

First, we will examine the overall context of the letter and then the specific and immediate context in which this text is found.

Paul begins this letter by dealing with a specific issue that had divided the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10) into divisive factions. This issue was the administrator of water baptism (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Because they were so divided over the administrators of water baptism, Paul thanked God that he had not baptized many of them, as he did not want to be responsible for such division (1 Cor. 1:14-16). Paul went on to demonstrate that they had their priorities confused, as it is the gospel rather than water baptism that is most

¹⁷ There is no definite article (the) in the Greek text in 1 Cor. 12:27. Literally it reads “Now ye are **a** body of Christ and members in particular.” The same is true in Ephesians 2:20-21 *“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.”* The church at Corinth is equally called “a” temple of God in I Cor. 3:16 as there is no definite article in the Greek text. The same is true in 1 Cor. 3:9 where the church at Corinth is “a” husbandry and “a” building of God.

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significant (1 Cor. 1:15-31). However, fearing that they would further divide over the particular preacher responsible for bringing them the gospel and administering their baptism, he went on to show that there was no basis for the preacher to brag or boast, but it was the Spirit of God where the power of the gospel resides (1 Cor. 2) as well as who was responsible for the ultimate administrator of their water baptism (1 Cor. 3:4-10) in addition to the actual constitution of the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:11-16).

In chapter three he directly deals with the division over the human instruments used by God the Holy Spirit in building the church at Corinth through preaching the gospel and baptizing them. In verses 1-4 he condemns them as “*carnal*” rather than “*spiritual*” due to their divisiveness over their individual baptismal administrators. In verses 5-9 he directly deals with the basis for their divisions. First, he asks them this question:

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos? – v. 5

Then he proceeds to give them this answer:

but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. – vv. 5-

7

Thus, Paul makes it clear that all of these administrators of baptism work under the leadership of one boss – God the Holy Spirit. Then, he proceeds to deal a death blow to their division over the various human administrators of water baptism by stating

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such administrators are all “**one**”, because they work together as “**one**,” with God under the leadership of the Holy Spirit:

*Now he that planteth and he that watereth are **one**: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers **together with God**: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.* – vv. 8-9 (emphasis mine)

Therefore, water baptism was administered ultimately under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, as all of the human administrators worked as “**one.....together with God**” the Holy Spirit in building the church body at Corinth. Thus “ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”

Paul immediately proceeds to illustrate this principle by the fact that he was the master builder used by God to lay the foundation for the church at Corinth in verse 10.

Therefore under the leadership of the Holy Spirit these men were used by God to evangelize, baptize and build them (“ye are”) into “**the temple of God**” at Corinth (v. 16).

Thus excluding the human instruments, Paul tells them “**Ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building...Ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you**” (vv. 9, 16) and later he will tell them “**Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular**” (1 Cor. 12:13).

What is his solution to their party division over the particular administrator of their water baptism? It was God the Holy Spirit that brought them to faith in the gospel, and it was God the Holy Spirit that led them to receive water baptism and it was God the

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Holy Spirit that sent the ministers to them and who led them to submit to water baptism bringing them together as one congregational body of Christ at Corinth. Hence, the bottom line is that the institutional church wherever it is concretely located, is a direct product of the Holy Spirit. For it is under the leadership of one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, regardless of social, gender and race differences and made to partake of the Spirit's blessings provided in that body. This truth ends all bickering and divisions over particular human instruments used by God in their salvation and baptism. What was true of the church at Corinth is true of all New Testament churches and their individual members.

Now, let's look at the immediate context in which 1 Corinthians 12:13 is found. Again, we have a problem of division, but in this instance it is over spiritual gifts. They are ignorant concerning spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1). Previous to their salvation they were under the leadership of demonic spirits in their idolatrous worship services:

*Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. – 1 Cor. 12:2
(emphasis mine)*

It is in direct contrast to this leadership of demonic spirits in idolatrous worship services that Paul proceeds to illustrate the difference between being under the leadership of demons and being under the leadership of God the Holy Spirit. Significantly, the word used to make this contrasting parallel is the preposition “**by**” which is the translation of the Greek preposition *en* in verse 3:

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus

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*accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but **by** the Holy Ghost.* – v. 3 (emphasis mine)

When they were under the leadership of demonic spirits they could say Jesus was accursed and they could not truthfully say Jesus is Lord, but now in contrast, “**by**” or **under the leadership of** The Holy Spirit they cannot say Jesus is accursed and they can say Jesus is Lord. Hence, Paul establishes what he means by the word “**by**” or the Greek preposition *en* at the very beginning of this context. He means **under the leadership of**, or **by direction of**, or **by means of**, the Holy Spirit.

The principle Paul used to settle the division over water baptism is the same principle Paul used to settle the division over spiritual gifts. It was through the apostolic laying on of hands that spiritual gifts were instrumentally imparted to these believers (Acts 6:6; 8:15-17; 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6; 2 Cor. 12:12). However, the apostles worked as “*one*” together with the Holy Spirit in administering spiritual gifts, just, as the various ministers worked as one in building the church at the “temple of God” at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:5-16).

Therefore, it was under the leadership of the Holy Spirit that they were individually gifted (1 Cor. 12:7-11). As members in that body they were made to metaphorically “drink” or partake of the benefits provided by such a diversely gifted membership (vv. 14-27). Many of these benefits of the Spirit indwelt assembly are listed in Acts 2:42-46. They were made to drink into “the faith” which was the doctrinal foundation upon which New Testament congregations were built. It was the preaching and teaching ministry under the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the churches (1 Tim. 3:1-13) that made each congregational body “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Membership in such a

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metaphorical body of Christ made them partakers of many benefits and blessings of the Holy Spirit that those outside of New Testament congregations are not blessed to partake. However, specifically in this context, they were graced to drink or partake into the spiritual gifts brought together into one body for the mutual benefit for all the members. In verse 7 Paul uses the Greek term *phanerosis* translated “manifest.” This term refers to the public manifestation of a person or things. In addition, in verse 7 the words “*to profit withal*” translates a Greek term (*sumpheron*) which means to “bring together” or to consolidate. God gifted the individual members for the purpose of public consolidation or for mutual public benefit for all the members.

Remember, 1 Corinthians 3:1-16 established how the church was built as the temple of the Spirit of God. It was built by the “*master builder*” Paul and then built up by others but all under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. They worked together with the Holy Spirit as “*one*” in building this church as the “*temple of God.*” Hence, the church at Corinth was formed under the leadership, or “*by one Spirit*” whereby they were all water baptized into one body, one temple, one husbandry, one building, by that same Spirit.

