



Ecclesiology

A Study of the Church

Mark W. Fenison

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Ecclesiology

A Study of the Church

A Pre-New Testament and New Testament Investigation

Revised Edition

10/08/2022



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Mark W. Fenison

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the fond memory and labors of my dad, Cornelius Walter Fenison, who was the greatest evangelist I have ever known and to my uncle James Berlyn Fenison. These two men of God have had the greatest impact on my life and were my earliest mentors in the faith which was once delivered.



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INTRODUCTION

Ecclesiology: A Study of the Church is a comprehensive study of New Testament Ecclesiology that places its primary focus on the Greek term *ekklesia* in pre-New Testament and New Testament eras with special emphasis upon its concrete and abstract use.

Ecclesiology: A Study of the Church breaks new ground in three significant areas. **First**, it demonstrates that the term *ekklesia* has never meant “called out” or “called out of this world” but from its earliest usage has always meant “called out assembly” which has always been descriptive of an actual physical assembly.

Second, it demonstrates the clear abstract use of *ekklesia* by Classical Greek writers. This is very significant as it adds another necessary dimension to the common meaning of *ekklesia* which must be considered when approaching and interpreting every use by New Testament writers. This has drastic consequences on the handful of instances in the New Testament where some theologians insist *ekklesia* takes on a new meaning contrary to its long-established historical meaning.

It cannot be overemphasized how important these two historical facts are when it comes to properly interpreting the Biblical usage of *ekklesia*. When these two historical facts are ignored it can result in merging ecclesiology with soteriology so that the result is a church salvation theology. Indeed, Roman Catholic and Reformed Roman Catholic (Protestant) ecclesiology and soteriology are a result of ignoring these two historical facts. Both mix ecclesiology with soteriology and teach that there is no salvation outside their concept of the *ekklesia*.

However, the proper understanding of this term leads to a soteriology completely distinct and separate from *ekklesia*. The ultimate thesis of this study is that salvation has always been under the heavenly administration of the “*everlasting covenant*” which begins its application at the time of the fall of man in Genesis, while the *ekklesia* has always been part of an earthly administrative covenant relationship (*Family Covenant*–Genesis; *Old Covenant*–Exodus–Malachi; *New Covenant*–Matthew–Revelation) designed to manifest and declare the heavenly covenant among men. The problem produced by the fall of man has always been the same from Genesis to Revelation. That problem can be reduced to one specific issue–spiritual separation from God. The solution to that problem has been the same from Genesis to Revelation–spiritual union with God. No element of salvation is possible apart from spiritual union. There have been only two different types of human beings on earth since the fall–saved versus lost, those justified versus those condemned, those “*in the Spirit*” versus those “*in the flesh*”, regenerate versus unregenerate or those in the kingdom of God versus those in the kingdom of Satan. On the other hand, the *ekklesia* has no relationship with either the problem of the fall or the solution to the fall. The *ekklesia* among men from Genesis to Revelation has been the public means for redeemed men to express acceptable public worship. The *ekklesia* is but one of seven aspects that characterize the “old” and “new” earthly public covenant administrations.

Therefore, there is no salvation union in connection with any kind of *ekklesia*. Hence, the Roman Catholic idea that there is no salvation outside their concept of the *ekklesia* (visible) is false, just as the Protestant idea of no salvation outside their concept of the *ekklesia* (invisible) is false. Salvation has nothing to do with the *ekklesia* except as a public means to express it in teaching, ordinances and worship.

New Testament congregations are the product of the Great Commission which is a closed reproductive cycle of like faith and order. That very idea is contrary by nature to the concept of a universal invisible church model which is inclusive of a membership diverse in faith and practice. Moreover, the interpretative basis for the universal invisible church model is grounded in ignoring the

historical meaning of *ekklesia* as it must totally ignore the abstract institutional use of *ekklesia* in pre-New Testament history and in the New Testament. However, the pre-New Testament and contemporary data better harmonizes with the local visible model.

Moreover, the New Testament model is not a state church model but in fact was persecuted by the existing religious state church models (Judaism and secular religious Rome) while the Roman Catholic church state model did not come into existence until Constantine in the fourth century over three hundred years after the establishment of the New Testament type of Christianity.

There are indeed, truly saved people found inside and outside of nearly all denominations. Salvation has to do with the kingdom and family of God whereas the *ekklesia* of God has to do with acceptable public worship among men.

Third, this study demonstrates that the Universal Invisible Church theory is completely irreconcilable with the very fundamentals of Biblical salvation. The essence of this theory is found in its primary interpretation of the prepositional phrase “*in Christ*” in connection with the “*body of Christ*.” This theory demands that this prepositional phrase conveys the idea of spiritual union between all true believers with God as one mystical body through Christ by the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Spirit is the stated mechanism that is supposed to attain this union between all the elect with God. However, such a view is logistically impossible. The baptism in the Spirit is both time and place located (Acts 1:4-5) as is the fall of man (Gen. 3). The problem in the fall of man is spiritual separation from God and yet the baptism in the Spirit cannot possibly be the solution as it occurs first on Pentecost over 4000 years after the fall. This study provides a unified wholistic approach to the eternal covenant of salvation both before and after the cross that is contrary to hyper-dispensationalism.

Ecclesiology: A Study of the Church approaches Ecclesiology from the historical anti-establishment church perspective. The anti-establishment church perspective was the perspective of the ancient Donatists, Paulicians, Waldenses and English Anabaptists.

The anti-establishment church perspective taught that the church was *spiritual* in nature but not in the same sense that the establishment Catholic Reformation defined the church to be *spiritual*. The Reformation defined the church to be *spiritual* with regard to its essence or substance as they defined it as “invisible” like the substance of angels and/or God whom we cannot see.

Instead, the anti-establishment concept of a *spiritual* church was in the sense that Biblical writers use the term *spiritual* as opposed to *carnal* and/or *secular*. It did not have to do with the essence or the substance of the church but with the origin, and operation of the church.

In the New Testament, the church is *spiritual* with regard to its origin. It is the product of the leadership of the Spirit through church sent missionaries (see 1 Cor. 3:5-16) as they carry out the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 13:1-4). The church is also *spiritual* with regard to its operations. It operates under the leadership of the Spirit in obedience to the Word of God. Its functions are spiritual activities with regard to its public worship (preaching/teaching, singing, giving, and mission).

The ancient Donatists, Paulicians, Waldenses and Anabaptists contrasted this kind of *spiritual ekklesia* with the Roman and Reformed Catholic churches that were joined with the secular state of this world. They regarded this union of state and church to be an illicit union or a metaphorical act of harlotry (Rev. 17:1-5). They thoroughly repudiated the ideas of a “universal visible” and “universal invisible” *ekklesia*. Although many believed in a yet future glory *ekklesia* consisting of all the elect, none of them, believed in any present existence of such an *ekklesia* composed of all saints.

Moreover, Reformation Ecclesiology argues that the church is a spiritual *organism* rather than an *organization* as though these two characteristics are in opposition to each other. Anti-establishment Ecclesiology argues it is both, as any organism is also highly organized. Peter describes this combination perfectly when he says the *ekklesia* is composed of “*spiritual stones built up into a holy temple*” (1 Pet. 2:5). With regard to the temple, the Jewish Temple was a very orderly and organized arrangement of stones but those stones were

void of life. In contrast, the *ekklesia* of Christ is an assembly of living physical bodies “*fitly joined together*” to function in a very orderly manner (1 Cor. 14:40). It functions under the supervision of its officers and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Its government, officers, worship, ordinances and mission all speak of organization.

This study documents the ancient anti-establishment view of the church right up to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith in England, and in America, this view is documented in the 1733 New Hampshire Confession of Faith, and in the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message. This study provides a detailed study of the 1645 and 1689 London Confessions. When the 1689 London Baptist Confession is properly interpreted within its historical framework, it is a complete repudiation of the establishment Reformation theory of the church as embraced by Presbyterians at that point in time.

Ecclesiology: A Study of the Church is formatted for classroom use. There are 45 lessons divided into 15 weeks. The first lesson is left open for the instructor to provide his own introduction. There are three lessons per week with review questions and required reading. Most of the required reading can be accessed free at <http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com>. Moreover, it can be easily adapted to fit a regular 3.0-hour class college or Seminary quarter. This formatting also works perfectly for personal study.

Finally, I greatly appreciate the assistance of Dr. William Van Nunen, Dean of John Leland Baptist College; Bro. Raul Enyedi, Dr. Ronnie Wolfe, Charles Hunt and Dr. David Pitman in helping proof this book in its manuscript stage. However, I take full responsibility for the form, grammar and contents of this book. No doubt, the first edition of any book of this size will contain some errors. I also wish to thank the staff at Xlibris for their professionalism and help in making this book possible.

Mark W. Fenison 5/3/17

WEEK 1

The Teacher's Introduction

The Significance of this Course

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Ekklesia and Our English Bible
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WEEK 1 LESSON 1

The Teacher's Introduction

LESSON GOALS: The Teacher will provide his own goals for introducing this course.

INTRODUCTION:

ASSIGNED READING

Ecclesia—the Church by B.H. Carroll, pp.13-35

The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament, by E.H. Overbey, pp. 1-9;*

***The reading assignment for this lesson is to be read after this introduction. However, from this point forward please do all reading assignments prior to reading the lesson. The assigned reading materials are designed to add insights to the lesson materials.**

STUDY SUGGESTIONS

1. Find a quiet place.
2. Submit yourself to the Holy Spirit through Prayer.
3. Do required Readings.
4. Read your lesson and jot down questions that come to your mind.
5. Do your review questions.

WEEK 1 LESSON 2

The Significance of this Course

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to demonstrate that the issue of ecclesiology has never been a settled matter within Christendom and, (2) to demonstrate the complications introduced to Biblical soteriology by the universal church theories and, (3) to demonstrate the practical significance of this present study.

INTRODUCTION: Dr. Earl D. Radmacher, President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology of Western Baptist Theological Seminary in Portland Oregon, said in his book *The Nature of the Church*:

In August, 1948, Christian leaders came from all parts of the world to participate in the historic assembly at Amsterdam which brought the World Council of Churches into being. Behind all of the theological discussion, the most urgent question which faced them was what is the church? "The first fact to face," said the moderator, "is that there is no agreed Christian interpretation of the doctrine of the church."—Earl D. Radmacher, **The Nature of the Church**, Western Baptist Press, 1972, p. 1

He further quotes Dr. Henrich Emil Brunner, the famous Swiss Reformed theologian as saying:

What is the church? This question poses the unsolved problem of Protestantism. From the days of the Reformation to our own time, it has never been clear how the church, in the sense of spiritual life and faith—the fellowship of Jesus Christ—is related to institutions called churches.—Ibid., p. 1

Therefore, here is acknowledgment by leading theologians that the true nature of the congregation has been, and still is an *unsolved problem* since the Reformation.

I. THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM OF PROTESTANTISM

This “*unsolved problem of Protestantism*” is due to the fact that they, along with the Roman Catholic Church mix their ecclesiology (doctrine of the congregation) with their soteriology (doctrine of salvation). They must, at one and the same time, hold a position that declares that salvation is inseparable from one aspect of the church of which they embrace (universal invisible aspect) while denying that salvation is inseparable from another aspect of the church of which they embrace (institutions called congregations) and yet claim this singular “church” is but “one body.

This synergism of the church with salvation is the root of their *problem* in attempting to harmonize their singular church with “*institutions called churches.*”

A. THE PRODUCT OF ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE CONGREGATIONAL DISCIPLINE

However, this is a self-imposed problem that has its ultimate source with overthrowing the disciplinary actions of apostolic congregations. This conundrum was first created by Augustine’s attempt to overthrow the Donatists’ view of congregational discipline. The Donatists would remove heretics from their midst by congregational discipline and according to the same principle remove heretical congregations from their fellowship. Augustine and the state supported congregations (with whom he represented) had been disfellowshipped by the Donatists and repudiated as part of true apostolic congregations. Augustine replied by redefining the nature of the congregation to be as extensive as the kingdom in this world by his interpretation of the parable of the tares (Mt. 13). Therefore, he applied the following words of Christ to the congregation, thereby, invalidating the basis for the disciplinary action by the Donatists:

So, the servants of the householder came and said to him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in your field? from where then has it tares? He said to them, An enemy has done this. The servants said to him, Will you then that we go and gather them up? But he said, No; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.—Mt. 13:27-30—emphasis mine.

The Donatists rightly replied that Augustine had created two different kinds of congregations when there is but “one” (Eph. 4:5) and that Jesus said “*the field is the world*” not the congregation. The Donatists further stated that this was a parable about “*the kingdom*” not the congregation. Jesus was really teaching about the nature of the professing kingdom of God in this world consisting of true (seed) and false (tares) professors. Significantly Augustine’s new interpretation of the kingdom as the congregation made the congregation inseparable from salvation (seed), as well as, inclusive of the whole world and thus, the **universal visible** church theory was born. Augustine became the father of the **universal visible** church doctrine which is the basis for the Roman Catholic view of the church.

1200 years later, the Reformers found themselves outside of what they had formerly believed to be the true church of Christ. Their goal had merely been to reform (hence the term “Reformers”) this church. They had never planned on leaving the Catholic Church, nor ever dreamed of starting other denominations. However, now forced outside this concept of the church, and thus outside of what they had formerly believed to be inseparable from salvation, they were forced to justify their separated existence from Rome, and yet, maintain their Christian status. As Catholics, they believed there was no salvation outside of the church. Rome believes this still.¹

The Reformers, being excommunicated, realized they were now outside the church, thus outside salvation according to their own Catholic doctrine. They were faced with accepting either they were outside the true church and

¹ According to Rome, the only exception is for those whom God has not revealed the truth of the church, but yet have been baptized and live pious lives. They call these “separated brethren.” Hence, they regard much of present-day Protestantism as “separated brethren.”

thus outside salvation or forced to redefine the nature of the church in order to be included within the church, and therefore, included in salvation. They reexamined Augustine's interpretation of the parable of the tares. They made the same interpretational error by confusing the professing kingdom (consisting of true kingdom citizens [seed] and false professors [tares]) with the church thus making "the field" the church instead of "*the world*." However, they made a further interpretative distinction in Augustine's theory by defining the "*true seed*" as the true church, which is invisible, as opposed to the visible universal church which they still considered co-extensive with "*the world*." Therefore, they embraced a triple kind of church doctrine. (1) They acknowledged the concrete application or the local visible assembly. (2) They acknowledged the Roman universal visible church extensive with "*the world*." (3) However, they added a third perspective defining "the seed" to be the "universal invisible church." Later they extended the definition of this third type of church by defining the saved-on earth as the church "militant" as opposed to the saved in heaven as the church triumphant thereby confusing the church with the family of God in addition to confusing the congregation with the kingdom of God.

Therefore, both Augustine and the Reformers made the same interpretative mistake as they claimed "*the field*" in Matthew 13:38 is the congregation when both the Donatists and Anabaptists pointed out that Christ explicitly said the field was "*the world*" not the church and that there is but "*one*" church. Significantly, both Augustine and the Reformers had perverted the parable in order to escape disciplinary consequences that would disfellowship them from either what they formerly perceived as the true church or from those claiming to be the apostolic churches (Anabaptists). Their interpretative error confused the kingdom and the family of God with the congregation and is the historical root of the church salvation concept.

This synergism of the congregation with the kingdom solved their dilemma about being excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore outside of salvation as defined by Rome. However, it immediately created two major problems. One major problem was the problem that Brunner confesses was their greatest problem with this theory and that was defining how both aspects could be regarded as "*one body*" instead of two different types of bodies. The second major problem it created was the problem of defining the precise mechanism that brought a believer into one aspect but did not bring that believer into the other aspect of that "*one*" body.

B. THE PROBLEM OF “ONE BODY”

With regard to the first problem, they theorized that the concrete *ekklesia* (congregation) was designed to be a miniature representation or visible expression of the universal invisible *ekklesia* (congregation). However, that created a problem in attempting to explain how these visible expressions should become more harmonious with the “one” true church. Indeed, that was the whole point for the Reformation. They were attempting to reform the visible church so that it better expresses and conforms to the “true” church as “one body.” Even Reformed Baptists agree that this has yet to be accomplished with regard to the visible expressions of the “true” church. This is an integral part of the “unsolved problem of Protestantism” expressed by Brunner. This view of the church requires its advocates to make their congregations more conformable to their “universal invisible” church theory. It is the only logical and consistent outcome of that line of thinking. They must bring their congregations into a more harmonious expression of what they call the one “true” church, since that is precisely how they define “congregations” in relationship with the universal invisible church.

For example, the goal of a Christian is to be changed more and more into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Our progress toward that goal is called progressive sanctification, and how conformed to Christ-likeness defines our progress in sanctification. Likewise, the Reformed theory would judge the progressive growth of their individual assemblies by how much one is conformed to the “true” church, just as the maturity of the individual Christian conforms to the image of Christ.

Reformed Baptists clearly recognize this is their goal and they are attempting to reform their congregations in keeping with that line of thinking.

However, what are the practical consequences forced upon any congregation which follows that line of thinking? For example, does one have to be immersed in water, or identify with any kind of water application to be a member of their “one” true church? They answer no, as they believe this “one” true church consists of believers found in many denominations, some of which immerse, others sprinkle or pour or do not practice water baptism at all. In addition, they believe some members of this “one” true church may not be members in any visible church. Therefore, in their endeavor to more

closely conform to what they imagine to be the one true Church, John MacArthur, John Piper, and Alistair Begg, all receive professing believers into their membership whether they are unbaptized, sprinkled, and/or poured.² Why? Because what they conceive as the “one” true church does not require water baptism for membership. John Piper wrote in his response to Wayne Grudem (the author of **Systematic Theology**³) with regard to requiring immersion for church membership :

In the first edition, he advocated finding a way to have conscience-persuaded paedobaptists and credobaptists as members of the same local church. He said,

*“This would mean that Baptist congregations would have to be willing to allow into membership those who had been baptized as infants and whose conviction of conscience, after careful consideration is that their infant baptism was valid and should not be repeated. Of course, Baptist congregations could be free to preach and to attempt to persuade prospective congregation members that they should be baptized as believers, but if some, after careful consideration, are simply not persuaded, it does not seem appropriate to make this a barrier to membership.” I agree with this. – John Piper, **Response to Grudem on Baptism and Church Membership**.⁴*

Their ecclesiastical framework of understanding leads them to require nothing more or less than a profession of faith for congregation membership. Even though, both New Testament precept and example require immersion, this line of thinking requires them to repudiate clear Biblical teaching. This

² When I lived in Ohio, just 30 minutes from Allister Begg’s church, I personally called and talked to their eldership staff and verified they received unimmersed members. John MacArthur in his debate with Presbyterian R.C. Sproul in their interchange on tape three admitted that they received such members. John Piper and Bethel Baptist Church have a copy of their decision online to receive such as members into their church.

³ Wayne Grudem, **Systematic Theology; An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine**. Zondervan: Grand Rapids MI, 1994

⁴ <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/response-to-grudem-on-baptism-and-church-membership> 12/6/2015

line of logic leads to one error after another error until it eventually destroys any congregation that consistently attempts to follow that line of logic. The first error is the elimination of immersion as a prerequisite for congregation membership.

However, they also realize and acknowledge that some members in their one true church concept are not members in any congregation. This realization has led many to embrace “open membership” so that any professed believer that merely shows up is recognized as a member with membership privileges.

Of course, this line of thinking is also responsible for the doctrine of “open communion.”

Another logical conclusion that is forced upon this line of thinking is the fact that members in their true church have no doctrinal creed or unity except in basic salvation truth. Hence, this line of thinking would not only eliminate all confessions of faith, but allow for all other diverse opinions to coexist within a congregation as this is the actual state of what they recognize to be the one true church.

Hence, this would logically lead such churches to abandon all creeds or standards for fellowshiping with other churches except for basic salvation truth.

Moreover, the errors continue to increase as one attempts to consistently follow this line of thinking. The one true church does not administer church exclusion as its members cannot be removed unless the Reformed doctrine of salvation is repudiated. Hence, if the visible church is going to be more conformable to the one true church then neither should it practice church exclusion. However, the Scriptures are abundantly clear that New Testament congregations did exclude members from the congregation (Mt. 18:17; 2 Thes. 3:6-14).

Therefore, this theory demands that all congregations which embrace this line of thinking, repudiate water baptism as prerequisite for congregation membership, repudiate any formal congregation membership, repudiate creeds or have any standard for membership or fellowship outside of basic salvation truth, and repudiate congregational discipline.

In a word, such thinking necessarily destroys every filtering process God designed to protect his congregations from apostasy.

Such a concept radically transforms the membership of a congregation, as well as its discipline and administration of the ordinances. Such thinking, necessarily leads to ecumenical chaos and apostasy. The big church rationale leads to increasing denominationalism and confusion. Some estimate that presently there are seven new denominations being developed every week and they all have their justification in this kind of big open ended church paradigm.