Consider the above in light of John 4:1-2. In John 4:1 the apostle says that Jesus baptized and made more disciples than John. However, in John 4:2 it is clarified that Jesus Himself never baptized anyone, but that His disciples administered such baptisms. That is, these baptisms were administered under the leadership, direction and authority of Jesus Christ. They are attributed to Him (v. 1) but actually administered by those under his leadership (v. 2). Jesus promised the church that He would send “*another Comforter*” or the Holy Spirit to them (Jn. 16:13) who would “*lead them*” into all things. Like the first Comforter, the second

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Comforter would “*lead them*” in regard to the administration of baptism (I Corinthians 3:8-9) and building churches. Hence, just as the administration of water baptism was attributed to the first Comforter (John 4:1) but actually administered under his leadership by His disciples (Jn. 4:2) so likewise water baptism is directly attributed to the second Comforter (1 Cor. 12:13) but is actually administered under His leadership by His ministers (1 Cor. 3:8-9).

In closing, let it be noted that the historic Baptist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:13 before 1680 was unanimous that this text referred to water baptism and the membership in the local church.

I. Authorized Body

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. - Eph. 1:22-23

Those who interpret the metaphorical “*head*” and “*body*” relationship between Christ and the church to be an organic spiritual union in which Christ is the organic spiritual head and the church to be the organic spiritual body have a tremendous problem with this text.

Paul uses the metaphor “*head*” to establish the authority of Christ “*over all things.*” Hence, Christ is “*the head*” over all things as much as He is the “head” over the church which is His **metaphorical** “*body.*” If the **metaphor** of “*head*” infers organic spiritual union with the church body then it equally infers organic spiritual union with “*all things,*” as He is equally the “*head*” over

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both. However, that would teach **pantheism** making Christ spiritually united with “*all things*.”

Although spiritual union is a Biblical concept that is found in the doctrine of regeneration, it is not inferred or implied in the “*head*” and “*body*” **metaphors**. Remember, the proper use of **metaphors** can only convey characteristics that are actually found in the relationship between the literal “*head*” and “*body*.” In the literal physical relationship between the “*head*” and “*body*” both are mutually dependent upon each other for life. If you cut off the literal “*head*” from the literal “*body*” both mutually die as one cannot be sustained without the other. To apply these metaphors to spiritual union would teach that Jesus Christ is as much dependent upon the body for spiritual life as the body is dependent upon Christ for spiritual life. The Bible does not teach such a thing.

Spiritual union between Christ and believers may be **metaphorically** expressed by the vine and branch metaphor. If the branches are severed from the vine, only the branches die, as the vine is sustained by its own inherent and separate life principle.

The **metaphors** of “*head*” and “*body*” merely convey the idea of final authority, direction, and leadership by Christ and submission to that leadership by the church. In every context where the **metaphors** “*head*” and “*body*” are found the subject is progressive sanctification not salvation. The “*head*” metaphor is consistently used in the New Testament to express the position and submission to authority as in 1 Cor. 11:3. It is never used to convey spiritual union.

What Ephesians 1:22-23 actually teaches is that Christ possesses final authority over “*all things*.” On planet earth His authority is visibly manifested in and through the church. The New Testament

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church is the visible expression of the Kingdom (rule) of God on earth and possesses the “*keys of the kingdom*” (Mt. 18:17-18) which symbolizes Christ’s authority. Jesus expresses this authority in the church when he says:

Tell it to the church... Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. – Mt. 18:17, 18
(emphasis mine)

When authorizing the church to carry out the Great Commission Jesus prefaced it by saying “*all power is given me in heaven and in earth.*” On planet earth His authority is manifested in and through the church, as His temple.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? – 1 Cor. 3:16
(emphasis mine)

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular – 1 Cor. 12:27 (emphasis mine)

In the preceding context of Ephesians 1:22-23 Paul has just declared that God has set Christ above all principalities in heavenly places. The extent of His authority not only reaches in this world but the world to come. The present manifestation of that authority in “*this world*” is in His institutional church which is His metaphorical body:

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

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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, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. – Eph. 1:19-23

J. Two Metaphorical Temples

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? – 1 Cor. 3:16

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

The former verse (1 Cor. 3:16) in context refers to the actual constitution of the local congregation at Corinth. Paul was the “*master builder*” (1 Cor. 3:10) while others built on the foundation he laid at Corinth. Notice Paul says “*ye*” not “*we*” as he was not a member of the congregational body of Christ at Corinth, but a member of the congregation at Antioch (Acts 13:1-4). This was the “*temple of the Spirit*” at Corinth consisting of a plurality of members located there (1 Cor. 12:27). This is the **institutional** “*temple of the Spirit*.” It is visible and physical congregation.

The latter verse (1 Cor. 6:19) in context refers to the literal physical body of each member at Corinth. Their literal physical body is “*the temple of the Holy Ghost*.” This is the **individual**

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“*temple of the Holy Ghost.*” The body of Christ at Corinth consisted of these physical bodies assembled together as one institutional body of Christ at Corinth. Speaking of their physical bodies he says:

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?

– 1 Cor. 6:15

Hence, the metaphorical institutional “*body of Christ*” which Paul says is made up of “*individual members*” (1 Cor. 12:27) must be a **physical** local congregational body of Christ, as its membership consists of literal **physical** “*bodies*” which again does not consist of “*we*” but “*ye*” in both cases. Hence, Paul is repudiating the idea of a so-called universal invisible body of Christ made up of all believers.

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NINE COMMON SENSE REASONS

For Rejecting the Universal Invisible Church Theory

1. It's theory contradicts its practice

This doctrine is commonly preached and taught to be the Biblical basis for **unifying** God's people in actual practice. However, in reality, even though it is common that several churches embracing this doctrine are to be found in almost every city throughout this country, and yet not once, has this theory ever been able to bring such churches together as one church body/denomination even though they exist sometimes only blocks or a few miles apart. It simply does not work.

Surely if it were Biblical, and if it were true, then somewhere at some time, it would achieve practical unity at least between the churches embracing that theory, which only exist within walking distance from each other in the same cities?????? It is a false doctrine because it has no practical application.

2. It promotes division and confusion rather than unity

Without this doctrine there would have been no basis for the excommunicated Reformers (Luther, Calvin, etc.) to respectfully call themselves churches of Christ. They would have remained simply excommunicated Roman Catholics or have had to come over to the dreaded and hated Anabaptists. This doctrine gave them a way to separate from Rome **and from each other** and has been the basis for countless numbers of such separations until this very day. Indeed, it is reported that there are now over 37,000 different Christian denominations in the world and five new ones are formed each week. This doctrine is the **ONLY** basis used for justifying the

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existence of each new one and thus creating further division and confusion. The character of this doctrine is seen in its only fruit – further division and disunity within Christendom. Its fruit manifests it to be a false doctrine.

3. It's Advocates cannot agree on its membership

Its advocates cannot agree among themselves who is included in this kind of church. *Dispensational* Universal Invisible advocates deny that all the saints living before Pentecost are in this church. Amazingly the distinguishing factor according to this theory is that all saints after Pentecost to the Rapture are “*in Christ*” and those previous to Pentecost are not “in Christ” and therefore the very gospel is attacked demanding there is another salvation **outside** of Christ.

Non-dispensational Universal Invisible advocates include all the elect in all ages but then contradict themselves by interpreting I Corinthians 12:13 as “*Spirit baptism*” which they also demand is the means to enter into their kind of church, when in fact, the baptism in the Spirit had no previous existence before the day of Pentecost. They have the problem of explaining how those saints living before Pentecost could enter into this kind of church one way and those after Pentecost another way???? One false doctrine can only lead to more false doctrines.

4. It includes what God commands local churches to exclude

New Testament churches are commanded to separate from any “*brother*” who walks disorderly (2 Thes. 3:6) or who lives in openly known sin (I Cor. 5:11) and have no fellowship with such (2 Thes. 3:14). New Testament churches are commanded to mark

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and avoid heretics (Rom. 16:17). However, what many refer to as the so-called “true” church is the kind of church that embraces the very ones that New Testament Churches are commanded to separate, mark and avoid. Yet, the advocates of the universal invisible church theory claim that the local church is the visible expression of it!!

New Testament churches don’t receive into their membership unbaptized persons. However, the so-called “true” church receives unbaptized, sprinkled, poured or immersed persons into its membership. Yet its advocates claim that local churches are the visible expression of the universal invisible church!

This theory makes God the author of confusion. According to this theory, what God demands for membership in *the visible expression* (local church) is *not expressed* in the membership requirements of the Universal invisible church. Only a false doctrine would demand such interpretations.

5. It can’t be found in Church History before the Reformation

If the so-called Universal Invisible Church is Biblical, then, why can’t it be found prior to the Reformation Period????? Why is the very first recorded discussion on the nature of the church just a few hundred years after the Apostles completely silent about this doctrine? Nearly 600 (286 Catholic bishops; 279 Donatist bishops) preachers from all over the known world convened to discuss the true nature of the church and the idea of a universal invisible church never surfaced among them! The great Presbyterian church historian, Augustus Neander lamented that if only they knew of the Reformation doctrine of the universal invisible church theory the debate could have been resolved. It

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was the 286 churches represented by Augustine that ultimately became the Roman Universal (Catholic) visible Church.

Augustine led the debate for the Catholics and tried to introduce a new concept called the universal visible church while the Donatists rejected it, and accused him of teaching two different kinds of churches, one that was local and visible and another that was universal and visible. In the Reformation the Anabaptists accused Luther of the very same thing when he introduced the universal invisible church theory. If this theory is Biblical then why didn't those closest to the time of the New Testament teach it? Why did the Donatists accuse Augustine of teaching two kinds of churches if there were already two kinds of churches (one visible another invisible)????? Why? The answer is simple. It is because it is a false doctrine invented by the Reformers 1500 years after the writing of the New Testament.

Only three concepts of the church can be found from the end of the first century to the Reformation; (1) local visible body of Christ; (2) Universal visible body of Christ originating with Augustine; (3) Future glory church when all the elect will be assembled after the resurrection.¹⁸

6. It Perverts the Historical Biblical Context

It must be remembered that during the New Testament period, all churches were like faith and order with one another and jointly referred to as "*the churches of Christ.*" The contextual

¹⁸ The only kind of church that included all the saints in all ages embraced by those living between the first and sixteenth century was the future glory church idea. No one during this time believed it had any present application but was strictly yet future.

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“*we...us....ye....you*” found in New Testament epistles were united in the same faith and practice within the same kind of churches. Therefore, it is a perversion of the historical and Biblical context to define or interpret the contextual “*we...us....ye...you*” in these epistles as Christians divided into contradicting denominations. This is especially true since the contextual “*we....us....ye....you*” found in these epistles are explicitly commanded to avoid, have no fellowship with, but place under discipline such brethren who establish another kind of faith and order or conflicting and competing denominations (2 Thes. 3:6,14; I Cor. 5:6-13; Rom. 16:17).

Therefore, in the historical and Biblical context of the body of Christ, the contextual “*we...us....ye....you*” at the very minimum refers to Christians who were like faith and order existing in the same kind of churches or what today we would call the same “denomination” of churches. Yet, the universal invisible church advocates rip the pronouns “*we....us....ye.....you*” out of the historical context and make them apply to a post-New Testament era of professed Christians existing within conflicting denominations, as well as, inclusive of those who have no kind of church affiliation whatsoever. The truth is that the contextual “*we...us...ye...you*” refer to all Christians who are members of the same kind of church, holding the same faith and order. The so-called universal invisible church theory is simply Satan’s tool to justify those who have departed from the faith.

7. It robs the New Testament Churches of any abstract Instruction

It is common for a Pastor to make the statement, “*This morning I will be preaching on **the church** and its ordinances.*” He didn’t

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say what particular church or what particular ordinances, but it is a common abstract statement that is commonly understood to mean the kind of church and ordinances practiced by that very Pastor and church. Most admit that the epistles written by the apostle Paul were circular letters intended to be passed from church to church (Col. 4:16) for common edification of all the churches since he was imprisoned and unable to return and build up each church. His letters are full of abstract language for teaching about “*the servant*” and “*the wife*” and “*the husband*” and “*the laborer*” and “*the old man*” and “*the new man*” and “*the body*” and “*the church*” and the list goes on. Such is common abstract language intended to instruct the particular person or church that reads it.

Yet, every passage where this same abstract use of language occurs, it is robbed from New Testament churches and applied to something that cannot possibly make any kind of application of *practical* unity between its membership or *practical* assembling of its membership. Instead it justifies practical division and separation.

8. It promotes irresponsibility and disobedience to God’s Word

The Great Commission is about making “disciples” and that very term necessarily includes discipline in New Testament faith and practice. The local visible church is placed in authority over its membership for instructive, corrective and if necessary purgative discipline (Mt. 18:15-18; I Cor. 5; 2 Thes. 3:6). However, the doctrine of the Universal Invisible Church completely invalidates any kind of church discipline whether it is instructive, corrective or purgative. The disciplined person simply tells the church, “*I belong to the true church and I can worship God upon the hill or*

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at my home or go to another church of my choice.” Such a person will leave and will either join some church that promotes their sins or they will meet in their home and start a new denomination to promote their sins. Yet, they will leave and justify their departure on the boast they belong to the “**true**” church that requires no accountability to anyone and in reality promotes disobedience to Christ. This doctrine is the safe haven for all kinds of apostasy under the guise of the “true” church of Christ.

9. It confuses the Kingdom and Family with the Church of God or salvation with service

The spiritual kingdom is all about the King spiritually indwelling the believer by spiritual union in order to rule from within his citizens. The Family of God is all about being created in “*righteousness and true holiness*” after the image of God called new birth, whereby we are made partakers of the moral divine nature of God. These two aspects are essential to be His people and both the kingdom and family of God have existed on earth since the fall of man, as that is the only possible way to counteract the rule of sin in and over man due to the fall. Apart from spiritual union with God there is no internal basis for fallen man to have spiritual life, light or righteousness. Apart from regeneration there is no basis for spiritual union between God and man whereby spiritual life, light and righteousness can indwell any man. Hence, the very nature of essential salvation from the fall demands the existence of the spiritual kingdom and family of God from the fall of man.