C. THE PROBLEM OF DEFINING THE MECHANISM TO ACCESS MEMBERSHIP

The Protestant problem is how does entrance into the universal invisible body equal salvation but entrance into the congregational body does not equal salvation and yet claim both are “one body.” The proposed solution generally adopted by universal church advocates is that the baptism in the Spirit is the mechanism for entrance into the membership of the true invisible *ekklesia*, while a profession of faith in connection with water baptism had been both the Biblical and historical recognized mechanism for entrance into the membership of the concrete *ekklesia*. However, water baptism is now in the process of being eliminated as part of the mechanism into concrete congregational membership by Reformed churches.

Moreover, this proposed solution creates many other problems. The baptism in the Spirit is a dated event that occurred on Pentecost. All previous references to this baptism are prophetic in nature that point forward to Pentecost (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:6-7) while all post-Pentecost references point back as a completed event (Acts 11:15-16). This fact forced many to date the beginning of the “true” church with the day of Pentecost because the baptism in the Spirit had no prior existence to Pentecost, and if the baptism in the Spirit is the mechanism for entrance into the “true” church then the church could not predate the very mechanism that obtains membership into that kind of body.

This fact produces even more serious problems for the universal invisible church theory that will be discussed below.

D. THE PROBLEM OF CONGREGATION SALVATION

The most serious “unsolved problem” of this doctrine is its synergism with salvation—or a Church salvation doctrine. If the baptism in the Spirit is the mechanism for entrance into the “true” body of Christ and since that baptism is time and location restricted (“*in Jerusalem*” “*not many days hence*”) then this forces one to believe no church existed prior to Pentecost. If no church existed previous to Pentecost and salvation is inseparable from membership in this church, then, either there is a completely different way of salvation before Pentecost or no salvation at all prior to Pentecost because all who are living prior to Pentecost would be considered to be outside the church.

This poses another serious consideration. The Bible clearly teaches that all mankind fell “*in Adam*” (Rom. 5:12-19) and the only other alternative to this fallen and condemned state is the state of salvation “*in Christ*” (Rom. 5:12-19). However, if “in Christ” is viewed inseparable from the church and that church is accessed by baptism in the Spirit, then, there can be no one “in Christ” prior to Pentecost. Is there salvation outside of Christ for anyone at any time?

The Bible is clear there is no salvation outside of Christ either before Pentecost (Jn. 14:6; Acts 10:43) or after Pentecost (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). Simply put, there is no salvation for any fallen son of Adam at any time who is spiritually outside of Christ. Before Pentecost, Jesus said “*no man*” cometh to the Father but by him. After Pentecost, Paul says there is but one mediator between God and man which is Christ. There is no man born into this world that is not fallen “*in Adam*” and does not need salvation that is found only “*in Christ*.”

However, the universal invisible church doctrine demands there must be another kind of salvation outside of Christ since the mechanism for entrance into this “true” body is through the Pentecost dated baptism in the Spirit.

Some have seen these problems and proposed that all living prior to Pentecost were saved by works instead of by grace (which only increases the problems with this theory).

Others have suggested they are saved by grace in every sense we are saved by grace except they did not have the new birth or if they did, they were without the permanent indwelling Spirit. However, such a theory makes them superior to those under the New Covenant as those under

the new covenant cannot please God apart from the new birth and/or indwelling power of the Spirit (Rom. 7:18; 8:8-9) and yet this theory demands pre-Pentecost people could please God without indwelling and/or regeneration.

E. THE PROBLEM OF UNIFIED BIBLICAL SOTERIOLOGY

This confusion of the congregation with salvation has a direct impact upon how one views the Bible as a whole with regard to the fall of man and the solution to that fall.

If entrance into the “true” church is being brought into spiritual union with God through Christ, and this is mediated through the baptism in the Spirit event on Pentecost, then all living prior to Pentecost are outside of Christ, and therefore, are either forever lost or under some other kind of soteriological (doctrine of salvation) solution to deal with their fallen condition during their life time and at their death. Hence, such a view demands that fallen man prior to Pentecost has some kind of ability outside of Christ that post-Pentecostal mankind does not. For example, if Romans 7:14-25 describes the total inability of the regenerate condition to deal with indwelling sin apart from the power of the indwelling Spirit, how is it that the pre-Pentecost man can deal with the power of indwelling sin without the power of the indwelling Spirit of God?? If Romans 8:8-9 denies any man can be a true child of God without the indwelling Spirit, how can the pre-Pentecost man be His child without the indwelling Spirit of God? Are there really two different types of fallen mankind with two different types of solutions?

It is this very issue that has caused Reformed Baptist universal invisible church advocates to repudiate dispensationalism because they can plainly see that there is only one kind of fallen man from Genesis to Revelation and there can be no other solution to that fallen condition “*in Adam*” except to be “*in Christ*.” They realize there is no salvation for any fallen man at any time outside of Christ and that for any fallen man to be without the Spirit is to be “*none of his*” (Rom. 8:9). They correctly see only two possible contrasting conditions (“*in Adam*” versus “*in Christ*” or “*in the flesh*” versus “*in the Spirit*” or natural born versus born again, or “lost” versus “saved” etc.). Hence, their

solution is that the true *ekklesia* originated in Genesis with salvation of the first person and it is regeneration, rather than the baptism in the Spirit that is the mechanism for entrance into membership of this “true” *ekklesia*.

However, this solution also has its problems. How can the congregation precede its own foundation which consists of apostles first, and “secondarily” followed by prophets (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 12:13)? How can the *ekklesia* be a New Testament mystery and revelation of gentile inclusiveness (Eph. 3:1-5) since nothing but Gentiles had been saved in Genesis 4-11? Moreover, this non-dispensational view of the church equally confuses the congregation with the kingdom and family of God.

F. THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVISM AS FINAL AUTHORITY

Moreover, this kind of thinking not only logically leads to the complete forsaking of the visible church but to the complete annihilation of the visible church. George Barna,⁵ the pollster, has written a book called “Revolution” as an attack against the visible institutional congregation. This book is a response to consumerism and customization. Thomas White, the associate professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological seminary writes:

Consumerism appears in that we have allowed society to influence religion, and we have become religious consumers who see local congregations as nothing more than purveyors of religious goods. Just as we demand choice in consumerism, we now demand choice in religion. In a book, Shopping for God, James Twitchell compares “AT&T offering ‘the right choice’; Wendy’s ‘there is no better choice’; Pepsi, ‘the choice of a new generation’; Coke, ‘the real choice’; and Taster’s Choice Coffee is ‘the better choice.’” In the church this comes across in demanding the right program, the right service time, the right music for each congregant’s personal preference. You must have the latest and greatest or risk becoming a religious K-Mart or Circuit City—a bankrupt reminder of an age gone by.

⁵ George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006)

*Customization has also affected religion. This principle can best be seen in the iPod. Remember back to those ancient days when the older among us were kids. We had to buy an entire cassette tape, and then a little later we had to buy an entire CD. Now consumers simply go to the Internet and purchase the one song they want without any obligation to purchase other songs. They can even create their own playlist. You can have a page on the Internet called "Myspace," which you can customize to fit your own personality. In fact, it seems this generation is all about "you." In religion this means, you do not have to go to church. You do not even have to believe as I do. You can have your own beliefs. I can have mine. And we can both be right even though we completely disagree. You can watch a television sermon, go to a Christian concert, listen to the radio, read a good book, and put together your own cafeteria-style buffet of religious nourishment expecting no one to criticize you since you are so religious.— Jason G. Duesing, Thomas White, Malcomb B. Yarnell III, **The Baptist Understanding of the Church: Upon this Rock**, (B&H Publishing, Nashville, TN. 2010) pp. 229–230*

Since membership in the so-called "true" church does not require either baptism or membership in any particular concrete church, and since there are literally thousands of conflicting systems of faith existing between the members of the "true" church, and since concrete churches are popping into existence every week simply due to personal differences, then, it logically follows that membership in a concrete church becomes unnecessary and/or self-defining. Hence, the universal invisible church theory ultimately and logically boils down to "you" without any responsibility to go to a sound congregation but rather for "you" to simply "*be the church*" as you perceive it. White goes on to quote Barna's final summarization of his view by saying, "*We should keep in mind that what we call 'church' is just one interpretation of how to develop and live a faith-centered life. We made it up. It may be healthy or helpful but it is not sacrosanct*" (ibid., p. 230). In other words, the "church" has no real existence except to serve your own personal interest and is nothing more than what you define it. In other words, this theory ultimately leads to the total destruction of the institutional church by final exaltation of self as

the final authority or in the words of Judges, “*In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*” – Jud. 17:6

II. THE VALUE OF THIS COURSE

In summary, the “*unsolved problem of Protestantism*” is how can a soteriological body of Christ made up of only the saved be regarded as “*one*” body and yet inclusive with countless diverse ecclesiastical congregational bodies? However, as clearly demonstrated previously, this is just one of many problems produced by this theory. Their attempts to conform and include many ecclesiastical bodies as “*one*” universal body creates many practical problems and most significantly would destroy all the Biblical safe guards designed to prevent such congregations from apostasy. However, the most serious issue with this theory is that it distorts the very fundamental nature of Biblical salvation. The thesis of this course is that all of these are self-inflicted issues due to improperly mixing the church with salvation and that the “*unsolved problem of Protestantism*” is the Achilles heel that exposes both the universal visible and invisible church theories as false doctrines.

This course is designed to explore and distinguish between the true nature of salvation as opposed to the true nature of congregation of Christ. The value of this course is that it provides the student with a view of salvation that is consistent from Genesis to Revelation and yet distinct from the congregation which as an institution had its “*foundation*” laid in the ministry of Christ. This course will provide evidence which denies the congregation is inclusive with spiritual salvation “*in Christ.*” This course will distinguish between “*in Christ*” by spiritual union through regeneration and “*in Christ*” by metaphorical union. This course will provide evidence that the congregation is the *metaphorical “body of Christ”* and therefore representative of the unified way Christians are to serve Christ in any given locality. This course will interpret “the church” in unspecified contexts to be the abstract institutional congregation rather than some universal invisible congregation. This course will distinguish the congregation of God from the kingdom and family of God.

More importantly, this course demands that it is proper preaching and teaching of “church truth” that is essential to protect and defend the truth of one Savior proclaimed through one gospel about one way of salvation from Genesis to Revelation.

Which view of Ecclesiology is correct? Which view fits with the historical and Biblical data more accurately? This course is designed to provide that answer.

REVIEW QUESTIONS: *

1. According to Dr. Earl Radmacher what was the pressing “fact” that the world council of congregations addressed in 1948?
2. According to Dr. Henrich Emil Brunner what was the unsolved problem from the Reformation to his present time?
3. Who is the father of the doctrine that merges the kingdom with the *ekklesia* or the *universal visible* church theory?
4. What was Augustine attempting to avoid by merging the *ekklesia* with the kingdom?
5. What was Luther attempting to avoid by adding the term “invisible” to the universal church doctrine?
6. How do universal invisible church advocates harmonize the visible *ekklesia* with their universal invisible *ekklesia*?
7. What are some practical consequences to the visible *ekklesia* by attempting to make it conform more closely to the universal invisible church theory?
8. Since most universal invisible church advocates interpret the baptism in the Spirit on Pentecost as the mechanism for entrance into the church what are some of consequences for those living prior to Pentecost?
9. Can being “*in Christ*” spiritually be separated from salvation? If so, how? If not, then what are the consequences for those spiritually outside of Christ or not “*in Christ*” spiritually?
10. Can the congregation precede its own foundation?
11. What is the logical conclusion of consumerism and selectivism with regard to the concrete *ekklesia* as found in the New Testament?

*These review questions are designed to make sure the more significant aspects of the lesson stick in your mind.

REQUIRED READING:

The Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13 by Mark W. Fenison—see Appendix

WEEK 1 LESSON 3

Ekklesia and Our English Bibles

LESSON OBJECTIVES: The objectives for this lesson are (1) to provide the student with a brief history of the English Bible in connection with the translation of the Greek word *ekklēsia* by the English words *congregation* and *church* and, (2) to provide the student with a brief history of the English term *church* and its connection with the Greek term *kuriakē*.

INTRODUCTION: It is remarkable that few Bible students have studied the history of our English Bibles. Many believe that the King James Version of 1611 was the first Authorized Version of the English Bible. However, the Great Bible of 1540 was actually the first authorized English Bible. Astoundingly many students are completely unaware that King James and his translators were Reformed Catholics (Church of England), and regarded the Church at Rome to be the true congregation of Christ until the Reformation. They also joined Rome in severely persecuting Baptists in England. Many do not know that all English versions of the Bible, including all editions of the 1611 KJV contained the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha was placed between Malachi and Matthew. The KJV continued to retain the Apocrypha, thus a total of 80 books, until the Apocrypha was officially removed from its printing in 1885.

I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BIBLE IN ENGLAND

A. THE OLD LATIN BIBLE

The history of our English Bible is very interesting. The Old Latin translation of the Scriptures was the earliest known version of the Bible

that found its way into ancient Britain around the second century. This was not the Catholic Latin Vulgate completed by Jerome in 405 A.D. This later Latin version by Jerome (The Vulgate) did not enter into England until Augustine brought it into England around 597 A.D. Dr. Price in his book *The Ancestry of the English Bible* says,

*Christianity's conquest of Great Britain took place while the Old Latin still held sway. Augustine's mission to England introduced the Vulgate - Ira Maurice Price, **The Ancestry of the English Bible**, New York: Harper and Brothers, 9th ed., 1934, p. 166*

Therefore, the earliest translation of the Bible in England was the Old Latin version. The Latin biblical texts in use before the Latin Vulgate are usually referred to collectively as the *Vetus Latina*, or 'Old Latin Bible', or occasionally the 'Old Latin Vulgate'. (Here "Old Latin" means it is older than the Vulgate and written in Latin, not that they are written in Old Latin). The Old Latin Bible was a translation of the Greek Septuagint and Greek New Testament. The Old Latin and the Old Syrian (Peshitta) translations are the earliest known translations of the Bible. Both occurred around 150 A.D. Tertullian claimed that he possessed the "whole" Biblical canon at his time long before Rome claimed to have defined what was the Biblical canon.

B. THE NORTHUMBRAIM ANGLO-SAXON PARAPHRASE—950 A.D.

The earliest known⁶ English version of the gospels from the Old Latin occurred about 950 A.D. in the Northumbraim Anglo-Saxon dialect:⁷

⁶ *Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne (born 609 died 709) is thought to have translated the Psalms into English. The Venerable Bede (born 672 died 735) is said to have produced an English translation of the gospel of John into old English, but it is lost.*

⁷ *English has been spoken in England since 449 A.D. The developmental periods of English are (1) Old English—449-1064 A.D. (2) Middle English—1065-1499 (3) Modern English—1500 to present. "It is common to divide England into four dialect areas for the Old English period. First of all, note that by England that part of mainland Britain is meant which does not include Scotland, Wales and Cornwall. These three areas were Celtic from the time of the arrival of the*

About 950 Aldred, a priest, prepared and wrote between the lines of this Latin text, his Anglo-Saxon paraphrase. This is the earliest known version of the Gospels in the English language, but its dialect is that of Northumbrai. This text is now known under the names of “The Lindisfarne Gospels,” “The Book of Durham,” and “The Gospels of St. Cuthbert” The Latin text used in all these interlinear versions was not that of the Vulgate, but of the Old Latin....–Ibid., p. 213.

This early Anglo-Saxon version in the Northumbraim dialect translated by a Roman Catholic Priest uses the earliest known English form of the term *church* which is *cyrican*⁸ (The “c” is a hard “k” sound and the “y” is the “oo” sound, thus *kurikan* which comes from the Greek term *kuriake*). Later, more information will be provided about this when the history of the term *church* is considered in connection with the Greek term *kuraikan*. The term *church* evolved in the English language from “*cyrican...cyrician... cirice... circe...chirche* into its final early modern forms *churche* and *church*.”

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Celts some number of centuries BC and remained so well into the Middle English period. The dialect areas of England can be traced back quite clearly to the Germanic tribes which came and settled in Britain from the middle of the 5th century onwards. There were basically three tribal groups among the earlier settlers in England: the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes. The Angles came from the area of Angeln (roughly the Schleswig-Holstein of today), the Saxons from the area of east and central Lower Saxony and the Jutes from the Jutland peninsula which forms west Denmark today. The correlation between original tribe and later English dialect is as follows:

Germanic tribes and regions in England where they mainly settled

Saxons — South of the Thames (West Saxon area)

Angles — Middle and Northern England (Mercia and Northumbria), including lowland Scotland

Jutes — South-East of England (Kent)” - https://www.uni-due.de/SHE/SHE_Old_English.htm 4/21/16

⁸ “*And ic secge pe, Daet ou eart Petrus, and ofer pysne stan ic getimbrige mine cyricean; and helle gatu ne magon ongean pa.*” Benjamin Thorpe, Ed. **The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Holy Gospels**, “Mt. 16:18” (London: J.G.F. and J. Rivington, St. Paul’s Churchyard, and Waterloo Place; and J.H. Parker, Oxford, 1842).

C. THE WYCLIFFE TRANSLATION

The next English Bible that used the term *church* was the translation by the Roman Catholic Priest John Wycliffe. Wycliffe translated Jerome's Latin Vulgate into English in 1338. The English form of *church* in Wycliffe's translation is *chirche*.⁹

D. THE TYNDALE BIBLES AND REVISIONS–1516-1540

Significantly, the next five translations that followed Wycliffe's translation of Jerome's Latin Vulgate were not translations of any Latin version but were translations of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. William Tyndale provided the initial translation while others advanced various editions of Tyndale's work. All of these translated the Greek term *ekklesia* by some form of the term *congregation* (*congregacion*, *congregacio*).

1. **William Tyndale's version**–1516 “*I wyll bylde my congregacion*” - William Tyndale, **New Testament**, London: Samuel Bagster, 1836 Mt. 16:18 p. 141 <http://www.originalbibles.com/the-tyndale-new-testament-1526-pdf/> 12/15/15
2. **Myles Coverdale's Bible**–1535–“*I builde my congregacion*” https://archive.org/stream/CoverdaleBible1535_838/Coverdale_1535#page/n463/mode/2up 12/12/15
3. **Thomas Matthew**–The Matthew's Bible–1537 - “*I wil bylde my congregacio*” <https://archive.org/stream/MatthewBible1537/Matthew1537#page/n451/mode/2> 12/15/15
4. **The Great Bible**–1540 “*I wil bylde my cogregacion*”–<https://archive.org/stream/GreatBible1540/1540GreatBible#page/n435/mode/2up> 12/12/15
5. **Taverner's Bible**–1551–“*I will builde my congregacion*”–<https://archive.org/stream/1539TavernerBible#page/n423/mode/2up> 12/15/15

⁹ “*Y schal bilde my **CHIRCHE**,” - Mt. 16:18–emphasis mine - http://www.biblebdata.org/onlinebibles/wycliffe_nt/40_016.htm 12/16/15*

The Great Bible in 1540 was the very first “Authorized Version” of the English Bible.¹⁰ It was authorized and printed under King Henry VIII. So, actually the King James Version was **not** the first Authorized Version of the Bible in the English Language. The first authorized English Bible translated *ekklesia* by *congregation* and not by *church*.

The title page of the Great Bible says, “*The Bible in English, that is to say the content of all the Holy Scripture both of the Old, and new Testament, with a prologue thereunto, made up by the Reverend father in God, Thomas archbishop of Canterbury. This is the Bible appointed to the use of the congregations....*” Therefore, the Great Bible of 1540 was the first authorized English translation.

E. THE BISHOP BIBLE - 1568

The Bishop Bible was an English version of the French Geneva Bible and a transition bible between the former five versions and the King James Version. The five former versions previous to the Bishop’s Bible strictly used the term *congregation*. However, the Bishop’s Bible used the term *congregation* in Matthew 16:18 but used the term *churche* in Matthew 18:17 and *church* in all other places.

The Bishop Bible–1568 “*I wyll buylde my congregation*” Mt. 16:18 <http://thebiblecorner.com/englishbibles/thebishopsbible/matthew/18.html> 12/16/15

The Bishop Bible–1568 “*If he heare not them, tell it vnto the Churche: If he heare not the Churche, let hym be vnto thee as an Heathen man, and a publicane.*”–Mt. 18:17 <http://thebiblecorner.com/englishbibles/thebishopsbible/matthew/18.html> 12/16/15

The Bishop Bible–1568 “*But yf I tary long, that thou mayest knowe howe thou oughtest to behaue thy selfe in the house of God, whiche is the Church of the luyng God, the pyller and grounde of trueth.*–1Ti 3:15 <http://thebiblecorner.com/englishbibles/thebishopsbible/matthew/18.html> 12/16/15

¹⁰ The title page says “*This is the Bible appointed to the use of the congregations.*” What is interesting is that the term *congregations* is found on the cover page, and the Greek *ekklesia* is consistently translated “*congregation*” and “*congregations*” but never “*church.*”

So, this version acted as the transition between the previous five versions that exclusively used *congregation* and the King James Version which returned to the exclusive Catholic use of *church* throughout its translation.

II. THE HISTORICAL REASONS WHY “CHURCH” IS FOUND IN THE 1611 KJV

As you can see in the period leading up to the 1611 KJV there was a conflict between English translations whether *church* or *congregation* should be the proper English expression for *ekklesia*. Significantly, those versions that used *church* were translations of the Latin versions while those that used *congregation* were translations of the Greek text. The first “authorized” English Bible (The Great Bible) and all of its related predecessors (Tyndale’s, Matthew’s, and Coverdale’s) consistently translate *ekklesia* by *congregation*.

The Bishops Bible conditioned England for the return of *church* into the English Bibles. The Douay Rheims Catholic version which followed the Bishops Bible used *church* solely as the English expression for *ekklesia*. The KJV translators (Reformed Catholics) followed the Roman Catholic lead and chose to use *church* instead of *congregation*.

However, is there a reason why the KJV translators chose *church* over *congregation* as the most suitable term to translate *ekklesia*? Is it because the word *church* provides the best translation of *ekklesia*? Do we know the reason for this choice? Yes, we do, because both King James and his translators tell us plainly why they made this choice.

King James issued fifteen rules to his translators, and rule number 3 absolutely forbade them to translate the Greek term *ekklesia* by any other word than the term *church* which the King admitted was an “old ecclesiastical” term, meaning a term that conveyed ecclesiastical dogma or doctrine.

“3. The old ecclesiastical words to be kept; as the word church, not to be translated congregation, &c.”¹¹

¹¹ The following set of “rules” had been prepared on behalf of church and state by Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London and High-Church Anglican. “For the better ordering of the proceedings of the translators, his Majesty recommended the following rules to them, to be very carefully observed: --

So, the translators were forced by royal decree to translate the Greek

"1. The ordinary Bible, read in the church, commonly called the Bishop's Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the original will permit.

"2. The names of the prophets and the holy writers, with the other names in the text, to be retained, as near as may be, according as they are vulgarly used.

*"3. The old ecclesiastical words to be kept; as the word **church**, not to be translated **congregation**, &c.*

"4. When any word hath divers significations, that to be kept which has been most commonly used by the most eminent fathers, being agreeable to the propriety of the place, and the analogy of the faith.

"5. The division of the chapters to be altered, either not at all, or as little as may be, if necessity so require.

"6. No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek words, which cannot, without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be expressed in the text.

"7. Such quotations of places to be marginally set down, as shall serve for the fit references of one Scripture to another.

"8. Every particular man of each company to take the same chapter of chapters; and having translated or amended them severally by himself, where he thinks good, all to meet together, to confer what they have done, and agree for their part what shall stand.

"9. As any one company hath dispatched any one book in this manner, they shall send it to the rest to be considered of seriously and judiciously: for his Majesty is very careful in this point.

"10. If any company, upon the review of the book so sent, shall doubt or differ upon any places, and therewithal to send their reasons; to which if they consent not, the difference to be compounded at the general meeting, which is to be the chief persons of each company, at the end of the work.

"11. When any place of special obscurity is doubted of, letters to be directly by authority to send to any learned in the land for his judgment in such a place.

"12. Letters to be sent from every bishop to the rest of the clergy, admonishing them of this translation in hand, and to move and charge as many as being skillful in the tongues, have taken pains in that kind, to send their particular observations to the company, either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford, according as it was directed before the king's letter to the archbishop.

"13. The directors in each company to be deans of Westminster and Chester, and the king's professors in Hebrew and Greek in the two universities.

14. These translations to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishop's Bible, viz. Tyndale's, Coverdale's, Matthew's, Wilchurch's, Geneva."*

15. "Besides the said directors before mentioned, three or four of the most ancient and grave divines in either of the universities, not employed in translating, to be assigned by the vice-chancellor, upon conference with the rest of the heads, to be overseers of the translation, as well Hebrew as Greek, for the better observation of the 4th rule above specified." According to these regulations, each book passed the scrutiny of all the translators successively. In the first instance, each individual translated every book which was allotted to his division. Secondly, the readings to be adopted were agreed upon by the whole of that company assembled together, at which meeting each translator must have been solely occupied by his own version. The book thus finished was sent to each of the other companies to be again examined; and at these meetings it probably was, as Selden informs us, that "one read the translation, the rest holding in their hands some Bible, either of the learned tongues, or French, Spanish, Italian, etc. If they found any fault, they spoke; if not, he read on." In this way every precaution was taken to secure a faithful translation, as the whole Bible underwent

term *ekklesia* by the old ecclesiastical term *church* strictly for political and theological reasons. There was no attempt to “rightly divide the word of truth” or seek to give the best and proper translation of *ekklesia* into English.

However, the translators were also complicit in this determination to use old ecclesiastical terms as *church* and *baptism* for clearly stated political and doctrinal reasons. In the translator’s preface that is now absent from our King James Versions, but was found in the earliest editions, the translators speak clearly and explicitly to what really motivated them to use the terms *church* and *baptism* and it was not because these English terms were the best translation of the Greek terms they represented. It was because of pure theological reasons:

Lastly, we have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old ecclesiastical words and betake them to other, as when they put washing for baptism, and congregation instead of church—The Translators Introduction of the King James Bible 1769

They plainly tell us that “ecclesiastical” terms, or terms full of theological content were intentionally chosen in order to oppose the “*scrupulosity of the Puritans.*” The Church of England (Catholicism under the king of England instead of the Pope) was split between Conformists and Puritans. The Puritan faction in the Church of England was more in line with the Reformers on the mainland in Europe. The Puritan’s opposed the hierarchal structure of the Church of Rome and in the Church of England. The Conformists sought to retain the ecclesiastical language found in Catholic Versions of the Bible because it provided more support for their ecclesiastical government view.

at least six different revisions by the most learned men in the kingdom. The translation was commenced in the spring of 1607, and occupied about three years, and the revision of it occupied about three quarters of a year more. It was printed in Gothic letter, and first published in folio in 1611, with the title, “The Holy Bible Conteyning the Old Testament, and the New: translated out of the originall Tongues: And with the former translations diligently compared and reuised by his Maiesties speciall Comandement. Appointed to be read in Congregations.” The expense of this translation appears not to have been borne by the king, nor by any government commission, but chiefly, if not entirely, by Mr. Barker.

**By “Wilchurch” is meant the Great Bible, which was printed by Edward Wilchurch, one of King Henry VIII’s printers.—King James Instruction to His Translators - http://www.kjvonly.org/other/kj_instructs.htm 12/6/15 -*

In other words, these particular words (church and baptism) were chosen for purely theological and political reasons.

The Puritans argued that the term *congregation* more properly translated the Greek term *ekklesia*. Indeed, five previous English Translations had translated *ekklesia* by *congregation*. This translation favored a more congregational form of government (rather than the Roman Catholic form) and more importantly conveyed the actual meaning of *ekklesia* into English. King James and his translators did not choose the term *church* because it more accurately translated the Greek term *ekklesia*. Neither did they select the term *baptism* because it more accurately translated the term Greek term *baptismos*. Indeed, the English term *baptism* is not a translation of *baptismos* at all, but a transliteration. A transliteration does not provide the equivalent meaning of *baptismos* into English, but only provides the equivalent sounds. In other words, the English term *baptism* simply provides how the Greek term *baptismos* would sound in English. These were “ecclesiastical” terms or terms used to convey church dogma in opposition to Puritans and Anabaptists.

III. THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE TERM “CHURCH”

Depending upon which English dictionary you consult, the term *church* has many different and often conflicting meanings according to its usage. Its modern-day usage varies from identifying a building as a *church* to the name for the clergy, a denomination, the religious service you attend, all denominations together, a particular national denomination, all Christians in a particular country, all Christians living in the world, all Christians in heaven and earth, a particular dispensation, etc.

However, this broad range of meaning should not be a surprise considering its ecclesiastical history and its ultimate origin. The English term *church* and its more ancient English forms (*cyrican.... cirice... circe... Chirche... churche*) are derived from an entirely different Greek term than it is used to represent. The English term *church* can be traced from one language to another until its ultimate source is found in the Greek term *kuriake*.¹²

¹² from Proto-Germanic *kirika (cognates: Old Saxon kirika, Old Norse kirkja, Old Frisian zerke, Middle Dutch kerke, Dutch kerk, Old High German kiribha, German Kirche), probably

Dr. Edward Overbey expresses the general sentiment of most linguists today in regard to the origin and development of the term *church*.

*According to most scholars the word church comes from a Greek word meaning “the Lord’s” with the word **house** usually understood. The word is used in the New Testament to refer to the Lord’s Supper, 1 Cor. 11:20, and to refer to the Lord’s day, Rev. 1:10. As early as the third century the word was used to refer to the building where the Christians met. When referring to a building where Christians worshipped, the people called it **the Lord’s** with the word house understood. Over a period of hundreds of years, the original Greek word passed into various European languages as Christianity was brought to the peoples of Europe. Time and the peculiarities of each language had its effect on the word but the word still remained recognizable. In English it is church, in Old English **cirice**, in German **kirche**, in Scottish **kirk**, and in Old Scandinavian **kyrka**.—Edward H. Overbey, **The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament**, (Vader, WA; Victory Baptist Church, 2016) Revised ed., p. 6—emphasis mine*

The Greek term *kuriakē* (*kuriake*) was a well-known technical term during the New Testament period which had to do with those things belonging to the Emperor of Rome.¹³ It is a possessive noun and means “The Lord’s.” The Emperor claimed to be a The Emperor claimed to be

[see note in OED] from Greek *kyriake* (*oikia*), *kyriakon doma* “Lord’s (house),” *Online Etymology Dictionary* - <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=church> 12/6/15

¹³ **1. Linguistic:** Formerly it was supposed that the adjective *kuriakos* (translated “the Lord’s”) was a purely Christian word, but recent discoveries have proved that it was in fairly common use in the Roman Empire before Christian influence had been felt. In secular use it signified “imperial,” “belonging to the lord” --the emperor--and so its adoption by Christianity in the sense “belonging to the Lord” --to Christ--was perfectly easy. Indeed, there is reason to suppose that in the days of Domitian, when the issue had been sharply defined as “Who is Lord? Caesar or Christ?” the use of the adjective by the church was a part of the protest against Caesar-worship (see LORD). And it is even possible that the full phrase, “the Lord’s day,” was coined as a contrast to the phrase, “the Augustean day” *he sebaste hemera*, a term that seems to have been used in some parts of the Empire to denote days especially dedicated in honor of Caesar-worship.—**International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, “Lord’s Day” <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/L/lords-day.html> 12/6/15

a god/man and thus, Lord over his empire. This term was used to signify those things that belonged to the Emperor. For example, the appointed monthly day for emperor worship throughout the Roman empire during the New Testament era was “Sunday.” It is believed the apostle John was exiled on the isle of Patmos for refusing to offer a pinch of incense unto the Emperor on “The Lord’s” day (te kuriake hemera) along with the words “Caesar is Lord.” Early Christians refused to recognize and worship Caesar as Lord. Instead, the early Christians used this term *kuriake* for the things of the Lord Jesus Christ (“*The Lord’s supper*”—*kuriakov deipnov*; 1 Cor. 11:20; “*The Lord’s day*”—*τη kuriakη hmera*; Rev. 1:10). Early Christians did not have designated public buildings for worship. They met in homes (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15) and at public sites. Not until much later were buildings erected for the purpose of public worship. Just as the term had been employed for the *kuriake* “supper” and *kuriake* “day,” it was employed by later Christians to identify the *kuriake* public house of worship. Hence, it became an ecclesiastical term for anything and everything belonging to the Lord (clergy, worship service, buildings, the Catholic dogma of the church, etc.). That is why it carries so many different meanings today.

As earlier as 1550 in the commentary notes of a translation of the Gospel of Matthew by Sir John Cheke, the Professor of Greek at Cambridge University in England, there is a comment in the margin of the translation that indicates they knew *church* was not a synonym for *ekklesia* but was derived from *kuriakē* (*kuriake*) and that it primarily had been used for the building where Christians met for prayer and worship.¹⁴

By the time it was first used in England, it had already become a term full of ecclesiastical baggage and doctrines. This is why F.J.A. Hort said in his book, **The Christian Ecclesia**:

¹⁴ “*Ekklesia. be thoos whom god hath called out from ye residue of his creatures to p̄fesse his naam and his true worship, and be outwardli knowen bi heering his wordes and receiving his sacramentes, inwardli bi goddess purpose toward yem and yeer true faith towarde god. And bi ye trutorn of ye word mai be named ye outcalled. For yis word church into ye which we torn ecclia, is ye house where ye outcalled do meet, and heer goddess wor, and vse comum praier and thanks-geving to god. For it cometh of ye greek kuriakon, which served in ye primitive church for ye common house of praier and sacramentes, as appeareth in Eusebius, which ye latins called dominicu. We following ye greek calle yis house, as ye north doth yet moor truli sound it, ye kurk, and we moor corruptly and frenchlike, ye church.*” Sir John Cheke, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, –1550, Reprint in London, 1843, 67* <https://www.google.com/search?tbm=bks&q=Sir+John+Cheke%2C+The+Gospel+According+to+Saint+Matthew+12/16/15>

The reason why I have chosen the term ecclesia is simply to avoid ambiguity. The English term church, now the most familiar representative of ecclesia to most of us, carries with it associations derived from the institutions and doctrines of later times, and thus cannot at present without a constant mental effort be made to convey the full and exact force which originally belonged to ecclesia.—J. A. Hort, **The Christian Ecclesia**, p. 1

Both King James and his translators plainly tell us that “ecclesiastical” terms, or terms full of ecclesiastical content were intentionally chosen in order to oppose the “scrupulosity of the Puritans” who pressed for a more literal translation. How do you think Baptists living at that time reacted to this outright attack upon their doctrines by this new authorized state sponsored version? Do you think they gave up their previous authorized version which retained *congregation* for this new one?

Since the term *church* ultimately originates with the Greek term *kuriake*, the reality is that the King James translators chose to translate one Greek term (*ekkllesia*) by another Greek term (*kuriake*), instead of giving the true meaning of *ekkllesia*.

This brings us to the real issue. Both *congregation* and *church* have been used in earlier editions of our English Bibles. Which term more accurately translates the Greek term *ekkllesia*?

Dr. Edward Overbey says with regard to their choice of *church* over *congregation*:

*The word **church** should not be in our English versions today to represent **ecclesia**. Its appearance in the New Testament, we believe, has obscured the true meaning. The word **church** is not used in Tyndale’s, Coverdale’s, and Crammer’s Bible (The Great Bible). These and other versions used the word **congregation** to translate **ecclesia**.*—E. H. Overbey, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 7–8—emphasis mine.

Therefore, the most important question of all is, does the Greek term *kuriake* with all of its historical ecclesiastical uses summed up in its English form *church* provide an accurate translation for the Greek term *ekkllesia*?

Dr. Overbey responds to this question:

*In our study of the word **ekklesia** in the New Testament it is clear that we should be careful to divorce the word **church** from it lest we read into **ekklesia** the meanings of the word **church**.*

*Our plan in general in this study will be to examine the word before the New Testament times in the Classical Greek and in the Septuagint. We will then in the light of this background carefully study each use of the word in the New Testament using the immediate and remote contexts to learn its meaning.—E.H. Overbey, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 8-9*

Our next lesson will begin to explore the origin, development and history of *ekklesia* in Pre-New Testament Greek literature. The aim will be to discover the precise meaning of *ekklesia* according to its usage before and during the writing of the New Testament. Only after we have established the historical meaning of *ekklesia* can we properly evaluate if the English term *church* is a more suitable translation for *ekklesia* than *congregation*.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. From what Greek term does our English word *church* originate?
2. How many English Versions prior to the 1611 KJV translated
3. *ekklesia* by the term *congregation*?
4. What was the Authorized Version prior to 1611 and how did it translate *ekklesia*?
5. Did the Reformed Catholics make the change from *congregation* to *church* immediately or was there a transition version to condition the English readers for this change?
6. Did King James and his translators tell us why they chose *church* over *congregation* and if so, what reason did they give?
7. Was their choice of *church* motivated by seeking the best translation of the term *ekklesia* or by ecclesiastical motivations due to dispute with Puritans?
8. In light of the King James Only debate today, how do you imagine that Baptists living at the time King James responded to a new state church sponsored Reformed Catholic version that openly stated

their opposition to Baptist doctrine when they already had an Authorized Version in English that properly translated *ekklesia* as *congregation*?

READING ASSIGNMENT:

Ecclesia—The Church by B.H. Carroll, pp. 35-37, 39-46

The Church and the Kingdom, Jesse B. Thomas, pp. 210-216

<http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/thomas.chrch.n.kgdm.par5b.html>

The Meaning of Ekklesia in the New Testament, by E.H. Overbey, pp. 10-17

NOTE: To see a chronological time line for publications of the English Bible in the 16th century see the following website - <http://clausenbooks.com/bible1600.htm>



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 2

Ekklesia in Classical Greek–Part 1

Ekklesia in Classical Greek–Part 2

PAGE TURNER
Ekklesia in Koine Greek
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 2 LESSON 1

Ekklesia in Classical Greek—Part I

LESSON GOALS: This lesson is designed to explore the etymology, origin and usage of *ekklēsia* in Classical Greek literature, in order to properly understand its meaning prior to its usage in the Greek Septuagint. Our ultimate goal is to establish the meaning of *ekklēsia* according to its usage previous to, and during the writing of the New Testament.

INTRODUCTION: The Greek term *ekklēsia* translated as *church* in our KJV had a long history of use prior to the New Testament. In the following lesson we are going to explore how it was used in the Hellenic¹⁵ and in the Hellenistic periods,¹⁶ right up to the time of the New Testament. The Hellenic period refers to the Greek language and culture prior to the death of Alexander the Great sometimes called the Golden Age or Classical period. The precise length of this period is a subject of debate. However, all agree it is somewhere from 500 to 336 B.C. The Greek city states had already been established between 799-500 B.C. during the Archaic age.

INVESTIGATING THREE PERIODS OF GREEK HISTORY

799–500 BC—Archaic - Greek City States develop and colonize

500 - 336 BC - Classical—Golden Age—Pericles, Aristotle

323–31 BC - Hellenistic—Spreading of Greek Culture

¹⁵ *Hellenic—of or relating to Greece, its people, or its language; specifically: of or relating to ancient Greek history, culture, or art before the Hellenistic period*

¹⁶ *Hellenistic—the dispersion of the Greek language and culture among the non-Greek world by Alexander the Great. - So Hellenistic Jews are those Jews who adopted the Grecian language and some of its culture.*

The Hellenic Greek period (799-500 BC) included various ancient Greek dialects (Doric, Ionic, Attic, etc.) that ultimately were synthesized into an Ionic-Attic Greek dialect.

Hellenistic Greek (500-336) was the academic Greek of the poet, philosopher or educated man (Homer, Hesiod, Aesop, Aristophanes, Socrates, Plato etc.).

CLASSICAL/HELLENIC PERIOD–500-336 BC

1. The genre known as Greek tragedies was created during this time (e.g. Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides).
2. Philosophy schools of Socrates and Plato founded.
3. The classical period ended in a violent war between the city-states, which proved to be a devastation from which the city-state could not fully recover.

HELLENISTIC PERIOD–336-31 BC

The Hellenistic period refers to the period after the death of Alexander the Great up until the conquest of the last Hellenistic kingdom by Rome (323-31 B.C.). Alexander the Great dispersed the Greek language and culture all over the known world before his death. The Ionic-Attic Greek dialect that was dispersed by Alexander went through several changes and ultimately became the vernacular or common language of the masses. Therefore, it became known as “Koine” (common) Greek. The use of Koine Greek extended beyond the conquest of Rome to about 300 A.D. It was during the Hellenistic period that the Greek Septuagint (Old Testament in koine Greek) was written.

Greek culture was spread by the breakup of Alexander the Great’s empire into three kingdoms:

1. Seleucid–Babylon, Persia, Central Turkey, etc.
2. Pergamum–City in Asia Minor
3. Ptolemaic–Egypt

I. THE CLASSICAL GREEK MEANING OF EKKLESIA

*It is not enough to know the etymology, the proper formation and the usage of a given writer. Before one has really learned a word, he must know its history up to the present time, certainly up to the period which he is studying. The resultant meaning of a word in any given instance will be determined by the etymology, the history and the immediate context.—A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research*, Broadman Press, Nashville, TN; 1934, p. 173*

In a general sense, the term *etymology* can be used to describe both the compositional root origins of a word along with its developmental historical usage. However, in a technical sense, etymology refers to the compositional make up of a word or its root derivatives.

A. THE ETYMOLOGICAL MEANING:

The term *ekklesia* is composed of two Greek words. It is composed of the Greek preposition *ek* and the noun *kalasis*. The preposition *ek* means “out of”¹⁷ while the noun *kalasis* means “a call” or “a summons.”