However, the church of God has its “*foundation*” (a symbol of origin) with Christ and the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 12:28) 4000 years after the fall, and therefore cannot possibly be

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any part of spiritual union with God through Christ, unless you embrace another way and another gospel of salvation **outside** of Christ for the past 400 years before the cross. The Scripture denies such an idea (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 10:43; 26:21-22; Heb. 4:2). Spiritual union with God through Christ by new birth was an Old Testament reality (“*in Christ*” – Gal. 3:17; 4:29; Ezek. 44:7; Jn. 3:3-11; 1 Pet. 1:11).

Therefore, the theory of the so-called universal invisible church confuses the church with the kingdom and family of God and denies any spiritual union between God and anyone living between the fall and Pentecost, which results in spiritual separation from God, who is life, who is light and who is righteousness.

CONCLUSION

In reality the theory of a Universal Invisible Church is the doctrinal justification of the Great Harlot of Revelation 17-18.¹⁹ She is the inclusion of all denominational confusion and division and the doctrine of the universal invisible church is the defense of her existence. God calls upon His people to “*come out of her my people and be not a partaker of her evil deeds*”

¹⁹ The Reformers consistently applied Revelation 17 and the title of the “Great Whore” to Rome. That is an indisputable fact of history. Also, Rome consistently calls herself the “mother” of the Protestant denominations.

The True Historical Origin of the Universal Church Theory

In this chapter it will be argued that both types of the universal church theory (visible and invisible) had their philosophical origin with the misinterpretation of Matthew 13:24. Furthermore, in both cases was an attempt, at least to avoid, if not to invalidate church discipline. In both cases, it was an attempt to include within the church what biblical church discipline would exclude from the church.

From the close of the New Testament until the Nicene conference in 467 A.D., nothing can be found about a universal visible church in secular church history.

Yes, the term *catholic* can be found prior to 467 A.D. and is used to describe the term “*church*” during that period. However, it did not mean how it is used later by the Catholics or later by Protestants.

For example, the term *catholic* was applied to each singular geographically located church by early writers.

“....*bishop of the catholic church which is in Symrna.*” –
The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p. 42 chapter xvi –
Polycarp.

The New Testament church was “catholic” or universal in regard to its membership requirements. The former “house of God” and Jewish Synagogues restricted membership to Jews only, and divided males from females, and separated Gentile proselytes from Jewish converts. In contrast, the churches of God were *catholic* as

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they allowed for people of all races, genders and classes equal membership.

The Presbyterian Confession of Faith or the Westminster Confession acknowledges this is the ancient meaning under the section dealing with the church:

“The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law),” – **Westminster Confession of Faith 1647**, chapter 25, section 2

However, prior to 476 A.D. it is never once used to express a singular universal church consisting of all Christians either visible or universal.

In fact, in the first conference of churches, represented by a meeting of their elders concerning the nature of the church, only the local visible church view was embraced. It was during this counsel that Augustine introduced another view – the visible universal church theory. Augustine interpreted and applied Matthew 13:24 and the term “*field*” to be the church. His motive for doing so has no exegetical basis as Jesus plainly says that the “*field*” in this kingdom parable is “*the world*” (Mt. 13:38) not the church. However, Augustine was attempting to repudiate church discipline, as the Donatists were excluding the liberal churches from their fellowship of which Augustine represented. The churches represented by Augustine eventually united with the secular state and formed the Roman Catholic Church.

When Augustine applied the term “church” to the “field” and claimed the church was a universal **visible** church, he was accused of creating two different kinds of churches when the Bible only

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taught one kind. Augustine summed up this debate in the following words:

“The issue between us and the Donatists is about the question where this body is to be located, that is, what and where is the Church?” (Inter nos autem et Donatists quaestio est, ubi sit hoc corpus, id est, ubi sit Ecclesia?) -
Quoted by Leonard Verduin, **The Reformers and their Stepchildren**, (Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI) p. 33
footnote “h”

Augustine argued it was equal to the “field”, or the “world” and therefore, Christ commanded them not to pluck out the “tares” but leave them unto the end of the world. Hence, Augustine repudiated the Donatist action of discipline of what they perceived as apostate churches or “tares” from their fellowship. However, the Donatist elders rightly pointed out that Christ spoke of the kingdom not the church, and that the “field” was the “world” not the church.

Prior to this interpretation by Augustine, there was only one view of the nature of the church – visible and local.

It is true that the idea of a yet unassembled future glory church after the coming of Christ consisting of all the elect can be found in secular church history between the close of the Biblical canon and the Reformation period. The same idea was embraced by Dr. James Pendleton, Dr. B.H. Carroll, Dr. Rosco Brong, Dr. Roy O. Beaman and many other “Landmark” type Baptists. However, they all denied any present existence of such a church and they all believed when it did come into existence it would be a localized congregation of all the elect actually and literally assembling in one place – heaven. Significantly, the historical Anabaptists which

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embraced this future church concept denied that Catholics would be part of that future church.

Between the time of Augustine and the Reformation no other concepts of the church can be found other than the following three:

1. Visible geographically located congregation
2. Universal Visible church of Roman Catholics
3. Post-Second Coming assembling of all the elect in heaven

However, at the time of the Reformation when Rome had issued Papal Bulls to excommunicate the Roman Catholic Reformers from the church, the Reformers faced with the very same dilemma that Augustine had been confronted with - excommunication. They were only trying to reform the Roman Catholic Church because they believed it to be the true church of God. They subscribed to the Augustian doctrine of the visible universal church, and therefore they believed that to be excommunicated out of the church would be equal to being separated from the saving graces of Jesus Christ which they equated with the church and sacraments administered by the church.

Louis Berkhof says that Luther was the first to make the distinction between the visible and invisible church:

This means that the Church of God is on the one hand visible, and on the other hand invisible. It is said that Luther was the first to make this distinction, but the other Reforms recognized and also applied it to the church. – Louis Berkhof, **Systematic Theology**, [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974] p.565

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Martin Luther and John Calvin tackled this dilemma and revisited the Augustinian doctrine based upon Matthew 13:24 and again misinterpreted the “*field*” to be the “*church*” rather than the “*world*” (Mt. 13:28). However, they realized what Christ was describing was not merely universal, as interpreted by Augustine, but invisible, as the “*true seed*” were “*hid*” among the professing stuff. They simply added “*invisible*” to the Augustinian doctrine of the Church, and then ignored the institutional and generic use of “*the church*” in the New Testament, but confused the New Testament church with the “*kingdom of God*” and with the “*family of God*” in heaven (Eph. 3:15).