A term may be defined by its etymology if its etymology is consistent with its actual usage, or connotative use. However, if the connotative use bears a different meaning than its etymological meaning, then the connotative meaning takes precedence in determining its proper definition.

D.A. Carson, a universal invisible church scholar, in his book, “Exegetical Fallacies” says that determining the meaning by the etymology of a word is one of the most common exegetical fallacies:

One of the most enduring of errors, the root fallacy presupposes that every word actually has a meaning bound up with its shape or its components. In this view, meaning is

¹⁷ *Ek distinguished from apo means “out of the midst” of something rather than “away from” something (apo).*

determined by etymology; that is by the roots of a word.
 Anthony C. Thistleton offers by way of example our word **nice**,
 which comes from the Latin **nescius**, meaning “ignorant”
 But I know of no one today who in saying that such and such a
 person is “nice” believes that he or she has in some measure labeled
 that person ignorant because the “root meaning” or “hidden
 meaning” or “literal meaning” of “nice” is “ignorant.”—D.A.
 Carson, **Exegetical Fallacies**, Grand Rapids: Baker Books,
 1996, 2nd Ed., p. 28

For example, Earl Radmacher, who is a devout advocate of the universal invisible church theory, says,

*A distinction should be maintained between the etymology
 of a word and its meaning at some particular time in history.
 For example, “hussy” comes from “huswife” which means **house
 wife**; today it means a worthless woman or girl. **Ekklesia**
 comes from **ekkaleo** to call out, but in the times prior to the
 New Testament it means assembly or called out assembly. To
 say it means “the called out” is not correct.”—Earl Radmacher,
The Nature of the Church, (Western Baptist Press: Portland,
 OR) 1972, p. 110*

The universal visible church advocate J. Hort in his classic work *The Ecclesia* reminds us:

*There is no foundation for the widely spread notion that
ekklesia means a people or a number of individual men called
 out of the world or mankind . . . the compound verb **ekkaleo**
 is never so used, and **ekklesia** never occurs in a context which
 suggests this supposed sense to have been present in the writer’s
 mind.—F. J. A. Hort, **The Ecclesia***

Dr. Edward Overbey says:

*A distinction should be maintained between the etymology
 of a word and its meaning at some particular time in history.
 Sometimes the two are the same; many times, they are quite
 different. “Hussy” came from “huswife” which means housewife;*

today it means a worthless woman or girl, or a pert girl. "Constable" came from "comes stabuli" which means attendant of the stable; today it means a peace officer. "Ekklesia" came from "ekkletos" which means called out but in the times prior to the New Testament it meant assembly or called out assembly. To say it means the called out is not correct."—E. H. Overbey, **The Meaning of Ekklesia in the New Testament**, Little Rock, AR: The Challenge Press, n.d., p. 10

Dr. Roy Mason, a graduate of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky who studied under Dr. A.T. Robertson said:

Prof. Royal, of Wake Forest college, North Carolina, who taught Prof. A. T. Robertson, of the Louisville Seminary, and Prof. C. B. Williams, Greek, when asked if he knew of an instance in classic Greek where ecclesia 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 Professors Burton of Chicago University, Stifler of Crozer, Strong of Rochester and many other scholars."—Roy Mason, **The Church That Jesus Built**, Clarksville, Tennessee, Baptist Bible Church Publications, 1977, p. 40).

Dr. S.E. Anderson of Northern Baptist Seminary makes this observation:

*We know it is not fair to impose distorted 20th-Century definitions on a good First-Century word. Classical Greek writers defined ekklesia as assembly or congregation. - **The Meaning and Use of Ecclesia in the First Christian Century**, Little Rock, Challenge Press, n.d., p. 2*

With regard to the etymological meaning of *ekklesia*, it would be a grave mistake to define it by "called out" or "the called-out ones" as all Greek scholars are agreed that meaning cannot be found in Classical Greek usage.

B. THE CONNOTATIVE MEANING OF EKKLESIA:

Words carry cultural and emotional associations or meanings defined by usage (connotation) in addition to their etymological meaning. That is the connotative meaning.

In his **Synonyms of the New Testament**, R.C. Trench provides the connotative meaning for *ekklesia* (assembly) while explaining how the etymological meaning can be understood consistently with its actual historical usage. He says that the *ekklesia*

*...was the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the right of citizenship, for the transaction of public affairs. That they were **summoned** is expressed in the latter part of the word; that they were summoned **out of the whole population, a select portion of it, including neither the populace, nor strangers, nor yet those who had forfeited their civic rights, this is expressed in the first.**—R.C. Trench, **Synonyms of the New Testament**, The National Foundation for Christian Education, Marshallton, DL. pp. 1-2*

It is important to understand that Trench is speaking of its earliest and most common meaning (“*the lawful assembly in a free Greek city*”) and how the etymology of the term is consistent with that earliest known usage. Hence, Trench is providing both the connotative usage in addition to the etymological meaning of the term. Trench never sees a time in Classical Greek history where the etymological meaning stood alone, or apart from the actual idea of an “assembly.” Those assembled had been called out for that very purpose. From its earliest usage it denoted an assembly. Indeed, the very term may have been initially coined to describe a “called out assembly.”

Furthermore, Trench correctly states that those called out to assemble were not equal to the whole population of the city but consisted only of those properly qualified as citizens among the whole population of the city. He correctly states that only a “*select portion*” is admitted into the assembly while “*the populace...strangers*” and those who had forfeited their civic rights were not admitted. The Greek *ekklesia* was a qualified selection of the populace which admitted neither women, nor children. As will be seen

later, the meaning of *ekklesia* provided by Trench is historically accurate in all of its details.

There is general consensus that the connotative meaning of *ekklesia* in Classical Greek is “assembly” or “congregation” as characterized by its earliest known use for the common Greek city *ekklesia*.

After examining every pre-New Testament use both in the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods, in all classical Greek and Septuagint usage, Dr. Earl Radmacher, the former chancellor emeritus of the Conservative Baptist Seminary, and a staunch universal invisible church advocate makes it clear that prior to the New Testament:

*One thing must be stressed and that is it **always** describes a corporeal, physical unity of people—The Nature of the Church*, (Western Baptist Press; Portland, OR), 1972, p. 122—emphasis mine

Of course, it is the evidence that demands this conclusion by Radmacher, not his theological persuasions. His theological persuasions ultimately force him to define *ekklesia* in the New Testament in the very opposite terms, as a **non**-corporeal, **non**-physical unity of people.

Therefore, two facts about the Classical Greek *ekklesia* are that (1) it “*always describes a corporeal, physical unity of people*” and that it consists of (2) a restricted qualified membership. These two facts are both obstacles in any attempt to justify any historical basis to support the universal invisible application of *ekklesia* to a non-corporeal, non-physical unity of people or to any believers who merely happen to assemble by chance.

Therefore, how can Radmacher and other universal church advocates get around these two facts in order to find any historical basis to support their use of *ekklesia* in the New Testament to define a non-corporeal, non-physical unity of people?

1. *Playing fast and loose with Historical data*

They attempt to do this by two means. The first means is to establish some historical period of time wherein the etymological meaning of “called out” was actually the primary and connotative meaning. The second means is to deny that any qualification other than mere presence was required to be part of the Classical Greek *ekklesia*.

In order to validate the etymological meaning of *ekklesia* apart from any connection with an assembly, some speculate there was an actual time in early pre-recorded Greek history where the etymological concept prevailed as the actual connotative meaning according to usage.

For example, consider the way John S. Hammett, professor of Systematic Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary attempts to establish a developmental period in Greek history when the etymological idea of “called out” no longer was associated with “assembly.”

“In ancient Greece, the ekklesia was the assembly of the called-out citizens, who came together to conduct the business of the city. But over the years, the element of being called out became less prominent, and an ekklesia was regarded as just an assembly of people”–Biblical Foundations for Baptist Congregations: A Contemporary Ecclesiology. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Pub. 2005, p. 26–emphasis mine

Notice that in his first sentence he admits to the historical evidence concerning the meaning of *ekklesia*–“the assembly of the called-out citizens.” However, in his second sentence he asserts a pure unproven assumption as historical fact, which in reality has no historical basis whatsoever when he says “*but over the years the element of being called out became less prominent.*” That statement is a subtle attempt to invent a time period when the idea of “called out” was separated from its historical actual objective which was to assemble. However, it is the failure to be properly summoned that made the assembling in Ephesus (Acts 19) an unlawful assembly. It is the common Greek city *ekklesia* that Christ has in view because that was the kind of *ekklesia* where complaints could be made where there was authority invested in that *ekklesia* to address them (Mt. 18:16-18). Hence, the element of being “called out” in its relationship to actual assembling did not become less prominent as he suggests. His intent is to justify a separation because that is precisely what he wants to do with its use in the New Testament but in reverse. He wants to separate the element of assembling from the idea being “called out” in order to justify his theological assertion of an “called out” universal invisible church that never assembles on earth at any time. He says:

Still, the origin of ekklesia is interesting. It is formed from two Greek words, ek, “out,” and kaleo, “to call.” Thus, the ekklesia are “the called-out ones.”—John S. Hammett, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26—emphasis mine

As far as the historical record is concerned, there never was a time when *ekklesia* was ever disconnected from the idea of an assembly, or ever meant “the called-out ones” apart from being assembled. It is always used in direct connection with an assembly, and this assembly “*always describes a corporeal, physical unity of people.*” From the record it would seem that it was initially coined to describe citizens being summoned to assemble just as Trench claimed. That is the only conclusion the historical evidence will justify.

However, those who follow Hammett must rewrite and reinterpret Classical Greek literature to accomplish his feat of historical gymnastics. Professor Hammett is not only wrong but is misleading his readers in order to justify a theological bias that has no historical evidence to support it.

2. Promoting the idea of Universal inclusiveness from Classical Greek Literature

The second way to undermine the historical meaning is to deny the idea that segregation is not a dominant element in the historical use of *ekklesia* as Trench demands when he says, “*that they were summoned out of the whole population, a select portion of it, including neither the populace, nor strangers, nor yet those who had forfeited their civic rights, this is expressed in the first.*”

Trench is explicitly saying that the membership of the *ekklesia* is not equal to the “whole population” of the city, but rather it consists of a qualified “select portion of it.” Modern scholarship has vindicated Trench in this regard.

Why is it important to Radmacher and other universal invisible church advocates to deny this? It is important to them for two reasons. First, it provides an historical basis to interpret the membership of the N.T. *ekklesia* to be inclusive of all of God’s kingdom citizens, thus a universal church, rather than a properly qualified limited portion of God’s kingdom citizens (e.g. baptized believers). Second, it provides an historical interpretation that

allows for Matthew 18:20 to define the local church as an unorganized entity that consists of any two or three professing Christians that may happen to assemble together, at any given time and place without further qualifications.¹⁸

In his book under the heading “Contribution to New Testament Writing” Dr. Earl Radmacher says in direct response to these words by Trench:

*If etymology alone were the sole consideration, Trench’s definition would be quite adequate; however, he has not given proper attention to the connotational meanings which have more to do with actual usage. **This elaboration of the idea of segregation reads far too much into the classical usage.** . . . Baker points out why the idea of segregation is untenable.—Earl Radmacher, **The Nature of the Church**, (Western Baptist Press; Portland, OR), 1972, p. 110—emphasis mine*

However, Radmacher is mistaken. Trench does give the connotative meaning, (“*the lawful assembly*”) and in addition demonstrates how the etymological meaning harmonizes with the connotative meaning. Radmacher is clearly repudiating any kind of limiting qualifications as a primary factor in the historical use of *ekklesia*. He continues to provide quotations from John Broadus and Robert A. Baker to refute the idea that the whole city population was not inclusive of city assembly. His aim is not only to qualify the whole city population as eligible for, but inclusive in participation in the *ekklesia*.

Radmacher quotes John Broadus as the first step in repudiating such membership limitations:

The Greek word ekklesia signified primarily the assembly of citizens in a self-governed state, being derived from ekkaleo, to call out; i.e. out from their homes or places of business, to summon,

¹⁸ Neo-Landmarkers interpret Matthew 18:20 exactly as do the universal church advocates. They also jerk this text out of its context and attempt to make it refer to the constitution of a new church without any other qualifications than two or three baptized members who assemble to constitute a church. The grammatical and contextual evidence proves that Jesus is referring to the already established *ekklesia* in verses 15-18.

*as we speak of calling out the militia. **The popular notion that it meant to call out in the sense of separation from others is a mistake.***—Alvah Hovey, Ed., **An American Commentary on the New Testament.** *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* by John A. Broadus, Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, p. 358—emphasis mine

Radmacher’s point, which I have put in bold type is to repudiate any kind of separation “from others” as described in the definition given by Trench.

However, even the analogy used by Broadus fails to support Radmacher’s point. For example, women, children, and any incapable of fighting were not called out for the militia during the time of Broadus, or by the Greeks in the Hellenic period, nor were they qualified to participate in the historical Greek *ekklesia*. So, Broadus is wrong but there was a separation from those incapable of fighting. Furthermore, in context Broadus does not support Radmacher’s ultimate use of *ekklesia* in the sense that *ekklesia* in the New Testament consisted of those *called out from the world*.¹⁹

Moreover, Broadus misstates the “popular notion.” What Broadus claims is the popular but false notion, is actually the true and historical meaning of *ekklesia*, which is, “*to call out in the sense of **separation from others.***” The false notion that had absolutely no historical credibility was that *ekklesia* meant “*called out **from the world** or out **from mankind.***”

The Greek city *ekklesia* was unquestionably limited to only those who were actually summoned to participate in it. For example, it should be obvious that the Athenian Greek *ekklesia* was not open to all Greeks who

¹⁹ *This aggregate of professed Christians is in modern parlances called “the visible church,” as distinguished from “the invisible church,” which denotes as above, the **ideal** assembly of real Christians. But the word is not used in the New Testament to denote a congregation, actual or imaginary, of all professed Christians unless it be in Acts 9:31 (correct text), and in 1 Tim. 3:15. In the former the word probably denotes the original church at Jerusalem, whose members were by persecution widely scattered throughout Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and held meetings wherever they were, but still belonged to the one original organization. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, nearly twenty years later, these separate meetings had been organized into distinct congregations; and so he speaks (Gal. 1:22), in reference to that same period of “the congregations of Judea which were “in Christ.” In 1 Tim. 3:15 “the church” is naturally the particular local church with which one is connected. - Alvah Hovey, Ed., **An American Commentary on the New Testament.** “*Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*” by John A. Broadus, Philadelphia:*

were citizens in other Greek cities, but only those who qualified as citizens in the city of Athens. Hence, there is a localized qualification to participate in any given Greek city *ekklesia*. Later, it will be proven that the Greeks had a very restrictive definition of “citizen” that was not synonymous with their entire city population.

Radmacher then quotes Robert A. Baker in order to repudiate the whole idea that the Greek cities would exclude any portion of its population.

*It is generally agreed that when the derivative of the verb meaning ‘to call out’ was applied to this assembly, **the idea was not of segregation but of summoning**. It would contradict the early Greek spirit to suppose that the ‘Calling’ eliminated some from the meeting which would determine their common fate. It is probable that the earliest *ecclesia* found the members acting more in the capacity of **warriors and fathers** than as citizens.*—Robert A. Baker, “An Introduction to the Study of the Development of Ecclesiology,” (unpublished Doctor’s dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1944), p. 25—emphasis mine

However, Baker’s admission that the earliest Greek *ekklesia* was restricted to “warriors and fathers” defeats his own argument that the classical Greek city *ekklesia* was not segregated, but inclusive of the entire resident population of the city.

Even Radmacher fully understands and admits there were membership requirements that characterized the Greek city *ekklesia* and admits that such membership requirements varied from one Greek city to another.

*Thirdly, whereas **the qualifications for the constituency may vary to a great extent**, yet one qualification is constant, never varying: to be a member of an *ekklesia* a person must be physically present at the assembly.* - Radmacher, *Op. Cit.*, p. 123

Of course, it is self-evident that one must be physically present to be included in an actual assembly, and so, that is no qualification but inherent in the very meaning of assembly. But Radmacher’s “one qualification” totally dismisses the idea that being summoned is part of the connotative meaning of *ekklesia*. Indeed, Radmacher’s one and only constant “qualification” repudiates any need

for being summoned at all, but anyone who just happened to show up would meet his “one qualification” just as much as anyone who had been summoned to show up. Therefore, Radmacher is just as guilty of defining *ekklesia* apart from its connotative meaning as he accuses Trench. He falsely accuses Trench of defining *ekklesia* solely by its etymology, rather than according its connotative meaning, when in fact, his restricted qualification ignores the connotative meaning that includes only those being summoned to assemble.

Moreover, it is important to realize that Trench is speaking explicitly about the common Greek city *ekklesia*, whereas, Radmacher is making his case on what even he admits to be rare instances (assembly of armies, etc.), or cases completely separated from the Greek city *ekklesia*. Trench correctly includes both the connotative meaning without disconnecting it from its etymology, while Radmacher divorces one from the other, and then attempts to establish the primary meaning of *ekklesia* on nothing more than admittedly rare and exceptional cases.

However, the primary meaning of a term is never established by rare exceptions to the general rule but by the primary or common usage. Radmacher has admitted that in every Classical, Hellenic and Septuagint use, *ekklesia* “*always describes a corporeal, physical unity of people.*” Notwithstanding, he is seeking some kind of wiggle room around that suffocating admission in order to historically justify his ultimate use for *ekklesia* as a **non**-corporeal, **non**-physical unity of people (universal, invisible *ekklesia*). Therefore, he attempts to divert the reader from its primary use for the common Greek city *ekklesia* unto rare cases where there is insufficient context to determine that any other qualifications were required other than mere physical presence (some instances of the gathering of armies).

Moreover, as even his own cited authorities admit, the Greeks did not include women and children in their armies. Therefore, those who assembled were further qualified by a common fighting cause and common minimum ability to pursue that cause.

Furthermore, the following sources will confirm that there were other qualifications required than mere physical presence in order to be summoned to assemble as a Greek *ekklesia*.

3. *A Qualified and Segregated Ekklesia*

More modern Classical Greek Scholars agree with Trench that, as a general rule, *ekklesia* always included more requirements than mere physical presence.

The Assembly was the policy-making body of the state and consisted in principle of all male citizens over the age of 20.—
John Thorley, **Athenian Democracy**, Routledge, London and New York: 1996, p. 32—emphasis mine

Young-Ho Park, a Graduate of Yale Divinity School with a PhD from the University of Chicago argues that the Greeks did not define “citizenship” as inclusive of all who lived in a Greek city. He argues they defined “citizenship” to be more than a mere resident of a city, but those “eligible” or considered fit to participate in keeping with how they defined “liberty.”

It is natural that this idea of liberty excludes “the merchants and tillers” from the ekklesia by labeling them “vulgar people” (Banausoí)... The dilemma concerning who is part (meros) of the city—that is, who is eligible to attend the ekklesia and who is not—had been an ongoing problem throughout Greco-Roman antiquity.... The most common criticism of Athenian democracy is that it is was not, in fact, rule by all, for political participation was available only to freeborn male citizens, whereas, women, children, slaves, and metics were denied participation in “the human condition.”..... In addition to this limited definition of citizenship, one should consider the limitation that not all citizens enjoyed political participation in its fullest manifestation.... -
Young-Ho Park, **Paul’s Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly**: Laupp & Gobel, Germany; 2015, pp. 20, 21

N.S. Gill has a B.A. in Latin and an M.A. in linguistics from the University of Minnesota. She has also done graduate level coursework on classics at the University of Minnesota, writing two master’s level papers, one on the misdating of an Oxyrhynchus papyrus and the other on Ovid as part of the program. She says concerning the membership in the ancient Greek Ekklesia:

Membership in the Ecclesia (Assembly):

At 18, young Athenian males were enrolled in their demes' citizen lists, and then served for two years in the military. Afterwards, they could be in the Assembly, unless otherwise restricted.