Therefore, they avoided the Papal Bulls of excommunication by taking the position that the “true” church is universal and invisible, and it was the universal visible church that had gone into apostasy. This is when the Reformers started applying Revelation 17-18 to Rome and calling true believers to “*come out of her*” (Rev. 18:4), while ignoring she was also called the “*mother of harlots.*” Their own ordination and ordinances originated with what they called “*the Great Whore.*”

Significantly, the Reformation Anabaptists made the very same charge against the Reformers concept of the church that their ancient forefathers, the Donatists made against the new concept of the church by Augustine. They claimed they taught two different kinds of churches when the Bible spoke of only one kind.

However, the real truth is that all of professed Christendom, both saved and lost professors, who serve and worship God outside the membership of New Testament congregations are part of the metaphorical “*Great Whore and her Harlots*” or polluted institutional Christianity. Just as a “chaste virgin” or “bride” are metaphors for churches that remain faithful to “the faith once

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delivered” so the terms “whore” or “harlots” are metaphors to describe churches that have been metaphorically “corrupted” (2 Cor. 11:3) from essentials truths (2 Cor. 11:4).

One does not have to know all truth in order to be recognized as a Christian, but one does have to profess essential truths of salvation. Just so, a church does not have to know all truth in order to be recognized as a New Testament congregation, but such a church does have to profess all truths essential to be recognized as a true New Testament congregation. It is the belief and practice of these essential truths that identify any church as a metaphorical “*chaste virgin*” (2 Cor. 11:2). When a congregation embraces “another gospel” or “another spirit” or “another Christ” (2 Cor. 11:4) or any doctrine essential to be a true church, they become metaphorically “*corrupted*” (2 Cor. 11:3) from being a “*chaste virgin*” or have become a metaphorical institutional “*harlot*.”

The Great Commission provides the essential criteria to be a true congregation of Christ. The Great Commission provides five defining minimal principles that characterize every true Church of Christ.

True churches have an authorized horizontal instrumental origin with those identified as “*ye*” as opposed to “*them*.” Jesus never authorized unbaptized and untaught believers (“*them*”) to administer this commission to anyone. He authorized his church and gave it the “*keys of the kingdom*” (Mt. 18:17-18; Acts 1:21-22) or administrative authority.

True churches “*make disciples*” - a disciple is one who embraces like faith and order with “*ye*” or “*whatsoever things I have commanded*.” True churches receive and fellowship only with churches of like faith and order.

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True churches administer the same “*gospel*” and same “*baptism*” – “*go preach the gospel*” “*baptizing them IN THE NAME*” – Evangelization prior to scriptural baptism

True churches administer the same process in disciple making – evangelization, baptism, teaching observing assembly.

True churches originate by this same reproductive process from a previous assembly of authorized disciples of like faith and order – Acts 2:41-42; 13; 1-4.

True churches of Christ believe and teach a great deal more, but all churches of Christ are characterized by these five traits.

Landmarkism

The interpretative view of scriptures that are set forth in this book haven been historically identified since the 19th century as “Landmarkism.”

Between the years 1851 and 1888 there was a movement among Southern Baptists led by three men that many called “The Great Triumphrae.” They simply systemized what historical Baptists before them had believed and practiced, but Baptists of their day were on the brink of apostatizing from. Their ecclesiological (doctrine of the church) view was labeled *Landmarkism*.

In 1854 Dr. J.M. Pendleton wrote a book entitled **An Old Landmark Reset** and later in 1880 Dr. J.R. Graves wrote a book entitled **Old Landmarkism What is It?** based on the words “*remove not the ancient landmark thy fathers have set*” taken from Proverbs 22:28. In both books, the thesis being defended was that

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God gave his people certain teachings that acted like boundary lines to preserve the truth of the New Testament doctrine of the church. Although the terms *Landmarker* and *Landmarkism* are used and applied by a number of different types of Baptists today, it usually refers to a common belief that the Lord built a local visible congregation during his earthly ministry in Palestine, prior to Pentecost, that was composed of a body of baptized believers and commissioned to reproduce after its own kind until Christ returns. This position denies both the Roman Catholic doctrine of a universal *visible* church and the Reformed Catholic doctrine of a *universal* invisible church.

William Cathcart lived at the same time as did the three great defenders of Landmarkism (J.R. Graves, A.C. Dayton and James Pendleton) and was a Landmarker himself. In his epic **Baptist Encyclopedia** under the topic *Landmarkism*, he gives the following definition, which many believe was actually provided for him by Dr. James Pendleton.

“The doctrine of Landmarkism is that baptism and church membership precede the preaching of the gospel, even as they precede communion at the Lord’s Table. The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church; that as “a visible church is a congregation of baptized believers,” etc., it follows that no Pedobaptist organization is a church in the Scriptural sense of the term, and that therefore Scriptural authority to preach cannot proceed from such an organization. Hence the non-recognition of Pedobaptist ministers, who are not interfered with, but simply let alone.” – William Cathcart, **Baptist Encyclopedia** (Landmarkism) 1881

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This was their own definition of what they called *Landmarkism*. As you can clearly see by their own definition of Landmarkism, they were not simply reacting to the Campbellite movement, as imagined by some later writers (Morgan Patterson, James E. Tull, etc.). However, Dr. J.R. Graves wrote his definitive book (**Old Landmarkism, What is It?**) for the very purpose to deny their view was reactionary to Campbellism or Pedobaptism, but their view was properly based upon Scriptures and the historical practice of Baptists before them.

Let us examine this definition very carefully phrase by phrase. Cathcart says that “*the doctrine of Landmarkism is that baptism and church membership precede the preaching of the gospel, even as they precede communion at the Lord’s table.*” Landmarkism teaches that the New Testament church pre-existed the giving of the Great Commission. This is true to Scripture. Those referred to as “*ye*” in the Great Commission were already baptized believers in the New Testament church at Jerusalem (Mt. 18:17; 18; Acts 1:21-22) long before the commission was given. Those saved on Pentecost were merely “*added unto them*” or added unto “*the church*” (Acts 2:47). The office of apostle had already been “*set in the church*” long before Pentecost (1 Cor. 12:28; Mk. 3:12-15; Lk. 6:12-13; Acts 1:15-21).