They might be disallowed while owing a debt to the public treasury or for having been removed from the deme's roster of citizens. Someone convicted of prostituting himself or of beating/failing to support his family may have been denied membership in the Assembly.—N.S. Gill, <http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/greekpolitics/p/Ecclesia.htm> 12/8/15

In A History of Greece, to the Death of Alexander the Great, J. B. Bury says the Spartan Assembly or Ecclesia was restricted to Spartiate men of at least 30 years of age, who met when summoned by the Ephors or Gerousia.—N. S. Gill, <http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/spartarulers/g/022111-Ecclesia-In-Sparta.htm> 12/8/15*

Abilene Christian University posts on its website an article written by Roy Bowen Ward, entitled “*Ekklesia, A Word Study.*” Ward was Emeritus Professor of Comparative Religions at Miami University with a Doctor of Theology Degree from Harvard Divinity School. In it Ward says:

*The most common classical usage of **ekklesia** and its cognates was as a political term, meaning an assembly of citizens. In the Greek city-state the citizens were called forth by the trumpet of the kerux (herald) summoning them to the **ekklesia** (assembly). The **ekklesia** was the ultimate power in the constitutional government of the Greek city-state, whether it was a monarchy, oligarchy, or democracy. Of the general assembly of the citizens in or before the time of Dracon (codified laws in 621 B. C.) nothing is really known—though the people must have had some power. Later Aristotle applied **ekklesia** to the Homeric assemblies of the people.³ Most of our references to the use of this word concern the **ekklesia** of Athens.⁴*

*The **ekklesia** in Athens enjoyed a long life from 508 B.C. until the early fourth century, A.D., in the time of Diocletian. But only from 508 to 322 B.C. was it a strictly democratic institution. In this time, it was the general meeting of the people—all Athenian citizens could attend, **excluding only aliens, females, and those disenfranchised (atimoi)**. http://www.acu.edu/sponsored/restoration_quarterly/archives/1950s/vol_2_no_4_contents/ward.html 12/8/15—emphasis mine*

The concept of citizenship in ancient Greek cities was restricted entirely to the male populations who were regarded as capable of not only going to war, but were regarded as mature, responsible, and capable adults:

*As Ignatieff notes, classic civic republican citizenship “inheres only in those capable of material, social and intellectual dependence (1995, p. 57). The ideal was very much the citizen landowner, connected directly to the territory of the city state, and by very definition a patriot who would react positively to the call to arms if required. That is, this citizen had a vested interest in defending the ‘motherland’ because he and his comrades actually owned it. The ultimate goal was to achieve “an anti-bureaucratic or anti-imperial ideal of self-rule by adult, male property owners, equal among themselves, sustained by an economy of non-citizens” (Ignatieff, 1995, p. 59). Women, slaves and outsiders could not be trusted with the affairs of the state but they were nonetheless essential to its maintenance.—Pete Dyer, **Understanding Social Citizenship**, Bristol, UK, Policy Press, 2010 “Box 2:1: Heater on Aristotle and citizenship in the Ancient Greek city states”*

The problem is that when some scholars quote various Classical Greek writers that say “all citizens” had the right to vote, and participate in the *ekklesia*, they fail to understand how the Greeks carefully defined a “citizen.” Not all residing in the Greek city were defined as “citizens” or “full” citizens. Only a “full” citizen could participate in the *ekklesia*. Aliens, women and children, slaves, and those disenfranchised did not meet the qualification of “citizenship” and were not allowed to participate in the

assembly. Therefore, connotatively the meaning of *ekklesia* in Classical Greek literature always included other minimal qualifications that justified their physical presence.

Radmacher cites Acts 19 as an example to support his theory that an *ekklesia* could be a mere unqualified crowd of people that merely showed up. However, the city clerk denied it was a “lawful” *ekklesia* (Acts 19:39) as it had not been formerly called into session. In addition, there were more qualifications than mere physical presence at any lawful assembly. This is true of this unlawful assembly in Acts 19. There was a common cause that separated/segregated these citizens from others in participating in this assembly. These were idolaters gathered to defend their goddess Diana.

The Greek-English Lexicon by Louw and Nida says:

11.32 ἐκκλησία, ας f: . . . *Though some persons have tried to see in the term ἐκκλησία a more or less literal meaning of ‘called-out ones,’ this type of etymologizing is not warranted either by the meaning of ἐκκλησία in NT times or even by its earlier usage. The term ἐκκλησία was in common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to **an assembly of persons constituted by well-defined membership**. In general, Greek usage it was normally a socio-political entity based upon citizenship in a city-state (see ἐκκλησία, 11.78) and in this sense is parallel to δῆμος (11.78). For the NT, however, it is important to understand the meaning of ἐκκλησία as ‘an assembly of God’s people.’* - Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. 1996, c1989. **Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains** (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). United Bible societies: New York—emphasis mine

Therefore, with regard to the actual evidence, Radmacher is correct in saying that *ekklesia* in all pre-New Testament literature “*always describes a corporeal, physical unity of people.*” However, Radmacher is incorrect when he asserts that the only necessary qualification for membership in the Greek *ekklesia* is physical attendance, while Trench is proven to be correct. Whether it is the Greek city *ekklesia*, or whether it is an army being assembled there are always minimum criteria that justifies their physical presence. Of course, their physical presence is proof they have met such qualifications.

However, let us suppose Radmacher is correct, and that there is a rare usage of *ekklesia* where nothing but mere physical presence is required to be part of a Greek *ekklesia*. Still, the connotative meaning must be determined by the general rule, or primary usage, rather than rare exceptions to the general rule. Radmacher admittedly establishes his singular qualification on rare instances or exceptions to the general rule. Therefore, with regard to the general rule, Trench is correct that the Greek *ekklesia* consisted only of qualified citizens. Mere residency in a city did not qualify one to be a member of the *ekklesia*.

As a general rule, the historical evidence demands citizenship prior to membership in the *ekklesia*. When this general rule is applied to the New Testament concept of *ekklesia* it would support the idea that *professed* heavenly citizenship in the kingdom of God was the required prerequisite for membership in the earthly *ekklesia* of Christ. Hence, profession of faith as prerequisite for baptism were qualifications for membership in the *ekklesia*.

Indeed, as we shall see in the next lesson the following summarization by Dr. H.E. Dana for the actual usage in classical Greek literature more fully represents the true meaning of *ekklesia*:

.... There were in the classical usage of this term four elements pertinent to its New Testament meaning (i) the assembly was local; (ii) it was autonomous; (iii) it presupposed definite qualifications; (iv) it was conducted on democratic principles.—H. E. Dana, **A Manual of Ecclesiology**—p. 26

II. THE DEMOCRATIC NATURE OF THE GREEK CITY EKKLESIA

Lothar Coenen the contributor for the study of *ekklesia* in **The New International Dictionary of the New Testament** substantiates that the classical Greek city *ekklesia* consisted of only those with “full” citizenship, and conducted it business by democratic principles:

A decision was only valid if it won a certain number of votes. Authorization to participate and the methods of summoning the assembly and of voting—by show of hands in Athens (Aristot. Ath. Pol., 45), by acclaim (Thuc., 1, 87),

*by ballot sheets or stones (Exen. Hell., 1, 7, 9), were strictly regulated, as was the control of the assembly, which originally lay with the president of the Prytaneis and from the 4th cent. B.C. with a college of nine. Thus **ekklesia**, centuries before the translation of the OT and the time of the NT, was clearly characterized as a political phenomenon, repeated according to certain rules and with a certain framework. It was the assembly of full citizens, functionally rooted in constitution of the democracy, an assembly in which fundamental political and judicial decisions were taken. The scope of its competences varied in the different states.*—Colin Brown, Gen. Ed., **The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology**. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan; 1982), Vol. 1., p. 291

There is no debate among Greek scholars concerning the democratic nature of the Greek *city ekklesia*. There is overwhelming evidence that it was clearly an organized assembly that operated by majority rule. Within the democratic Greek city institutions (*ekklesia*, *boule*, court) there were three forms of voting that were used; (1) Raising hands; (2) Casting ballots and (3) casting lots.

When they cast ballots, there would be two jars, one made of clay, and the other of brass into which citizens would cast their ballot to determine yea or nay decisions. Aristotle describes this voting by use of tokens to cast ballots in detail with regard to the court system in Athens:

And when the jury are about to give their verdict, the herald first asks whether the litigants wish to challenge the evidence of the witnesses; for they are not allowed to challenge it after the voting has begun. Then he proclaims again, ‘The pebble with the hole through it is a vote for the first speaker, and the whole pebble one for the second speaker.’ And the juryman when taking the pebbles out of the lamp-stand presses the pebble against the lamp-stand and does not let the parties to the action see either the perforated pebble or the whole one, and throws the one that he wishes to count into the copper vessel and the one that he discards into the wooden one.—Aristotle, **The Athenian**

Constitution, part 68.4, Op. Cit.,²⁰

Significantly, casting lots was commonly used in Greek cities in all their various democratic institutions (*ekklesia*, *boule*, courts) to select persons to fill an office.

*Then there was also an executive committee of the **boulē** which consisted of one tribe of the ten which participated in the **boulē** (i.e., 50 citizens, known as **prytaneis**) elected on a rotation basis, so each tribe composed the executive once each year. This executive of the executive had a chairman (**epistates**) who was **chosen by lot each day**. The 50-man **prytany** met in the building known as the **Bouleuterion** in the Athenian agora and safe-guarded the sacred treasuries.*

*In tandem with all these political institutions were the law courts (**dikasteria**) which were composed of 6,000 jurors and a body of chief magistrates (**archai**) **chosen annually by lot**. **Indeed, there was a specially designed** machine of colored tokens (**kleroterion**) to ensure those selected were chosen randomly, a process magistrate had to go through twice. It was here in the courts that laws made by the assembly could be challenged and decisions were made regarding ostracism, naturalization, and remission of debt.—Mark Cartwright, **Athenian Democracy**, published October 13, 2014, - http://www.ancient.eu/Athenian_Democracy/—emphasis mine*

Finally, here is one passage from where casting lots is stated as the means to elect the officers in the assembly while other issues are simply decided by the assembly with majority vote:

*The πρυτανειφ themselves were under the presidency of one of their number known as an epistathf who was selected by lot. It was he who put motions to the vote in the Assembly. The Choregus was clearly epistathf during his Prytany.—Antiphon, **On the Choreutes Antiph**. 6 45*

²⁰ <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0046%3Achapter%3D68%3Asection%3D4> 12/18/2016

During the Classical Greek era the *ekklesia* was part and parcel with every Greek city. At the introduction of the Koine period with the Hellenization of the ancient near east by Alexander the Great, the Greek *ekklesia* was part and parcel with every city he established in his entire empire outside of Greece. By the time of Alexander the Great the term *ekklesia* was a technical term for the democratic form of government established in every city throughout his empire.

REVIEW QUESTIONS: *

1. What is the difference between the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods of Greek history?
2. What is the technical difference between the etymology of a term and its connotative meaning?
3. Is the etymology of a term a safe way to establish its meaning?
4. What is the etymological meaning of *ekklesia*?
5. What is the connotational meaning of *ekklesia* in Classical Greek literature?
6. Does the Classical Greek usage *ekklesia* justify any use of the etymological meaning that is not subordinate to the idea that *ekklesia* “always describes a corporeal, physical unity of people”?
7. Did the early Greek cities carefully define the meaning of “citizen”?
8. Were all people residing in a Greek city qualified as “citizens” and eligible to participate in the assembly?
9. What residents in Greek cities were not eligible to participate in the *ekklesia*?
10. What did H.E. Dana say were the four connotative characteristics of the Classical Greek city *ekklesia*?

ASSIGNED READING:

Ekklesia by B.H. Carroll—pp. 39-46;

The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament by E.H. Overbey—pp. 11-13

WEEK 2 LESSON 2

Ekklesia in Classical Greek—Part II

LESSON GOALS: The goal for this lesson is to expose you to original source materials so that you can both see and demonstrate the use of the Greek term *ekklesia* in Classical Greek literature with the definite article as an abstract institutional noun.

INTRODUCTION: It has been fully established that in Classical Greek literature the common meaning of *ekklesia* is “assembly” and that its etymological meaning “called out” is never unattached from the idea of a physical, corporeal unity of qualified people. As one universal church advocate candidly admits:

*One thing must be stressed and that is it **always** describes a corporeal, physical unity of people—Earl Radmacher, **The Nature of the Church**, (Western Baptist Press; Portland, OR), 1972, p. 122—emphasis mine*

Indeed, Radmacher goes on to say:

*Furthermore, **ekklesia** did not acquire any different significance in the Septuagint. All the uses of the word never go beyond the simple meaning of an assembly. Thus, when the writers of the New Testament, whose Bible was the Septuagint, used *ekklesia*, they were not inventing a new term. They found the term in common use and simply employed what was at hand. . . . Beginning of the Christian era the word *ekklesia* had no etymological associations or historical connotations that carried its meaning beyond the idea of an autonomous physical assembly.—Ibid. pp. 123,125*

The evidence demands this admission even though this admission repudiates Radmacher's own theological views, as Radmacher is an avowed universal invisible church advocate. How then does Radmacher shake off this indisputable solid historical usage of *ekklesia* in order to justify his interpretation of *ekklesia* in the New Testament as a non-corporeal, and non-physical invisible and universal concept?

After admitting the common historical sense has endured for centuries, Radmacher begins his departure from this solid pre-New Testament evidence by raising a question:

A question arises, however, as to whether the New Testament writers used the term in its established, non-technical and general sense....—Ibid. p. 123—emphasis mine

This “question” does not arise from any evidence prior to New Testament literature. Radmacher asserts that *ekklesia* began to change in meaning during the New Testament period. He begins his supposition with Acts 19:23-41.

He supposes that Acts 19:23-41 poses a problem for the historical non-technical use of *ekklesia*. He says these verses “seems to present conclusive evidence that the word *ekklesia* had broadened its meaning far beyond the strictly classical sense” (Ibid., p. 127). He imagines this to be the case because he says, “That this wholly irregular, disorganized mob in a state of confusion should be considered as any kind of *ekklesia* is quite different from the classical Greek usage” (Ibid., p. 127).

After making this supposition, he then broadly declares it is a “fact” that terms in general are always changing in meaning, hoping his readers will assume this is specifically true of *ekklesia* based only upon his misinterpretations of the passage in Acts and his ignorance of Greek city laws:

Because of the fact that words are constantly changing and developing in meaning, it would be natural that some of the usages would be on the borderline of the non-technical use, or in what may be called the sub technical use.—Ibid., p. 127

But how accurate is his supposition with regard to Acts 19?

No one denies that all the participants in Acts 19 were physically assembled in one geographical place in order to conduct a specified agenda (defense of Diana). However, from the earliest times the Greeks had laws

to determine the lawful character of their *ekklesia* and what constituted an unlawful *ekklesia*. Aristotle plainly spells such things out in his *Athenian Constitution*. A lawful *ekklesia* did not convene by accident but the members were summoned or called to assemble in an orderly manner according to a proper public protocol. It was the *prytaneis* (council) that gave forth the summons.

In the Athens of the 5th and 4th centuries BC, the prytaneis, a committee of the Boule (council), summoned the Ecclesia both for regular meetings—“Ecclesia, the Ancient Grecian Assembly” in Britannica, accessed 05/25/2017 - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ecclesia-ancient-Greek-assembly>

Indeed, the very term *ekklesia* conveys the idea of having been gathered by public summons. In Acts 19, the clerk reminded the Ephesians that this was not a lawfully summoned assembly, as it had not been formerly summoned. Neither was it being conducted in an orderly manner. There is no new meaning, or a broadening of meaning here as Radmacher supposes. This was still a visible assembly but an unlawful assembly.

The bottom line is that Radmacher’s “question” arises from no other source but his own theological bias, and ignorance of the historical data. Radmacher is approaching the New Testament with an already biased theological presupposition instead of approaching it according to the evidence he has plainly admitted.

However, another reason that “a question arises” in the mind of Radmacher and other big church advocates is because they ignore the abstract use of *ekklesia* in Greek literature. Indeed, if they acknowledged this common abstract use of *ekklesia* by pre-New Testament writers, it would completely and irreversibly destroy their whole interpretative basis for demanding a new and different meaning of *ekklesia* in the New Testament.

I. THE ABSTRACT AND ABSOLUTE USE OF THE NOUN EKKLESIA

Universal church advocates fail to recognize the clear and repeated use of *ekklesia* as an abstract noun in Classical and Koine Greek documents prior to the writing of the New Testament. They also fail to recognize that

ekklesia was regarded as a technical term in the absolute sense to designate “the assembly” as a specific *institutional* aspect of the Greek city government.

A. THE DEFINITE AND ABSOLUTE SENSE OF EKKLESIA

Under the topical heading *Contribution to New Testament Writing* Radmacher writes:

The lack of the definite article in the classical writings indicates that there was something about the essential nature of the religious ekklesia which found no analogy in the secular ekklesia.—**The Nature of the Church**, (Western Baptist Press; Portland, OR), 1972, p. 114

Radmacher is not denying Classical Greek writers used the definite article with *ekklesia* in Classical Greek literature because examples for that are abundant. He is denying that *ekklesia* is found with the definite article with regard to religious applications. Why is that denial important to Radmacher? Radmacher is attempting to lay a foundation for his readers to support his later contention that there is new use and meaning by New Testament writers that has no previous historical precedent. He feels that the complete absence of the definite article with *ekklesia* in Classical Greek applications to religious assemblies as opposed to the common use of the definite article with *ekklesia* in New Testament writings when applied to the Christian assembly provides a legitimate basis to argue for a change of meaning in the New Testament.

In order to bolster this idea, he quotes R.W. Kicklightner as saying:

The use of the definite article with ekklesia in Christian literature is an evidence of its exceptional nature and suggests a peculiar connotation, which must have made it somewhat meaningless to a contemporary Greek unfamiliar with Jewish or Christian practices. (Ibid., p. 114)

Hence, when New Testament writers spoke of “the” *ekklesia* they had a restrictive use in mind—the *ekklesia* of Christ. Radmacher is denying that

Classical Greek writers used “the” *ekklesia* in the same way as an absolute noun with regard to their religious assemblies.

However, there were good reasons why religious assemblies were referred to without the definite article or referred to in an absolute use of the noun *ekkleisa* among the Greeks. There were several different kinds of religious assemblies and the Greeks did not own one particular religious assembly above all others. Whereas, in direct contrast the New Testament writers did own one particular kind of religious assembly distinguished from all other religious kinds.

Moreover, there is evidence that the definite article was used in Classical Greek with reference to a religious assembly:

Aristophanes in his Greek play used the definite noun to describe those gathered in a temple to perform religious services.

Aristophanes, Thesmophoriazusae 266 (446-386 B.C.)

Euripides You look for all the world like a woman. But when you talk, take good care to give your voice a woman's tone.

Mnesilochus *falseto* I'll try my best.

Euripides Come, get yourself to the temple.

Mnesilochus No, by Apollo, not unless [270] you swear to me ...

Euripides What?

Mnesilochus ... that, if anything untoward happen to me, you will leave nothing undone to save me.

Euripides Very well! I swear it by the Aether, the dwelling-place of the king of the gods.

Mnesilochus Why not rather swear it by the sons of Hippocrates?

Euripides Come, I swear it by all the gods, both great and small.

Mnesilochus [275] Remember, it's the heart, and not the tongue, that has sworn; for the oaths of the tongue concern me but little.

Euripides Hurry up! The signal for **the meeting** [τῆς ἐκκλησίας] has just been raised on the Temple of Demeter. Farewell.

They both depart. The scene changes to the interior of the Thesmophorion, where the women who form the chorus are assembled. Mnesilochus enters, in his

feminine attire, striving to act as womanly as possible, and giving his voice as female a pitch and lilt as he can; he pretends to be addressing his slave-girl.

Mnesilochus Here, Thratta, follow me. [280] Look, Thratta, at the cloud of smoke that arises from all these lighted torches. Ah! beautiful Thesmophorae! grant me your favours, protect me, both within the temple and on my way back! Come, Thratta, put down the basket and take out [285] the cake, which I wish to offer to the two goddesses. Mighty divinity, oh, Demeter, and thou, Persephone, grant that I may be able to offer you many sacrifices; above all things, grant that I may not be recognized. Would that my well-holed daughter might marry a man [290] as rich as he is foolish and silly, so that she may have nothing to do but amuse herself. But But where can a place be found for hearing well? Be off, Thratta, be off; slaves have no right to be present at this gathering. - emphasis mine

The whole context is quoted so that the student can see it is clearly a religious temple worshipping kind of congregation that is in view. So Radmacher is wrong. Here is a clear use of the definite singular to describe a specific kind of religious assembly.

Radmacher is not only denying the use of the definite article with *ekklesia* with regard to religious assemblies but he is denying that *ekklesia* is found in the absolute sense as a technical term in Classical Greek literature with regard to any kind of *ekklesia*. However, not all Greek scholars agree with Radmacher:

Lothar Coenen the contributor for the study of *ekklesia* in **The New International Dictionary of the New Testament** says that the *ekklesia* was used as a technical term at a very early date:

In contrast, to ekklesia, which had become a technical term by an early date. ... Colin Brown, Gen. Ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan; 1982, Vol. 1, p. 292—emphasis mine

B. THE ABSTRACT INSTITUTIONAL SENSE OF EKKLESIA

Furthermore, Aristotle supports Coenen's assertion that *ekklesia* was understood in a technical and absolute sense. In his *Politics*, Aristotle uses

the term *ekklesia* as a definite noun in the abstract sense to describe the Greek city “assembly” as a city institution along with other institutions of city government:

Aristotle, Politics 6.1317b

*And these principles having been laid down and this being the nature of democratic government, **the following institutions** are democratic in character: election of officials by all from all; government officials by all from all; government of each by all, [20] and of all by each in turn; election by lot either to all magistracies or to all that do not need experience and skill; no property-qualification for office, or only a very low one; no office to be held twice, or more than a few times, by the same person, or few offices except the military ones; short tenure either of all offices or of as many as possible; judicial functions to be exercised by all citizens, that is by persons selected from all, and on all matters, or on most and the greatest and most important, for instance the audit of official accounts, constitutional questions, private contracts; **the assembly** [τὴν ἐκκλησίαν] to be sovereign over all matters, but no official over any or only over extremely few; or else a council to be sovereign over the most important matters (and a council is the most democratic of magistracies in states where there is not a plentiful supply of pay for everybody—for where there is, they deprive even this office of its power, since the people draws all the trials to itself when it has plenty of pay, as has been said before in the treatise preceding this one also payment for public duties, **preferably in all branches, assembly, law-courts, magistracies**, or if not, for the magistracies, the law-courts, council and **sovereign assemblies**, [τὰς ἐκκλησίας] or for those magistracies which are bound to have common mess tables. Also, inasmuch as oligarchy is defined by birth, wealth and education, the popular qualifications are thought to be the opposite of these, low birth, poverty, vulgarity. And in respect of the magistracies it is democratic to have none tenable for life... - emphasis mine*

As you can plainly see, Aristotle is using *ekklesia* with the definite article as a description of a Greek city institution, along with other types of city government institutions. Moreover, he is using it in an abstract sense without regard to any actual assembly in progress. In other words, he is conceptualizing it as an idea that can be discussed apart from any concrete assembly being present and in progress. The very mention of the term *ekklesia* among the ancient Greeks would immediately call to mind that form of city government institution as a concept. Therefore, Coenen is correct that it had gained a technical meaning early in Greek history.