Landmarkism denies this commission was given to any individual or group of individuals (ordained ministry) but to the institutional church, as this kind of disciplinary authority had already been given by Christ to the church (Mt. 18:17-18) with their ordained ministry. Therefore, according to Landmarkism, everything essential to constituting new churches (preaching the gospel, baptizing and teaching them) not only originates with a preexistent New Testament church, but is administered under the authority of a preexistent New Testament church, as Cathcart goes

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on to say, “*The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church.*” This represents the ancient Baptist belief that God directly calls men into the ministry (“*under God*”) but it is the church that is authorized by God to select, ordain and send them to administer the ordinances and organize churches (Acts 6:1-5;13:1-4). Dr. J.R. Graves says this explicitly in the following words taken from his book, **Old Landmarkism, What is it?**

“If the church alone was commissioned to preserve and to preach the gospel, then it is certain that no other organization has the right to preach it—to trench upon the divine rights of the church. A Masonic Lodge, no more than a Young Men’s Christian Association; an Odd-Fellows’ lodge or Howard Association, no more than a “Woman’s Missionary Board,” have the least right to take the gospel in hand, select and commission ministers to go forth and preach it, administer its ordinances and organize churches.” – J. R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism, What is it?**

The argument of Dr. Graves and all Landmark Baptists was that the Great Commission which begins with “*go*” preach the gospel (Mk. 16:15), and concludes with constitution of new churches, is given to the church as the only organization or institution authorized to administer it. *Landmarkers did not deny that all individual Christians could give witness to the gospel or preach it*, but they asserted that the Great Commission included more than mere preaching the gospel, but to “*make disciples*” which was inclusive of administering the ordinances and teaching them how to observe all things. This work was given only to the New Testament church. What old Baptists called “*gospel order*” refers to the order found in the Great Commission which begins with (1)

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the church being authorized by Christ to (2) go preach the gospel and then (3) baptize those that believe and then (4) bring them into a teaching assembly to teach them to observe all things Christ commanded. With the last step this four step cycle is repeated not only in keeping with the order found in this Great Commission command, but is a reproductive cycle that preserves the churches in all generations in keeping with its divine promise “*lo, I will be with you alway, unto the end of the world. Amen.*” Hence, the Great commission is a reproductive cycle whereby the New Testament church reproduces after its own kind until the end of the world.

Hence, Landmarkers believe that a primary tenet of Landmarkism is church authority in the selection, and commissioning of ministers not only to go forth to preach the gospel, but to “*administer the ordinances and organize churches.*” This is what Landmarkers defined as “*church authority*” in the Great Commission. Hence, although they admitted that such “*authority*” emanates “*under God*” but it is not conveyed directly from God to any individual or individuals apart “*from a gospel church.*” This denies what many call “direct” authority. Direct authority claims that authority to administer the Great Commission comes directly from God without any intervening agencies or earthly administrations. Advocates of direct authority would have simply said “*Scriptural authority emanates under God*” period. However, the Great Commission “*ye*” repudiates the direct authority theory, as “*ye*” indisputably stands between Christ and “*them*” or the recipients in the Great Commission. Therefore, historical Landmarkism demands that such authority “*under God*” is “*from a gospel church*” as the administrative authority established by God on earth to carry out the Great Commission.

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Cathcart then proceeds to assert what Landmarkism defined as a “gospel church.” He said, “***a visible church is a congregation of baptized believers.***” Therefore, Landmarkism restricted the “***gospel church***” to a “***visible...congregation of baptized believers.***” Indeed, all three prominent Landmarkers, including Dr. J.M. Pendleton, rejected the Protestant idea of a universal invisible church consisting of all true believers in all denominations on earth (An Old Landmark Reset by J.M. Pendleton) as one body of Christ. Dr. Pendleton believed a future aggregate church of true believers will assemble in heaven after the return of Christ, but he did not believe that any such kind of church presently existed in this age. Landmarkers believed that where there was no scriptural baptism there could be no scriptural church. Hence, this definition of a true church denied that all Protestant and Pedobaptist churches were true churches of Christ – “***it follows that no Pedobaptist organization is a church in the Scriptural sense of the term.***”

Landmarkism denied that such authority was given directly by God to anyone but a visible congregation of baptized believers, and since Pedobaptist churches did not meet those qualifications – “***therefore Scriptural authority to preach cannot proceed from such an organization.***” He is referring to authority to select, qualify and ordain a gospel ministry. He is not denying that individual Christians can give a gospel witness. This in turn demonstrated that Pedobaptist ministers were without scriptural authority “***to administer...ordinances and organize churches.***” As such, they should not be recognized as ordained ministers by New Testament churches – “***Hence the non-recognition of Pedobaptist ministers, who are not interfered with, but simply let alone.***”

Therefore, by historical definition, “Landmarkism” is the belief that authority to administer all aspects of the Great Commission,

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selecting, commissioning and sending men to preach the gospel, to administer the ordinances and to organize churches falls under the authority of the New Testament church. This is a clear and explicit rejection of the doctrine of *vertical* authority or authority given unto any two or three believers (even baptized believers) to administer the great commission (Mt. 18:16) unless those “*two or three*” baptized believers constitute a New Testament church (Mt. 18:17-20).

Even one of the most ardent foes of Landmarkism acknowledged that the Great Commission is the process by which Baptists are made and constituted into churches just as it always was, beginning in the New Testament:

*In this simple analysis of the commission is presented the very process by which Baptists are now made, constituted into churches, and governed. That it was the process by which the first preachers made converts, and constituted churches, is **beyond question**.* T. G. Jones. **The Baptists** p. 27; - emphasis mine

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The Family of God, Kingdom of God, and Church of God Differentiated

By H. Boyce Taylor

BRO. TAYLOR ANSWERS A QUESTION

"Men are born into the family of God by the new birth, but men are not born into the church" H. B. Taylor, in News and Truths.

THE QUESTION

If that is the truth, if men get into the family of God by one process, and into the church of God by another and different one, it follows certainly, that the family of God and the church of God are two different institutions. He who has been "born into the family of God by the new birth" is a child of God, and, as such is an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ: *"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). Is it possible that these *"heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ"* are still out of the church of God? Again: he who has been "born into the family of God" has the remission of sins; for, certainly, God's children are not reprobates. Again: He who has been "born into the family of God" is a new creature. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (II Cor. 5:17). We should feel under lasting obligations to Brother Taylor if he would tell us just what God must do to this person, or what the person himself must do to become a member of God's church, after he has been "born into the

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family of God," after he has remission of sins, after he has become a *"new creature."* His declaration that "men are born into the family of God" is entirely correct, but that the family of God is one thing and the church of God is another thing, is entirely erroneous. *"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"* (I Tim. 3:15). The family of God and the house of God are certainly the same, and the apostle here most emphatically declares that the house of God is the church of the living God. -Gospel Message.

THE ANSWER

We gladly answer the questions herein contained. In fact, while we are at it we go a little further and distinguish between **the family of God, the church of God, and the kingdom of God** as used in the New Testament.

The family of God includes all the children of God in heaven and on earth. *"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"* (Eph. 3:15). This family includes all believers. *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3:26). All believers are God's children. *"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins"* (Acts 10:43), *"Therefore it is faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all"* (Rom. 4:16). Since the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in Christ they are all members of God's family.

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God's family is bigger than the kingdom of God or the church of God for it now contains all the saved from Abel to the last man who has believed, whether in heaven or on earth. God has only one family. All believers are children and heirs of God.

The Kingdom of God includes all the saved on earth at any given time. In Matt. 13 the kingdom is used to include all professors. *"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. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3-5), *"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), *"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"* (Matt: 11:11), *"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it"* (Luke 16:16), *"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"* (Rom. 14:17). *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"* (Col. 1:13), *"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence"* (John 18:36). The kingdom as used in the above scriptures is composed of all the born again on the earth.

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"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44), "And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets. And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of

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me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:11-27), "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). Those passages refer to the millennium. That kingdom is yet future.

What is sometimes called the spiritual kingdom is composed only of those who have been born again, who have been *"translated, out of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son"* (John 3:3-5). *"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of*

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man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. 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. 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. 18:1-16). "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:13-15). The Master shows very clearly, that the kingdom is composed of only such as have received Him, whether children or adults. The family of God includes all the saved of all the ages, whether in heaven or on earth; the kingdom of God includes that part of the family of God who are on earth now.

The church of God is never used of any institution, except of an assembly or congregation of baptized believers in some given locality. *"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" (I Cor. 1:2).*

The local individual church is the only kind of church God has on this earth today. There is only one family of God, composed of

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all the redeemed of all the ages in heaven and on earth. There is only one kingdom of God, composed of all the born again on the earth now. There are thousands of churches of God on earth. Every individual Baptist church is a church of God. No others are. When a man is born again he is born into God's family. He is in the family of God. The relationship does not change. Whether in heaven or on earth he is in God's family. When he is born again he also enters God's kingdom. This relationship is for life. When he dies he passes out of the kingdom of God on earth and enters *"unto his heavenly kingdom to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"* (II Tim. 4:18).

The new birth does not make one a member of God's church, but only qualifies him for addition to the church by baptism. *"As many as received the word were baptized and added unto them"* (Acts 2:47). Baptism is not essential to admission into either the family of God or the kingdom of God: but baptism is essential to admission into a church of God.

Men are born anew into the family of God and into the kingdom of God: but they are baptized into a church of God: *"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"* (I Cor. 12:13). The *"one body"* referred to here by Paul was the church of God at Corinth. *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular"* (I Cor. 12:27).

That local church at Corinth was the body of Christ at Corinth. The members of the church at Corinth belonged to only *"one body"* of Christ. That body of Christ probably did not contain all the saved at Corinth: *"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth"* (I Cor. 1:2), and none of the saved anywhere else except at Corinth. Since they belonged to only *"one body"* and that was the local

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church at Corinth, Christ has no other kind of church or body except a local church. If they had belonged to a local church at Corinth, which Paul said was the body of Christ, and then to the kind of church the "Message" talks about, composed of all the saved everywhere, they would have belonged to two churches or bodies of Christ, one local and visible, the other universal and invisible. The New Testament knows nothing of such confusion as that. God is not the author of any such confusion.

Jesus Christ has only one kind of church or body on this earth, and that is the local assembly, the organized body of baptized believers in any given community. *"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"* (I Tim. 3:15). The very passage cited in the "Message" is in harmony with this truth. The church of God is there called the house of God; but the house of God is not used there in the sense of a family, but in the sense of a building. That the church referred to in that passage is a local church is clearly evident from even a casual reading of the context. *"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 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?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these*

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also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly" (I Tim. 3:1-14). Bishops and deacons are officers of local churches. Paul has just been telling them their duties as officials of the local church and adds that he writes these things that Timothy, a young preacher, may know how to behave himself in the house of God, the local church of which he was bishop (pastor). The church which Paul called the body of Christ, was a local church. Since Christ has but "**one body**" (i.e., one kind of a body) there is no church of Christ except the local church. The church which Paul called the house of God was a local church. The church that Paul said was "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" was a local church. The church to which the Lord Jesus promised perpetuity: "*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). This was a local church, for He never spoke of any other kind. The meaning of the word ekklesia permits of no other kind. Oh! that we let others more competent than the writer speak.

Prof. Royal, who taught Prof. A. T. Robertson, of the Louisville Seminary, when asked if he knew of an instance in classic Greek where ekklesia was ever used of a class of "unassembled or unassembling persons," said: "*I do not know of any such passage in classic Greek.*" With this statement agree Profs. Rurton of Chicago University, Stifler of Crozer, Strong of Rochester and many other scholars. Joseph Cross (Episcopalian) says: "*We hear much of the invisible church as contradistinguished from the*

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church visible. Of an invisible church in this world I know nothing, the Word of God says nothing; nor can anything of the kind exist, except in the brain of a heretic. The church is a body; but what sort of a body is that which can neither be seen nor identified. A body is an organism, occupying space and having a definite locality. A mere aggregation is not a body; there must be organization as well. A heap of heads, hands, feet and other members would not make a body; they must be united in a system, each in its proper place and all pervaded by a common life. So a collection of stones, brick and timbers would not be a house; the material must be built together, in an artistic order, adapted to utility. So a mass of roots, trunks and branches would not be a vine or a tree; the several parts must be developed according to the laws of nature from the same seed and nourished by the same vital sap."

Exactly so.

The limbs of a body scattered on a battlefield are not a body. The material of a house in the woods or quarries is not a house. These members and this material must be put in place before you have either a body or a house. So the saved are not a church unless brought together and organized or builded into a body or house of God. There is not and cannot be such an institution as a universal invisible church on this earth, composed of all the saved, because the material has never been brought together and builded into a house or body.

When the Lord Jesus and Paul spoke of the baptized believers of a larger territory than a local church they always said churches. There was no confusion in their speaking though there is much confusion in modern thinking upon this question.

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Once more we try to make the distinction clear. The family of God is composed of all the saved in heaven and on earth. Old Testament saints and babies who died in infancy are in God's family. They are not now, nor were they ever in the kingdom or in any church of God.

All believers on the earth at any given time since the days of John the Baptist compose the kingdom of God. *"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it"* (Luke 16:16). There are no infants in it. All true believers, whether Catholic, Protestant, Baptist or non-church-members on earth are in the kingdom; for if true believers they have been born anew. Only baptized believers or Baptists are members of the churches of Christ. – H. Boyce Taylor, **Why Be a Baptist** (published by Bryan Station Baptist Church, Lexington, KY).

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CONCLUSION

Even though the reader may not accept every distinction listed in the first chapter, there are just too many listed distinctions to believe the kingdom, the church and the family are one and the same.

If the common ordinary meaning of the term *ekklesia* is applied in every text with full consideration of its full range of natural applications (abstract institutional, generic, concrete; etc.) then there is no excuse to confuse it with the kingdom and family of God.

If the proper use of metaphors is applied to such terms as “*body...house...temple...building*” there is no excuse to define it in any other sense than a local visible congregational body of baptized believers.

If the builder’s own use of the term *ekklesia* (church) in connection with his use of *basilea* (kingdom) is observed carefully, there is no excuse to deny that what he claims to build as a New Testament institution in Matthew 16:18 is the very same concrete application he continues to speak about every time afterwards.