Aristotle, Politics–4.1293a

***And a fourth kind of democracy** is the one that has been the last in point of time to come into existence in the states. Because the states have become much greater than the original ones and possess large supplies of revenue, while all the citizens have a share in the government because of the superiority of the multitude, all actually take part in it and exercise their citizenship because even the poor are enabled to be at leisure by receiving pay. Indeed the multitude in this kind of state has a very great deal of leisure, for they are not hampered at all by the care of their private affairs, but the rich are, so that often they take no part in **the assembly** [τῆς ἐκκλησίας] nor in judging lawsuits.- emphasis mine.*

Aristotle, Politics 4. 1298b

*We have then in this way distinguished **the different kinds of deliberative body in relation to the forms of constitution**, and each form of constitution carries on the administration in accordance with the distinction stated. But for a democracy of the form that at the present day is considered to be democracy in the fullest degree (and I mean one of the sort in which the people is sovereign even over the laws) it is advantageous for the improvement of its deliberative function for it to do the same as is done in oligarchies in the matter of the law-courts (for they enact a fine to compel the attendance on juries of those whom they want to attend, whereas democratic states institute payment for attendance for the benefit of the poor), and also to do this in respect of **the assemblies** [τῆς ἐκκλησίας] - emphasis mine*

Aristotle, Politics 4.1300a

[1300a] [1] *and this usually happens when there is a plentiful supply of pay for those who attend **the assembly**, [τοῖς ἐκκλησιάζουσιν] for being at leisure they meet frequently and decide all things themselves. But a Superintendent of Children and a Superintendent of Women, and any other magistrates that exercise a similar sort of supervision, are an aristocratic feature, and not democratic (for how is it possible to prevent the wives of the poor from going out of doors¹?) nor yet oligarchic (for the wives of oligarchic rulers are luxurious). But let the discussion of these matters go no further at present, and let us attempt to go through from the beginning the question of the ways of appointing the magistrates.*

Aristotle, Politics 6.13418a

*For they say that whatever seems good to the majority of the citizens ought to be sovereign. Let us then accept this principle, yet not wholly without qualification, but inasmuch as fortune has brought into existence two component parts of the state, rich and poor, let any resolution passed by both classes, or by a majority of each, be sovereign, but if the two classes carry opposite resolutions, let the decision of the majority, in the sense of the group whose total property assessment is the larger, prevail: for instance, if there are ten rich citizens and twenty poor ones, and opposite votes have been cast by six of the rich on one side and by fifteen of the less wealthy on the other, four of the rich have sided with the poor and five of the poor with the rich; then the side that has the larger total property when the assessments of both classes on either side are added together carries the voting.⁷ But if the totals fall out exactly equal, this is to be deemed an impasse common to both sides, as it is at present if **the assembly** [ἡ ἐκκλησία] or law-court is exactly divided;*

Notice that Aristotle is not specifying any particular assembly that met in the past or is meeting in the present or will meet in the future but is referring to it simply as another Athenian government institution and its

role in city government in a purely abstract conceptional sense. When any Greek from any Greek city said the words “the assembly” it was understood they were referring to this aspect of city government as the institution of the democratic process.

By definition, any definite institutional noun used as a technical term is both abstract and absolute by usage. In the Classical Greek world, the term *ekklesia* primarily referred to the common city *ekklesia* that dominated Greek civilization and Grecian culture. This continued to be the case during the koine period after the rest of the world had been Hellenized. Hence, even in the New Testament, the town clerk at Ephesus simply referred to the assembly (τη... ἐκκλησία—Acts 19:39) as it was something universally known in nearly all cities of that time.

There is abundant evidence that the definite noun *ekklesia* was used in an abstract institutional noun. For example,

Aeschines, Against Timarchus 1:35

*If any public man, speaking in the senate or in the assembly [τῆς ἐκκλησίας] of the people, shall not speak on the subject which is before the house, or shall fail to speak on each proposition separately, or shall speak twice on the same subject in one day, or if he shall speak abusively or slanderously, or shall interrupt the proceedings, or in the midst of the deliberations shall get up and speak on anything that is not in order, or shall shout approval, or shall lay hands on the presiding officer, on adjournment of the assembly or the senate the board of presidents are authorized to report his name to the collectors, with a fine of not more than 50 drachmas for each offence.—Charles Darwin Adams, tran. **Aeschines, Against Timarchus** (London: Harvard Press, 1919). 1:35*

Aeschines is speaking of “the assembly” in an abstract institutional sense. He is not referring to any specified assembly that was now meeting or had met, but he was referring to this aspect of the Greek city governing institution. He was speaking of “the assembly” conceptionally, and abstractly, but without changing the meaning of the term “assembly” from its concrete reality. He does not say the “Athenian” *ekklesia* or “this” *ekklesia* but is speaking of *the ekklesia* abstractly as the Greek city institution.

Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 3:32

For the law expressly commands that if the Senate confer a crown, the crown shall be proclaimed in the senate-house, and if the people confer it, in the assembly, [τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ] “and nowhere else.” – Charles Darwin Adams, trans. **Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon***, (London: Harvard University Press, 1919) 3:32

Again, Aeschines is speaking of the assembly in the abstract sense as the city institution governed by law.

They will not be able to deny that the laws forbid the man who is crowned by the people to be proclaimed outside the assembly, [τῆς ἐκκλησίας] but they will present for their defence the Dionysiac law, and will use a certain portion of the law, cheating your ears.—Ibid., 3:35

Aeschines is again referring to the assembly as the institution of the city with regard to city law. He is not speaking about any specified assembly which had met or is meeting or will meet but is simply referring to the assembly in the abstract sense as one of the city government institutions.

Aristotle in *The Athenian Constitution* also speaks of “the assembly” in a context where the institutional character of their form of government is being described.

Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution*, part 44

They also conduct elections of Generals, and Cavalry Commanders and the other military officers in the Assembly [τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ], in whatever manner seems good to the People; and these elections are held by the first board of Presidents, after the sixth Presidency,² in whose term of office favorable weather-omens may occur. These matters also require a preliminary resolution of the Council.—Aristotle, **The Athenian Constitution**, part 44, translated by Sir Fredrick Kenyon.²¹—emphasis mine

²¹ <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0045:chapter=44&highlight=e%29kklhsi%2Fa> | Accessed 12/18/2015

Although the concrete application was the Athenian assembly, he spoke of the assembly in the abstract institutional sense as just one of several other aspects of the Athenian government institutions (*The Council... The Prytanes... The Council... the Assembly*”).

Therefore, the abstract use of the singular definite noun *ekklesia* is common to Classical Greek literature, and moreover, it is used in the absolute sense in the context of the city *ekklesia* just as it is used by New Testament writers in the absolute sense in context of Christ’s *ekklesia*.

Moreover, the definite plural is also used abstractly by classical writers.²² For example, Aristotle in “the Athenian Constitution speaks of the assemblies as part of the city government:

All the officials concerned with the regular administration are appointed by lot, except a Treasurer of Military Funds, the Controllers of the Spectacle Fund, and the Superintendent of Wells; these officers are elected by show of hands, and their term of office runs from one Panathenaic Festival to the next.¹ All military officers also are elected by show of hands. [2] The Council is elected lot, and has five hundred members, fifty from each tribe. The Presidency is filled by each tribe in turn, in an order settled by lot, each of the first four selected holding the office for thirty-six days and each of the latter six for thirty-five days; for their year is divided into lunar months.² [3] Those of them serving as Presidents first dine together in the Round-house,³ receiving a sum of money from the state, and then convene meetings of the Council and the People, the Council indeed meeting on every day excepting holidays, but the People four times in each presidency. And the Presidents put up written notice of the business to be dealt with by the Council, and of each day’s agenda, and of the place of meeting. [4] They also put up written notice of the meetings of the Assembly

[τασ̄ ekkhlhsiaò]: one⁴ sovereign meeting, at which the business is to vote the confirmation of the magistrates in office

²² Aristotle uses the definite plural *ta ekkhlhsia*. Plural and singular nouns can be used abstractly with or without the definite article. Example: “The computer is a machine” “Computers are machines” “a computer is a machine.” All of these are abstract generic uses of a noun.

*if they are thought to govern well, and to deal with matters of food supply and the defense of the country; and on this day information's have to be laid by those who wish, and the inventories of estates being confiscated read, and the lists of suits about inheritance and heiresses, so that all may have cognizance of any vacancy in an estate that occurs. - Aristotle, **The Athenian Constitution**, part 44, translated by Sir Fredrick Kenyon.²³⁻*

Therefore, it is obvious that Classical Greek writers did use *ekklesia* in an abstract institutional sense both in its singular and plural forms. This fact has a revolutionary impact upon the interpretation of *ekklesia* in the New Testament because it denies the assumption that the singular definite *ekklesia* must be given a brand-new meaning simply because the concrete sense does not fit a given passage. Until it is proven that the abstract institutional sense does not fit such controversial passages, there are no exegetical grounds to seek a new or rare meaning.

Additionally, and significantly, the use of *ekklesia* by Classical writers in the abstract institutional sense means the *ekklesia* continues to exist as a formal organization even after the actual assembly has been dismissed. Even though no present assembly is occurring, there were still qualified members and officers that could assemble and that do habitually assemble without change or need of re-qualifying members, or reinstating ordinances, form of government, discipline or mission statement. These things are already in place as an organized institution. This is very significant as this means that *ekklesia* continues to exist as an institution even when it is not assembled without changing its ordinary historical meaning. Therefore, an *ekklesia* is an institution that can and does habitually assemble.

The New Testament also uses *ekklesia* in this abiding organized institutional sense that can and does habitually assemble:

*27 And when they were come, and had **gathered the church together**, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.-*

²³ <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0046%3Achapter%3D43> Accessed 12/22/2015

Acts 14:27 Yet ***in the church*** I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. . . . ***in the congregations***. . . .—1 Cor. 14:19,33

The New Testament *ekklesia* could be “gathered. . . . together” (Acts 14:27) and it is considered an existing institution in the singular (1 Cor. 14:19) that is applicable to its concrete plural forms (1 Cor. 14:33). Even though Paul was addressing the *ekklesia* located at Corinth he used the singular definite form of *ekklesia* in the institutional sense in 1 Cor. 14:19 which he made applicable to plural *ekklesias* defined by the plural definite article (1 Cor. 14:33).

II. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE ABSTRACT USE OF EKKLESIA?

What is meant by the abstract use of nouns? Most English grammars will define “abstract” nouns as nouns that refer to intangible things such as actions, feelings, ideals, concepts or qualities. This is a popular use by instructors when teaching students about institutions such as government, marriage, church, family and other concrete realities in a conceptional non-specific manner. It is a way to speak or teach about concrete realities in a conceptional sense without applying it to any specific concrete example. The abstract use is best defined by contrasting it to the concrete use of nouns.

The example of a concrete use of a noun would be a *specific* person, place or thing. For Example, Dr. A.T. Robertson is a *Greek scholar*. This is a *concrete* and personal application of the nouns “Greek scholar.” However, if I said “**the** Greek scholar must be trained in his field of expertise as much as **the** Latin scholar”, then I have now entered into the abstract conceptional use of these nouns under the sub classification of what is called the generic use of nouns, or nouns without any specific or concrete application.

Nevertheless, this abstract usage has included Dr. A.T. Robertson, as much as, any other Greek or Latin Scholar because they fit into this abstract class or description of “the Greek scholar. . . the Latin Scholar.” Hence, the singular with the definite article (“the Greek scholar. . . the Latin scholar) is used *abstractly* without any specific or personal application. It is used conceptionally for all who would fit that classification. Indeed, it means the

very same thing as if I had used the plural “Greek Scholars must be trained in their field of expertise as much as Latin Scholars.” Hence, the abstract use would be inclusive of all scholars that were Greek or Latin scholars without regard to any specifically named Greek or Latin scholar. It is the use of a noun to describe a general concept or idea, yet without changing the meaning of the terms being used. Moreover, this abstract use is grounded in the reality of the concrete usage. This abstract usage has no reality apart from the concrete understanding of the term. If there were no concrete cases existent there could be no abstract use of these nouns. So, it is not a mere concept without concrete reality.

For example, the pastor (abstract use of “the pastor”) gets up before his congregation on Sunday morning and announces he is going to preach a series of messages on “the Pastor and his duties.” He is using “the Pastor” in the abstract sense. He has not named any specific pastor but is speaking about the office of Pastor as a concept. He is not introducing any new reality to the meaning of “pastor” other than what can be found in actual concrete cases. Indeed, the abstract use is impossible apart from concrete realities. This grammatical device makes it a concept for consideration apart from any specific personal application, **but not apart from its concrete meaning.** “The Pastor” he refers to only exists in concrete form, but for the sake of instruction, this is a grammatical device that all teachers use for the purpose of instruction without getting personal. If specific Pastors are present in the crowd then it would equally refer to each individual, but without any specific personal application. This has been a common use of nouns in all ages in all English, Greek and Latin cultures.

Sub-categories of the abstract use of nouns are the (1) Generic use of nouns and (2) the institutional use of nouns, and possibly (3) the collective use of nouns. All the former examples I have used above are abstract generic uses of nouns. The generic use describes a class or kind that is inclusive of all concrete cases that fit that class or kind. “The Greek Scholar” and “the Latin Scholar” includes all concrete actual Greek and Latin scholars. “The pastor” includes all concrete or actual pastors.

Another sub-category of the abstract use of nouns is the institutional use of nouns. As the term implies, it refers to institutions or organizations. It is a grammatical device for speaking about or characterizing an institution or organization apart from its concrete example.

For example, when we study the origin, nature and mission of the American School we may begin our study with the actual historical circumstances of the founding of the very first American School. Although, the actual historical circumstances around the founding of the very first American School are not the actual historical circumstances surrounding the concrete American school founded in your home town, still your concrete American school shares all the historical circumstances in the founding of the very first American School in an institutional sense. Those circumstances are the heritage of all such schools as an American institution. For example, we may talk about the founder of the American School institution to be John Cotton in Boston when he founded the very first American school in Boston Massachusetts, the Boston Latin School. Although John Cotton may not be the founder of any other specific school in America, he is the founder of the American school as an institution and that is part of the heritage of each school in America as an American institution.

For example, a preacher could enter the pulpit and say, “I will preach on the origin, nature and mission of the church.” He has not specified any particular concrete church but is merely speaking of the church in general, as an institution, and thus in the abstract institutional sense. Indeed, when he goes on to speak about the “origin” of “the church” he could describe the historical circumstances that are true of the prototype church found in the gospels and first chapters of the book of Acts. Although such historical details may not be true of the actual historical origin of his own concrete church which may have been actually organized in 1857 or even true of the actual organization of any other church found in the New Testament, yet all succeeding congregations share that historical heritage as an institution. Therefore, the institutional use of a noun is a broader abstract use than the generic sense. The generic sense demands what is true of one concrete case is equally true of all other concrete cases within that same class or kind. However, the institutional sense does not demand that every detail is equally true of every other concrete case except by way of historical heritage and essential likenesses necessary to identify with that prototype as an institution. Thus, the institutional sense is inclusive of generic likenesses, yet it is not restricted to generic likenesses, but is inclusive of the whole historical heritage that characterizes the very first prototype as an institution.

As previously shown, Classical Greek writers use *ekklesia* in the institutional sense and they also use *ekklesia* in the absolute sense in the context of that city form of government.

III. THE IMPACT OF THE CLASSICAL GREEK EKKLESIA UPON THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Some New Testament scholars deny that the *ekklesia* of Christ is an *organized institution* but rather is a living *organism*. However, it is both. It is an institution because it has qualified officers, membership requirements, ordinances, specific form of discipline, a specific form of government, and a mission statement. In Acts 1:26 casting of lots was used by the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem to select someone to fill the vacated office by Judas. In Acts 14:22 and 2 Corinthians 2:6 the raising of hands and/or casting of ballots may have determined the majority decision.

These are undeniable characteristic of an organized institution. It is also an organism because the members are living breathing human beings gathered together. Both of these characteristics (organized institution, organism) have their origin in the ancient Greek *ekklesia* which was an organized democratic institution composed of qualified living breathing human beings.

Moreover, the abstract use of *ekklesia* by Classical Greek writers has a revolutionary impact upon interpretation of the New Testament usage. New Testament scholars are not at liberty to invent a new meaning for *ekklesia* simply because the concrete use does not fit a particular passage. They must first demonstrate that the abstract uses of *ekklesia* cannot fit before demanding some new meaning unrelated to its common historical use.

Such characteristics were not invented by New Testament writers but have a solid historical basis in the primary use of *ekklesia* in Classical Greek literature and such examples were common throughout the New Testament world (Acts 19). As Earl Radmacher freely admits:

Furthermore, ekklesia did not acquire any different significance in the Septuagint. All the uses of the word never go beyond the simple meaning of an assembly. Thus, when the writers of the New Testament, whose Bible was the Septuagint,

used ekklesia, they were not inventing a new term. They found the term in common use and simply employed what was at hand.....Beginning of the Christian era the word ekklesia had no etymological associations or historical connotations that carried its meaning beyond the idea of an autonomous physical assembly.—Ibid. pp. 123,125

Dana appropriately states concerning the Classical Greek usage of *ekklesia*:

.... There were in the classical usage of this term four elements pertinent to its New Testament meaning; (i) the assembly was local; (ii) it was autonomous; (iii) it presupposed definite qualifications; (iv) it was conducted on democratic principles.—H.E. Dana, **A Manual of Ecclesiology**—p. 26

IV. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CLASSICAL USE OF EKKLESIA TO THE BIG CHURCH THEORY

What contribution does Classical Greek usage give to support the idea of a *non-corporeal, non-physical unity of people*? What contribution does Classical Greek usage give to support the idea of a universal invisible *ekklesia*? The answer to both questions is clear and simple—**nothing at all!**

SUMMARY CONCLUSION: The institutional abstract use of *ekklesia* is commonly found in Classical Greek literature. This poses a huge problem to universal invisible church advocates. They can no longer argue that those cases where the singular definite *ekklesia* is found in Scripture without any geographical specification are sufficient to argue for a new meaning for *ekklesia*. They must first consider the abstract institutional use of *ekklesia* as a possible meaning in keeping with the common historical use of *ekklesia*. Moreover, the abstract institutional use of *ekklesia* is consistent with an abiding organizational sense of *ekklesia* as an institution when it is not actually assembled.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Do Classical Greek writers use the definite article with *ekklesia* in regard to religious assemblies?
2. Did Aristotle use *ekklesia* in its abstract institutional sense?
3. Do Classical writers use the plural form in the abstract sense?
4. Would an unlawful assembly be one that was not formerly called according to legal protocol?
5. Is the abstract institutional sense of *ekklesia* consistent with the abiding organizational character even though no actual physical assembling is occurring?
6. Distinguish the Abstract and institutional use of nouns from the concrete use of nouns?
7. What are the common various forms of the abstract use of nouns?
8. What contributions does Classical Greek literature provide with regard to the New Testament use of *ekklesia*?
9. What are the four contributions that H.E. Dana suggests?
10. What contributions does Classical Greek usage provide for the universal invisible church application?

ASSIGNED READING:

The Meaning of Ecclesia by E. H. Overbey—pp. 10-12

Ecclesia—The Church by B.H. Carroll—pp. 35-37 (Note there are some typo's in Carroll's citation of some Old Testament quotes - With regard to Joshua 5:35 it is a typo which should have been Joshua 8:35. With regard to 2 Chron. 29:5, 14, it should be 2 Chron. 20:5, 14 (the typo is obvious here because if it was in chapter 29 it would have been placed right after 29:14). Job 39:28 should read Job 30:28.