If the doctrine of new birth is properly understood to include spiritual union with God through Christ restoring the sinner to life, light and righteousness, then it is inexcusable to define the baptism in the Spirit as the act which brings a person into spiritual union with God through Christ. Indeed, to assert such a doctrine is to repudiate the very essence of salvation from the fall of man and demand “another gospel” preceded Pentecost and worse yet demand there is salvation outside spiritual union with Christ prior

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to Pentecost. Finally, such a doctrine denies regeneration prior to Pentecost when that is an obvious falsehood (Jn. 3:3-11; Ezek. 44:7).

Although it is true that the kingdom, family and church of God overlap with each other, they are not to be confused with each other. In regard to the true people of God, the family of God is the largest, as it includes all of God's elect in heaven and on earth (Eph. 3:15). In regard to the professing people of God, the kingdom of God on earth is smaller than the family of God, but more inclusive, as it is manifested by profession of God as king which includes both true and false professors over all the earth at any given point in time. In regard to the professing people of God, the church of God is the smallest of the three, as it includes only professed believers that are water baptized into the institutional "*house of God*" as an authorized public place of worship where a qualified and authorized ministry administer qualified ordinances within the professing kingdom of God. The church of God is where "*the faith once delivered*" is taught and practiced (1 Timothy 3:1-4:6; Jude 3), thus making it "*the pillar and ground of the truth.*" Therefore, the church is the visible expression of God's family and kingdom in public obedience to Christ.

Are you a true believer in Jesus Christ? Are you a member of true church of Christ? Only the Lord's true churches know the difference between the kingdom, family and church of God. False churches confuse them with each other. Does the church you belong to know and teach the differences or does it confuse them? If your church confuses them, then that is a clear indicator it is not among the true churches of Christ. Go find a church that knows the differences and teaches them clearly.

Appendix 1

What is the Baptism in the Spirit?

Since the baptism in the Spirit has nothing to do with restoring spiritual union with God, then what happened on the day of Pentecost and what is the baptism in the Spirit?²⁰

The baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is an **institutional**, rather than an **individual** baptism. It is designed by God to publicly accredit His new public house of worship. In the Old Testament Scriptures, after the completion of each new public house of worship, that house was once immersed in the shekinah glory (Ex. 40:35-36; 2 Chron. 7:1-3). That is precisely the nature of the baptism in the Spirit in Acts 2:1-3 with the new public house of worship consisting of water baptized believers (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:4-5; 2:41-42).

The subjects of the baptism in the Spirit were **all water baptized** professed believers in Christ (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:4-5).

*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: - Mt. 3:11*

The proper subjects were not only water baptized believers but those who had been habitually assembling (Acts 1:21-22) with him from the baptism of John:

²⁰ For a more comprehensive study see my book "The Baptism in the Spirit" which can be accessed free on line at:

http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/books_by_mark_fenison.html

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And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.... 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. – Acts 1:4-5, 21-22

It is these baptized church members that are specifically directed to remain in one geographical location (“not depart from Jerusalem”) that were to be immersed in the Spirit as the new public house of worship (1 Tim. 3:15 “house of God”).

Paul says that over 500 brethren saw the risen Lord at once prior to Pentecost (1 Cor. 15:6) but only the 120 that assembled on Pentecost were baptized in the Spirit. It was a geographically restricted, one time, historically fulfilled baptism upon the new institutional house of God.

This gift of institutional indwelling was conditioned upon salvation by repentance and faith in the gospel in addition to baptism in water:

*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**. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort,*

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saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. – Acts 2:38-42

When added unto the spirit baptized institutional church through faith and baptism they drank into, or partook of the temporal and extended blessings of that Spirit indwelt institution (Acts 2:39-46). Notice the gifts listed in Acts 2:39-40 are revelatory gifts that were terminated when the New Testament scriptures were completed. The extended blessings were the teaching ministry, and proper administration of the ordinances that maintains it as “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15) as well as provides the basis for practical unity within the body (1 Cor. 12:14-27).

Many fail to receive and understand this view of the baptism in the Spirit because they also fail to see that the institutional baptism in the Spirit was but one aspect of a much broader role of the promise and coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit came on the day of Pentecost to usher in a completely New Covenant public administration replacing the prior Old Covenant public administration (Heb. 9:2 “*and....also*”). When God established the Old Covenant as a public administration, he did so through a chosen prophet (Moses) who was chosen to build a new house of public worship (tabernacle/temple) and provide a new body of scriptures (The Law and the prophets) unto a chosen people (Israel) wherein the administration of salvation was primarily restricted within Israel. The finalization of this covenant administration was the immersion of the new house of God in the Shekinah glory (Ex. 40:35).

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Likewise, the new covenant public administration was established after the pattern of the old administration (Heb. 9:1 “and...also”). God chose another prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:18) to build a new house of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Mt. 16:18) and supply a new body of scriptures (The New Testament) thus binding up and sealing the Biblical canon among Christ’s disciples (Isa. 8:16-20; Jn. 14-17; 1 Jn. 4:5-6; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:15-17). He selected a new field of evangelism, primarily among the Gentiles (Rom. 11) and then finalized this new covenant administration by the immersion of the new house of God on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1) and reaffirming it among the Gentiles (Acts 11:15-16).

Therefore the promise of the Spirit was a multi-dimensional promise inclusive of several things, each of which must be distinguished from the other under this new dispensation of the Spirit or else confusion results.

It did not usher in a new way of salvation (Mt. 7:13-14), or a new gospel (Gal. 1:8-9; Acts 10:43; Heb. 4; 2), or a new Savior (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 10:43). The promise of the Spirit did not change **how** people were saved, but changed **who** was the primary target for salvation in this dispensation (the gentile world – Rom. 11:11-25).

The baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost signified the coming of the Spirit as “*another comforter*” to continue the work of the former “*comforter*” (Jesus Christ). The baptism in the Spirit provided the specific public accreditation of the new “*house of God*” as the new public administrator of the “*keys of the kingdom*” (Mt. 18:17-18. This act of public accreditation occurred only one more time in Acts 10 at the house of Cornelius because the all Jewish church at Jerusalem would not have permitted the

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administration of water baptism to Gentiles by its ordained representatives (Acts 10:47-48). Hence, God publicly accredited these gentile believers as suitable candidates for water baptism and church membership (Acts 10:47-48; 11:15-16). When Peter was called upon by the Jewish membership to give an account of baptizing them into the membership of the church at Jerusalem, his sole defense was that they were baptized in the Spirit just as they were “*at the beginning*” or on Pentecost. Although, thousands had been saved since the day of Pentecost, the nearest reference to this act by God was on Pentecost rather than “*since the beginning*” with thousands of Jewish converts added to the church by water baptism. This proves the baptism in the Spirit is not a repetitive **individual** baptism but rather is an historic institutional baptism.