WEEK 2 LESSON 3

Ekklesia in Koine Greek Literature

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to establish the meaning of *ekklēsia* according to the usage by Septuagint translators and, (2) to determine the impact that the Septuagint usage may have had on the New Testament writers and readers and, (3) to establish the meaning of *ekklēsia* in the Apocrypha literature.

INTRODUCTION: Alexander the Great had Hellenized (Grecianized) the Middle East before his untimely death. In every city he established the *ekklēsia* as part of the city government. The Greek language was established as a common language in the Middle East. It was the language of the market place. Koine Greek was so common that during the interbiblical period (between Malachi and Matthew) the Septuagint and Old Testament Apocrypha were translated into Koine Greek. By the time of Christ, most people in the Middle East were fluent in Aramaic, Greek and Latin.²⁴ The translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek by the Jews is called *the Septuagint*. The term *Septuagint* is a Latin term which means “seventy.” It is often referred to by the Roman numerals *LXX* (70). It is commonly dated from about 285 to 250 B.C. Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton says:

The earliest writer who gives an account of the Septuagint version is Aristobulus, a Jew who lived at the commencement of the second century B.C. He says that the version of the Law into Greek was completed under the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, and that Demetrius Phalereus had been employed about it. Now, Demetrius died about the beginning of the reign of Ptolemy

²⁴ This can be seen by the plaque placed on the cross of Christ by Pilate.

Philadelphus, and hence it has been reasonably inferred that Aristobulus is a witness that the work of translation had been commenced under Ptolemy Soter. - An Historical Account of the Septuagint Version by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton (1807-1862)²⁵

The most ancient Jewish tradition about how the Septuagint occurred is found in the letter of Aristeas. Thackeray describes him as follows:

The writer professes to be a high official at the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 BC), a Greek interested in Jewish antiquities. Addressing his brother Philocrates he describes an embassy to Jerusalem on which he has recently been sent with another courtier Andreas. According to his narrative, Demetrius of Phalerum, a prominent figure in later Athenian history, who here appears as the royal librarian at Alexandria, convinced the king of the importance of securing for his library a translation of the Jewish Law. The king at the same time, to propitiate the nation from whom he was asking a favor, consented, on the suggestion of Aristeas, to liberate all Jewish slaves in Egypt. Copies follow of the letters which passed between Ptolemy and Eleazar, the high priest at Jerusalem. Ptolemy requests Eleazar to select and dispatch to Alexandria 72 elders, proficient in the Law, 6 from each tribe, to undertake the translation, the importance of the task requiring the services of a large number to secure an accurate version. Eleazar complies with the request and the names of the selected translators are appended to his letter.

There follow: (1) a detailed description of votive offerings sent by Ptolemy for the temple; (2) a sketch of Jerusalem, the temple and its services, and the geography of Palestine, doubtless reflecting in part the impressions of an eyewitness and giving a unique picture of the Jewish capital in the Ptolemaic era; (3) an exposition by Eleazar of portions of the Law.

The translators arrive at Alexandria, bringing a copy of the Law written in letters of gold on rolls of skins, and are

²⁵ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/brenton1.html> - accessed 12/16/15

honorably received by Ptolemy. A seven days' banquet follows, at which the king tests the proficiency of each in turn with hard questions. Three days later Demetrius conducts them across the mole known as the Heptastadion to the island of Pharos, where, with all necessaries provided for their convenience, they complete their task, as by a miracle, in 72 days; we are expressly told that their work was the result of collaboration and comparison. The completed version was read by Demetrius to the Jewish community, who received it with enthusiasm and begged that a copy might be entrusted to their leaders; a solemn curse was pronounced on any who should venture to add to or subtract from or make any alteration in the translation. The whole version was then read aloud to the king who expressed his admiration and his surprise that Greek writers had remained in ignorance of its contents; he directed that the books should be preserved with scrupulous care. – The Septuagint by H. St. J. Thackeray²⁶

And so, that is the tradition behind the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek Septuagint.²⁷

I. THE IMPACT OF THE SEPTUAGINT ON CHRISTIANITY

Most Bible scholars believe that the Septuagint was the Bible in the early first century for Greek speaking Jews. The Old Latin Bible (not Jerome's Latin Vulgate) was a translation from the Old Testament Septuagint along with the Greek New Testament. This was the Bible to the Latin world until the fourth century. New Testament writers often quoted from the Septuagint. This can be easily seen in the following few examples, especially if you compare the LXX readings below with the KJV Old Testament which follows the Masoretic Hebrew text.

²⁶ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/isbelxx01.html#iii> - accessed 12/16/15

²⁷ However, there are some who believe the whole thing is fictitious and that the LXX never really existed.

1 Peter 4:18 “*And if the righteous scarcely be **saved**, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*”

Proverbs 11:31 (LXX): “*If the righteous scarcely be **saved**, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*”

Proverbs 11:31 (KJV): *Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.*

James 4:6 “... God **resisteth** the **proud**, but giveth grace unto the **humble**.”

Proverbs 3:34 (LXX): “*The Lord **resists** the **proud**, but he gives grace to the **humble**.*”

Proverbs 3:34 (KJV) *Surely he **scorneth** the **scorners**: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.*

Matthew 15:9: “*But in vain do they **worship** me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.*”

Isaiah 29:13 (LXX): “*...but in vain do they **worship** me, teaching the commandments and doctrines of men.*”

Isaiah 29:13 (KJV) *Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:*

Matthew 21:16, “... Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast **perfected praise?**”

Psalms 8:2 (LXX): “*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou **perfected praise**...*”

Psalms 8:2 (KJV): *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou **ordained strength** because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.*

Revelation 2:27 “*And he shall **rule** them with a rod of iron...*”

Psalms 2:9 (LXX): “*Thou shalt **rule** them with a rod of iron...*”

Psalms 2:9 (KJV) *Thou shalt **break** them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

Matthew 21:42: “... *The stone which the builders **rejected**, the same is become the **head of the corner**:*

Psalms 118:22 (LXX): “*The stone which the builders **rejected**, the same is become the **head of the corner**.”*

Psalms 118:22 (KJV) *The stone which the builders **refused** is become **the head stone** of the corner.*

In each case above, the Hebrew Old Testament text (as represented in the King James Version) reads differently than what is found in the New Testament quotation.

Earl Radmacher says,

Exclusive of the Synoptics,²⁸ there are about six hundred verses of the New Testament which are quoted from the Septuagint. . . . More than half of the quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament are taken from the Septuagint.—Earl D. Radmacher, **The Nature of the Church**. (Portland, OR: Western Baptist Press, 1972), p. 115

Many of the names for Old Testament books found in our KJV originate with the LXX rather than the Hebrew text (e.g. Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, etc.). Even the term *bible* is not from the Hebrew text but from the LXX. Therefore, the consensus of most Bible scholars is that the Septuagint was the Bible of the first century Hellenistic Jews.

*Historically. . . . the Septuagint should be endowed with special significance considered as a translation, because, to some circles of Greek-speaking Jewry, it replaced the **Biblia Hebraica**, and thus became their Bible. Because it was accepted as the conclusive evidence of the Biblical revelations, it was used by the authors of the New Testament writings, and, accordingly, came to have a decisive impact on the theology of the New Testament. In a historical perspective, it became, to an even greater extent than the **Biblia Hebraica**, the Old Testament of the New Testament*—Mogens Muller, **The First Bible of**

²⁸ “Synoptics” means “to see together” and refers to the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke

the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint (JSOTSupp 206; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 115-116

Deissmann says,

Take the Septuagint in your hand and you have before you the book that was the Bible of the Jews of the Dispersion and of the Proselytes from the heathen; the Bible of Philo the philosopher, Paul the Apostle, and the earliest Christian missions; the Bible of the whole Greek speaking world; the mother of influential daughter-versions; the mother of the Greek New Testament... Paul, the preacher and propagator of the Gospel, is not comprehensive without the Septuagint. He is not only the great Christ-Christian, but also the great Septuagint-Christian.—G.A. Deissmann, “*The Philology of the Greek Bible*,” pp. 8-9, quoted in Earl D. Radmacher, **The Nature of the Church** (Portland, OR: Western Baptist Press, 1972), p. 114

II. THE USE OF EKKLESIA IN THE SEPTUAGINT

Many scholars believe that long before the time of the Septuagint, the Greek term *ekklesia* had already become a well-established technical term for *assembly*. This belief is reinforced by how careful the Septuagint translators were in their use of *ekklesia*.

There are two different Hebrew words translated *assembly* (*edhab, qahal*). However, the word *edhab* refers to a group of people that do not exercise the prerogatives of specific autonomous action. *Ekklesia* is **never** used to translate *edhab*. *Ekklesia* is only used by the Septuagint translators to translate the Hebrew word *qahal* but only in cases where it always refers to a corporeal, physical unity of people.

The Theological Word Book of the Old Testament defines *qahal*:

An assembly of any sort and purpose may be designated by qahal. It may be for evil counsel or deeds (Gen. 49:6; Ps 26:5),

*civil affairs (1 Kgs. 2:3; Prov. 5:14; 26:26; Job 20:28) or war (Num. 22:4; Jud 20:2, etc.). The assembled armies see the fight between David and Goliath (1 Sam 17:47). The term may in other contexts designate an assembled multitude of nations (Gen. 35:11), peoples (Gen. 28:3; 48:4), and even the dead (Prov. 21:16) It may be of the returning exiles (Jer. 31:8; Ezr. 2:64) and then the restored community in Jerusalem is a qahal (Ezr. 10:12, 14; Neh. 8:2, 17). But the qahal is especially an assembly for religious purposes. The experience at Horeb for receiving the Law was "the day of assembly" (Deut. 9:10; 10:4; 18:16). There were also assembly on other occasions for feasts, fasts, and worship (II Chron. 20:5; 30:25; Neh. 5:13; Joel 2:16). - R. Laird Harris, ed., Gleason L. Archer, assoc. ed., Bruce K. Waltke, assoc. ed., **Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament**, (Chicago, IL: Mood Press, 1981) Vol. 2, p. 790*

Although the Hebrew term *qahal* is broader in meaning than the classical Greek *ekkleisia*, the translators of the Septuagint **never** use *ekkleisia* to translate *qahal* wherever the context is broader than the classical meaning of *ekkleisia*. This fact demonstrates clearly that in the mind of the translators *ekkleisia* was very well defined and was not strictly synonymous with *qahal*. After doing a thorough investigation of the use of *ekkleisia* to translate *qahal*, even the universal invisible church advocate Earl Radmacher admits:

By way of summary of the Septuagint usage, then, it has been seen that an ekklesia may meet for any purpose, but there always seems to be some deliberative purpose for the meeting. Secondly, this ekklesia seems to be autonomous in nature. Thirdly, whereas the qualifications for the constituency may vary to a great extent, yet one qualification is constant, never varying: to be a member of an ekklesia a person must be physically present at the assembly. The ekklesia is never contemplated as a spiritual fact, independent of spatial and temporal limitations.... All uses of the word never go beyond the simple meaning of an assembly. Thus, there is no place for reading the church back into the Old Testament on the basis of the prevalent usage of ekklesia. As Carroll exclaims: "The

testimony here is univocal. It is as solidly one thing as the Macedonian phalanx.”—Earl D. Radmacher, *The Nature of the Church*, (Portland OR: Western Baptist Press, 1972) p. 123—emphasis mine

Radmacher is quoting Carroll where Carroll is answering a question in the following context:

As in the Septuagint, ecclesia translates the Hebrew word qahal, does it not mean “all Israel, whether assembled or unassembled?”

*My reply is I see not how this question could have risen in any mind from a personal, inductive study of all the Septuagint passages, since in every instance of the 114 cited the word means a gathering together—an assembly. You can see that for yourselves by the context of your English version. The Septuagint usage is as solidly one thing as the Macedonian Phalanx²⁹—B. H. Carroll, *Ecclesia—The Church* (Louisville, KY: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc. 1903) pp. 55–56*

III. RADMACHER’S DENIAL OF ANY RELIGIOUS CONNOTATION

Radmacher also says, “*Finally, as was the case in the classical writings, there is no evidence whatever that the word acquired a specific religious connotation in the Septuagint.*” This statement by Radmacher is misleading. First, it is the primary ordinary usage that is being investigated rather than any kind of “religious connotation.” Just because Classical Greek and the Septuagint may or may not have acquired a particular religious connotation is a red herring that has no bearing upon its established primary meaning.

Furthermore, his statement is not entirely true with regard to the Septuagint. There is indeed a special religious connotation that New Testament writers would infer from the Septuagint usage.

²⁹ The phrase “as solid as the Macedonian Phalanx” refers to the interlocking of shields by the Grecian army when facing an enemy. There were no gaps where the enemy could penetrate the formation of the soldiers.

As previously cited from the Theological Word Book of the Old Testament, the term *ekklesia* was used particularly to characterize the religious assemblies of Israel. Indeed, this is the primary usage of *ekklesia* by the Septuagint translators. It especially characterized the assembling of Israel at Mount Sinai. This particular event was thoroughly well organized in advance of this assembling. There were (1) ceremonial pre-qualifications to participate in this assembly and; (2) specified boundaries where this assembly could and could not assemble; (3). A specified purpose for this assembly; (4) A specified and appointed day called “*the day of the assembly.*”

1. **Ceremonial Pre-Qualifications:** *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.... And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.—Ex. 19:10, 12-15*
2. **Appointed Day:** *And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.—Ex. 19:11*
3. **Appointed Place and Purpose:** *And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.—Ex. 19:17*

The Jews celebrate Pentecost as the precise day when God gave Israel the Law at Mount Sinai. During the time of Christ, the Sadducees were the ruling majority in the Sanhedrin and the reckoning of Pentecost was determined by their practice. They practiced Pentecost as the first day of the week following the seventh regular weekly Sabbath after the Passover. We call that day “Sunday” or the resurrection day of Christ, the “*Lord’s Day*” or the appointed “*day of the Assembly.*”

Moreover, this day represented the establishing of the Old Covenant administration, and the revelation of the “*house of God*” or tabernacle with all of its ceremonial laws and ministry.

New Testament writers used the term *ekklesia* in direct connection with “*the day of the Assembly*” at Mount Horeb when God spoke to Israel from the mountain (Acts 7:38; Heb. 12:18-22) as a well-organized, qualified, corporeal, physical unit of people specifically called out to assemble for a specified purpose:

*This is he, that was **in the church** (εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν) in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: - Acts 7:38*

*For **ye are not come unto the mount** that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)*

***But ye are come unto mount Sion**, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and **church** (ἐκκλησία) of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, - Heb. 12:18-23—emphasis mine*

Please notice the two phrases that have been placed in bold underline print. Both verbs (“*come*” v. 18, “*come*” v. 22) are second perfect active indicative verbs. They describe a completed action. The first is presented as a negative (“*not come*”) while the second is presented as a positive (“*are come*”). The comparison is between what Israel did on “*the day of the Assembly*” in Exodus versus what these Christians have done when assembled. The writer is not describing what these Christians are going to do in the future, but an action that already stands completed and is ongoing. In Hebrews 10:25 he has told

them not to forsake assembling of themselves together as some were already doing. Hebrews 10:26-13:17 is designed to encourage them to continue in doing precisely that.³⁰

Just as Israel had assembled on earth in a localized area but yet in the presence of God and angels “*in the day of assembly*” at Mount Sinai, so had these Christians assembled in the presence of God, angels and all heaven when they gather as an *ekklesia* on earth. During the New Testament period, Sunday was “*the day of the assembly.*” When, they assembled themselves together in “*the day of the assembly*” or the appointed time, place and organized way which was practiced by all New Testament assemblies, they have in fact come into the presence of God by that very act. The New Testament Assembly at Corinth is called “*the temple of God*” (1 Cor. 3:16) or “*the house of God*” (1 Tim. 3:15). God, angels (Eph. 3:10; 1 Cor. 11:10) and all of heaven are present (Heb. 12:1) in “*the day of the assembly*” and consistently so, every time they assemble together for public worship where the new covenant is preached and taught and manifested in the ordinances. These Hebrew Christians had not come into heaven, but in the assembly, they had come into the presence of heaven. Their names were “*written in heaven*” but they were not “*in heaven*” but still on earth. Their elders were still on earth (Heb. 13:7, 17) and it is in their public worship on “*the day of the assembly*” where they offered up their spiritual sacrifices as a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:20).³¹ Just as “*the day of the assembly*” at Mount Sinai represented the

³⁰ See E.H. Overbey, **The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament**, “Heb. 12:23” pp. 32-35 and B.H. Carroll, **Eccleisa—The Church**, “Heb. 12:23”—pp. 68-70

³¹ In Hebrews 12:22, the phrase “church of the firstborn” in the Greek text is a plural “church of firstborn ones.” The “firstborn” did not always refer to the actual first birthed child. It primarily signified a legal position with regard to inheritance, and in the book of Genesis that position was characteristically given to sons that were not birthed first. From Seth to Moses, the firstborn establishing of the whole Old Covenant administration, so also the “Lord’s Day” in the New Testament is also “the day of the assembling” which represents the establishment of the whole New Covenant administration. The negative versus positive contrast was the difference between covenant administrations. The *ekklesia* established by Christ was a superior covenant administration in contrast to the *ekklesia* at the foot of Mount Sinai when God enacted the old covenant administration. The “general assembly” has reference to the practice of the ten tribes in ancient Greece that lived outside the cities, thus outside the *ekklesia* as they lived in the rural areas. Once a year they gathered in “general assembly” to conduct business. “The general assembly” in heaven is the assembling of the “spirits of just men made perfect” or those already gone to heaven as they are observing (Heb. 12:1) the assemblies on earth along with the angels (Eph. 3:10).

establishing of the whole Old Covenant administration, so also the “*Lord’s Day*” in the New Testament is also “*the day of the assembling*” which represents the establishment of the whole New Covenant administration. The negative versus positive contrast was the difference between covenant administrations. The *ekklesia* established by Christ was a superior covenant administration in contrast to the *ekklesia* at the foot of Mount Sinai when God enacted the old covenant administration. The “general assembly” has reference to the practice of the ten tribes in ancient Greece that lived outside the cities, thus outside the *ekklesia* as they lived in the rural areas. Once a year they gathered in “general assembly” to conduct business. “*The general assembly*” in heaven is the assembling of the “spirits of just men made perfect” or those already gone to heaven as they are observing (Heb. 12:1) the assemblies on earth along with the angels (Eph. 3:10).

To say this usage of *ekklesia* in the Septuagint as a thoroughly qualified *religious* assembly had no impact upon New Testament usage is false. The primary use of *ekklesia* by the translators of the Septuagint was not only religious in character, but characteristic of true public worship in direct connection with the “*house of God*” as the appointed place of public worship (Deut. 12).

Therefore, the Classical meaning of *ekklesia* as “assembly” carried through to the Septuagint and directly into the New Testament, as over 90 instances of *ekklesia* in the New Testament characterize the well-organized qualified assembly for public worship (1 Cor. 11:18,20-22; 14:19; etc.). As Radmacher admits in the above citation, “*The ekklesia is never contemplated as a spiritual fact, independent of spatial and temporal limitations.*” In other words, Radmacher is admitting that there is no support in the Septuagint for interpreting the term *ekklesia* as a non-corporeal, non-physical unity of people (universal invisible spiritual church), and therefore there is no basis for the so-called non-dispensational universal invisible church existing in the Old Testament that continues into the New Testament.³²

*One thing must be stressed and that is that it **always**
describes a corporeal, physical unity of people. . . . Furthermore,*

³² Later it will be demonstrated that the “church of Christ” had no existence previous to the historical period covered by the gospels but has its “foundation” and first officers in the period of the gospels (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20).

ekklesia did not acquire any different significance in the Septuagint. All the uses of the word never go beyond the simply meaning of assembly. Thus, when the writers of the New Testament, whose Bible was the Septuagint, used ekklesia, they were not inventing a new term. They found the term in common use and simply employed what was at hand.—Radmacher, *Ibid.*, p. 122, 123—emphasis mine.

IV. THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

In addition to those writings regarded as Scriptures, there were many writings regarded as Apocrypha (Gr. “hidden books” pronounced “uh-pok-ruh-fuh”). The Apocrypha were considered valuable for historical, devotional and commentary value. The council of Trent invented the term “deuterocanonical” (Gr. second canonical books) books for what Protestants called “The Apocrypha”). Rome regards them as inspired Scriptures. However, neither Jews nor early Christians regarded them as inspired writings until well after the 4th century AD, and Rome did not officially regard them as canon Scripture until the Council of Trent during the Reformation period. A large portion of these writings were called the Pseudepigrapha (Gr. “falsely attributed” pronounced “soo-duh-pig-ruh-fuh”). The Pseudepigrapha consisted of forgeries attributed to the apostles and others.

The Jews and early Christians had to devise tests to distinguish between inspired and uninspired writings. When all tests are reduced to their most basic level, there are five elementary Bible based tests they used to determine Scripture from non-Scripture writings:

1. Is it written by a recognized prophet/apostle? - Heb. 1:1; 2 Pt. 1:19-20
2. Does it contain any error (historical, theological, prophetic, and self-contradictions, etc.)? - Deut. 13:1-5; 18:18-20; Isa. 8:20; 1 Jn. 4:1
3. Do those entrusted with God’s Word recognize it as God’s Word (Israel/congregations)? - Rom. 9:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:15
4. Does God empower it to change lives? (Isa. 55:7-8; Heb. 4:12)
5. Does it claim to be the Word of God directly or indirectly?

The apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha failed one or more of these Biblical based tests. However, all English Bibles from 1537 to 1827 included a section separated from the Old and New Testaments that included the Apocrypha, including the King James Version. These translators did not view the Apocrypha as Scripture but separated them from the rest of Scripture.

However, in view of our present course, it should be noted that no Greek Scholar asserts that any use of *ekklesia* in the Apocrypha ever goes beyond the meaning of an assembly. This fact demonstrates that in the minds of both Greeks and Jews right up to the writing of the New Testament, the Greek term *ekklesia* was considered and treated as a technical term for “assembly” and was universally recognized as such.

CONCLUSION

When this lesson is considered with the results of our previous lessons, we find that from a very early date, the term *ekklesia* was treated as a technical designation for an organized and qualified “assembly.” It was commonly used in the abstract institutional sense by early Greek writers and therefore it is a legitimate usage that must be considered by New Testament writers before assuming any new meaning for *ekklesia*. It was consistently used and restricted by the Septuagint translators in keeping with its well-established meaning of “assembly.” In addition, it acquired a more religious significance in the Septuagint. It is the only term used by Septuagint translators for the phrase “*the day of the Assembly*” that describes the assembly at Mount Horeb in Exodus 18-20 (Deut. 9:10; 18:16) which represents the Levitical public worship system. Significantly, the New Testament also directly connects this use of *ekklesia* at Mount Sinai (Acts 7:38; Heb. 12:18-22) with the New Testament *ekklesia* which also is characterized as well organized with regard to time, location, purpose and qualified members.

Therefore, the consistent primary meaning of *ekklesia* from its earliest recorded usage in Classical Greek, in the Septuagint, and in the Apocrypha is “assembly.” There was no other meaning at the time the New Testament was written. Again, it bears repeating that Dr. Radmacher, a very staunch opponent to Landmark ecclesiology fully admits that from its earliest usage right up to the writing of the New Testament that -

One thing must be stressed and that is that it always describes a corporeal, physical unity of people... yet one qualification is constant, never varying: to be a member of an ekklesia a person must be physically present at the assembly. The ekklesia is never contemplated as a spiritual fact, independent of spatial and temporal limitations—Ibid., pp. 122, 123—emphasis mine.

Therefore, this primary meaning, with all of its usages (concrete, abstract, institutional) is the only recognized meaning when we come to the New Testament period, and therefore, as long as the common meaning (the concrete, abstract institutional assembly) makes sense, there is no justification for seeking any new, much less a contradictory meaning.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What does the word “Septuagint” mean?
2. How many texts are quoted from the Septuagint by New Testament writers?
3. Name two reasons why the Septuagint would have great impact upon New Testament writers.
4. Does the Septuagint ever use *ekklesia* to translate the Hebrew *edhah*?
5. Does the Septuagint ever use *ekklesia* to translate “qahal” whenever the context exceeds the meaning of “*a corporeal, physical unity of people*”?
6. Did the Septuagint writers use *ekklesia* more for religious assemblies than did the Classical Greek writers?
7. Does the use of *ekklesia* in the case of Moses provide for a religious assembly that has more requirements than mere physical presence?
8. Is there a direct transition between the religious *ekklesia* of Moses at Mount Horeb and the New Testament use of *ekklesia*?
9. What five general principles were used to distinguish inspired writings from non-inspired writings?
10. Did all English versions of the Bible contain the apocrypha from 1537 to 1827?

REQUIRED READING:

The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament by E.H. Overbey, pp. 13-17 *The Church and the Kingdom*, Jesse B. Thomas, pp. 210-216 <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/thomas.chrch.n.kgdm.par5b.html>

PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT:

Examine every passage in the Old Testament where ekklesia is found in the Septuagint and see for yourself if the context demonstrates the common meaning. If you do not have access to a Concordance to the Greek Septuagint, these passages are provided for you by B. H. Carroll - **Ecclesia-The Church**, pp. 39-46



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 3

Approaching the New Testament Usage,

The Builder's use—Part 1

The Builder's use—Part 2

PACETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 3 LESSON 1

The proper approach to Ekklesia in the New Testament

LESSON GOALS: The goal for this lesson is to establish the proper exegetical approach that should be followed when interpreting terms with well-established meanings when coming to the New Testament. The proper approach will be defined by recognized scholars of different denominational backgrounds.

INTRODUCTION: It is believed that the proper exegetical approach demands that the Biblical interpreter must begin by viewing the term *ekklesia* according to its historical meaning which has been established before and during the time when the New Testament was being written. It has been proven that *ekklesia*

.... always describes corporeal, physical unity of people.... By the time of the writing of the New Testament, the word ekklesia already had an extensive history of its own—a back-ground in both Greek and Jewish writings. From its etymological meaning to call out, the word in the Classical Greek period came to signify³³ an assembly irrespective of its constituents and how they were gathered or summoned. Furthermore, ekklesia did not acquire any different significance in the Septuagint. All the uses of the word never go beyond the simple meaning of

³³ “came to signify” is purely inference without a speck of historical data. The first union between the preposition and noun may have been applied by its very first usage to represent those called out in assembly. There is no historical evidence of any transition period between its etymology and its usage.

an assembly. Thus, when the writers of the New Testament, whose Bible was the Septuagint, used ekklesia, they were not inventing a new term. They found the term in common use and simply employed what was at hand.—Earl D. Radmacher, The Nature of the Church, [Portland, OR: Western Baptist Press, 197] p. 122, 123

However, in addition to Radmacher’s admissions, we have also demonstrated that the established historical meaning of *ekklesia* not only included its concrete, or specific application, but also its abstract applications. The abstract application is where the singular noun *ekklesia* is found with the definite article but is not being applied to any specified time and place of assembling. The abstract use takes a concrete concept and generalizes it for the sake of unbiased discussion. For example, a pastor in a concrete assembly may tell that assembly “today we will be preaching on *the* church and its ordinances” rather than saying we are going to preach on *our* church and ordinances. There are various applications of the abstract use of nouns (generic, institutional, aggregate, etc.). However, as has been previously shown in classical Greek literature there is clear evidence that *ekklesia* is used in the abstract *institutional* sense by Aristotle and others (Aristotle, Politics–6.1317b) by which they distinguished it from other institutionalized aspects of the Greek city government (*ekklesia*, law-courts, and magistracies; etc.). Moreover, evidence has been provided that *ekklesia* was used in the absolute sense as a technical term for the Greek city assembly. This would be the natural understanding to the common Grecian during that period as this is the primary use. Any use other than the city *ekklesia* was always accompanied by modifiers that demanded something differently was being assembled. This abstract usage is part of its historical usage and application, and therefore must be considered, before dismissing the common meaning of *ekklesia* in any passage in the New Testament and adopting a new meaning.

The Question that Arises?

If this is the case as Radmacher claims, and it is, then one should proceed by assuming that New Testament writers used it in keeping with its historical meaning without presuming some other kind of meaning, until at least, the historical meaning cannot possibly make sense in a given context. However,

that was not Radmacher's approach. After admitting that the historical evidence for centuries demanded that *ekklesia* "***always describes a corporeal, physical unity of people***" then out of the clear blue sky he says "*A question arises, however, as to whether the New Testament writers used the term in its established non-technical and general sense.....*" (Ibid. p. 123)

From what sources or evidence does this "*question*" arise? Radmacher denies that it arises from any Classical or Septuagint sources and evidences! No such question arises from any pre-New Testament historical sources. The only possible source from which this "*question*" arises is Radmacher's own theological bias which he immediately inserts into the discussion before even examining a single New Testament usage in a scholarly manner. Although he admits that "*the evidence must be drawn from an exhaustive investigation of its actual use in the New Testament*" (Ibid.—p. 123), nevertheless, he chooses to poison the well by inserting his own bias at this point in the investigation when there is nothing to base his "*question*" upon except his own theological bias. That is precisely why he begins his study in his book with tradition rather than beginning with the historical evidence for the use of *ekklesia* prior to, and inclusive of the New Testament period. Instead of challenging the solid historical evidence at this point in his investigation, he ought to have simply proceeded to each use in the New Testament until he found a use in a context where the historical meaning made no sense, and then, and only then, seek a new meaning demanded by the immediate context.

However, Radmacher illustrates an improper bias in his approach. That brings us to the question being considered in this lesson. What is the broad consensus of scholarship across denominational lines about the proper approach in dealing with well-established words when interpreting Scriptures?

A. WITH REGARD TO THE HISTORICAL USAGE OF TERMS

1. Dr. A.T. Robertson

Now it is a most important principle in the interpretation of language, without the observance of which all interpretation becomes uncertain and unreliable, that whatever is the common

and regular meaning of a word, as shown by its origin and general use, must be held to be its meaning everywhere, until there shall be found some passage in which it cannot have that sense. Upon this principle, whether formally recognized or not, scholars are constantly working. – **John A. Broadus** Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, in **An American Commentary on the New Testament**, Vol 1, ed. Alvah Hovey; (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), 6 vols. p. 40.

2. Dr. Edward H. Overbey

A principle accepted by all scholars is that the most prevalent meaning of a word must stand in every place as long as it makes good sense. A new or rare meaning cannot be admitted, even though it could be shown that it would make good sense in some particular place, as long as the primary meaning fits the context. . . . We must assume the common meaning when we meet it. Only when this common meaning will not make sense are we justified in searching for a new meaning. Any other meaning must be made clear by the context. . . . The common meaning of a word must stand in every place it occurs as long as it makes sense.

When it fails to make sense then a new meaning or a rare meaning must be found in the context for the word. If a new or rare meaning will make sense in a given context we still cannot accept it as long as the common meaning will also make sense. To do otherwise would make language uncertain and confusing. For example, if in the sentence—‘John ate an apple.’—we say ‘apple’ has a new meaning of ‘onion’ because it makes sense in the context, we make language meaningless. As long as the common meaning ‘apple’ makes sense it must be recognized as the true meaning. . . . This principle is so self-evident that we do not believe it necessary to do more than state it. If we can give a word a new meaning because it can make sense that way in a particular context, even though the common meaning makes good sense, we can virtually change the entire Bible to suit our fancy. This idea, if followed, would actually make

the Bible meaningless and all other writings as well. . . The common meaning must be accepted in every place it makes sense. Only when the common meaning will not make sense are we permitted to assume it has a new meaning. – E. H. Overbey **The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament** (Little Rock, AR: Challenge Press, 1959) Pages 13, 15-16, 18-19 and 36-37

3. Dr. B.H. Carroll

Words are signs or ideas. To mean anything they must be understood according to the common acceptation in the minds of those addressed. I know of no more dangerous method of interpretation than the assumption that a word must be taken to mean something different from its real meaning. Revelation in that case ceases to be revelation. We are at sea without helm, compass, or guiding star. – B.H. Carroll **Ecclesia - The Church.** (Louisville: Baptist Book Concern, 1903) p. 29

4. Dr. Charles Hodge

It is not wise to depart from the natural meaning of the Biblical words simply to avoid a conclusion we are unwilling to admit. . . If words be taken by themselves, and made to mean anything which their signification will admit, without regard to the context or to the analogy of Scripture, then the authority of the Word of God is effectually subverted. No book, human or divine, can be interpreted on a principle so unreasonable. – Charles Hodge **An Exposition of 1 Corinthians** (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1958), pp. 88, 335

5. Dr. Bernard L. Ramm

*Hermeneutics must start with the **literal meaning of words.** . . The spiritual, mystical, allegorical, or metaphorical usages of language reflect layers of meaning built on top of the literal meanings of a language. To interpret Scripture literally is not to be committed to a 'wooden literalism', nor to a 'letterism',*

*nor to a neglect of the nuances that defy any 'mechanical' understanding of a language. Rather, it is to commit oneself to a starting point. . . . Thomas Horne, on page 322, volume 1, of his Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Scriptures, has a very excellent definition of what is meant by literal in literal interpretation: 'In common life, no prudent and conscientious person, who either commits his sentiments to writing or utters anything, intends that a diversity of meanings should be attached to what he writes or says; and, consequently, neither his readers, nor those who hear him, affix to it any other than the true and obvious sense. **The Literal Sense** of any place in Scripture is that which the words signify, or require, in their natural and proper acceptation, without any trope [figure of speech], metaphor, or figure, and abstracted from mystic meaning.' This is not letterism which fails to recognize nuances, plays on words, hidden metaphors, figures of speech, lamination of meanings in a word, etc. Nor is it the alleged 'wooden literalism' which is supposed to characterize orthodox, Fundamentalist, or conservative hermeneutics. As previously indicated this is a continuation of the hermeneutics of the Reformers. - Bernard L. Ramm, Protestant **Biblical Interpretation** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986) pp. 120, 121, 122 - emphasis mine*

6. Dr. B.B. Warfield

*The question is, after all, not what can a Biblical word be made to mean, but what does it mean; and the witness of its usage elsewhere, its form and mode of composition, and the sense given it by its readers from the first, supply here the primary evidence. Only if the sense thus commended to us were unsuitable to the context would be justified in seeking further for a new interpretation. . . . nothing can be demanded of us beyond showing that the more natural, primary, and original sense of the word is in accordance with the context. - B.B. Warfield **The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible** (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1948), pp. 295-296*

7. Dr. Walter C. Kaiser Jr.

Scripture is abused if such contrasts as 'the letter killeth, but the Spirit makes alive' is turned into a slogan to allow so-called 'Spirit-led interpreters' to bypass the authorial verbal meanings in each text in favor of more personal, spiritual, or sensational meanings obtained allegedly, from the Holy Spirit. . . . Does the Spirit set us free from the verbal meanings of the Word of the text? . . . We answer with a decisive no!—Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "The Single Intent of Scripture" in **Evangelical Roots**, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978), Ch. 9, p. 136

8. Dr. J.C. Ryle

*I hold it to be a most dangerous mode of interpreting Scripture, to regard everything which its words may be tortured into meaning, as a lawful interpretation of the words. I hold undoubtedly that there is a mighty depth in all Scripture, and that in this respect it stands alone. But I also hold that the words of Scripture were intended to have one definite sense, and that our first object should be to discover that sense and adhere rigidly to it. **I believe that, as a general rule, the words of Scripture are intended to have, like all other language, one plain definite meaning, and that to say that the words do mean a thing, merely because they can be tortured into meaning it, is a most dishonorable and dangerous way of handling Scripture.***—J.C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke**, Volume 1 (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1976), Vol. 1, p. 383 - emphasis mine

B. WITH REGARD TO MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS AND ALLEGORIZATION OF SCRIPTURES

1. Dr. Bernard L. Ramm

Many times, new meanings are derived by scholars who approach Scripture with the presumption that it cannot be

literally interpreted but must be figuratively interpreted. In defense of the literal basis of Biblical hermeneutics it may be argued that:

(a) The literal method of interpretation is the usual practice in the interpretation of literature. *Whenever we read a book, an essay, or a poem we presume the literal sense in the document until the nature of the literature itself may force us to another level. . . . The non-literal is always a secondary meaning which presumes an already existing literal understanding of literature. This previous stratum of language [the literal meaning] is the necessary point of departure for the interpretation of all literature. . . . Therefore, without prejudging the nature of Holy Scripture one way or another, we must start our interpretation of Holy Scripture from the stance of literal interpretation.*

(b) All secondary meanings of documents depend upon the literal stratum of language. *Parables, types, allegories, symbols, figures of speech, myths and fables presume that there is a level of meaning in language prior to the kind of language this kind of literature is. . . . In that all non-literal statements are 'take-offs' from the more original, more primitive literal language, then the literal exegesis is the point of departure in all interpretation.*

(c) Only in the priority of literal exegesis is there control on the exegetical abuse of Scripture. *By the 'exegetical abuse of Scripture' we mean all interpretation in church history and in the histories of the cults which force strange and unbiblical meanings into Scripture by some form of allegorical interpretation (i.e., any kind of reading into Scripture secondary or tertiary or even quaternary meanings). In the history of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture it is not denied that there is a literal, historical, or grammatical sense to Scripture, but it is depreciated. It is considered the 'fleshly' or the 'superficial' understanding of Scripture. Furthermore, there are many kinds of spiritualizing or allegorizing of the Scripture. . . . How do we resolve the competition among the various allegorical schools of interpretation? There is really only one way: grant the prior right to literal interpretation*

of Scripture, and the right of literal interpretation to act as judge and umpire of any proposed allegorical or mystical interpretation of Scripture. . . . To restore's theology on the secondary strata of meanings is to invite interpretation by imagination. That which supplies the imagination with its content is unfortunately too often non-Biblical ideas or materials. The only sure way to know the meaning of Holy Scripture is to anchor interpretation in literal exegesis. . . . It is the theologian's or interpreter's responsibility to guard the use of Holy Scripture by the hedge of literal exegesis.—Bernard L. Ramm, **Protestant Biblical Interpretation**, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), pp. 123, 124, 125—emphasis mine.

The main burden of doctrinal teaching must rest on the literal interpretation of the Bible. In our treatment of general hermeneutics, we maintained that the literal meaning of the Bible was the first and controlling principle for the understanding of the Bible. This principle is to be carried over into doctrinal interpretation. This does not deny that substantial doctrinal truth is conveyed symbolically, parabolically, typically, and poetically. But as previously indicated, the symbolic, et al, depend on the literal sense for their very existence, and are controlled by the literal. . . . The great doctrines of the faith should be those which can be determined by the literal approach to the meaning of Scripture. A theology which ignores this control will bring us back to the confused labyrinth of so much patristic and medieval exegesis.—Bernard L. Ramm, **Protestant Biblical Interpretation** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), Ch. 6, p. 167—emphasis mine.

2. Dr. Ernest F. Kevan

The basic principle of Biblical interpretation which emerges from this point of view is that the sense of Scripture is to be found in the grammatical meaning of the words. To respect the grammatical sense is the fundamental rule in the study of all books, and the Bible, though rightly revered as 'the Book of books,' is nevertheless still a book. It is no magical object left mysteriously

lying in man's path and requiring occult methods for extorting its powers. Every word is therefore to be accepted in its normal meaning and in the context of the style of writing in which it appears. Law, history, poetry and prophecy, each has its own literary style, and the interpreter will not be unmindful of these characteristics when endeavoring to reach an understanding of any given passage. . . The presence of metaphor and symbol must be recognized, but this does not require the abandonment of the principle of obedience to grammatical sense. The words must still be taken in their grammatical sense.—Ernest F. Kevan, **Revelation and The Bible**. Ed. by Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 293-294

*The crux of the problem raised by the allegorical method of interpretation is whether secret and independent senses of Scripture exist, as it were, in their own right—or whether there is but one sense only, from which derivative senses may be inferred. Only the second of these alternatives can meet the demands of the facts. Scripture is not **multiplex**, but **simplex**; and this unity of meaning resides in the grammatical sense. This grammatical or literal meaning forms the basis of derivative meanings and in relation to these subsequent interpretations the grammatical and literal meaning must be regarded as primary while the others are secondary. The ancient School of Antioch, and such teachers Augustine, Luther and Calvin have always insisted that the theological sense is found only in the literal sense.*—Ernest F. Kevan, **Revelation and The Bible**, ed. by Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 295-296

3. Dr. Walter C. Kaiser Jr.

It is urged that the following axioms be adopted and implemented in our preparation of lectures, sermons, Biblical studies, and personal devotions:

(1) God's meaning and revelational intention in any passage of Scripture may be accurately and confidently ascertained only by studying the verbal meanings of the divinely delegated and inspired human writers.

(2) Only one verbal meaning is to be connected with any passage of Scripture unless the writer or speaker of the text gives literary and contextual clues that he has several aims in view for this passage. For example, the two or three questions asked at the beginning of the Olivet Discourse set the stage for readers to realize that the discourse addresses those several questions and therefore has several applications. However, this does not in any way change the specific verbal meanings of the words used in the discourse.

(3) The single, original verbal meaning of Biblical Words may be ascertained by heeding the usual literary conventions of grammar, syntax, history, culture, and accumulated theological context. And if it cannot be ascertained by these means then it cannot be ascertained at all.

(4) This authorial meaning can be understood by all readers if they will allow the writer to first say what he wants to say and if they will not read what he has said viewed through a pre-understanding of either conservative or liberal prejudices.

(5) The Spirit takes the single truth-intention of the author's text and in His convicting, teaching, comforting, and motivating power urges us to apply the principle taught in this text to scores of different situations. Hence, the personal reception, application, significance, value and impact any text has for particular individuals is directly linked to the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. But this in no way affects, changes or depreciates the importance of the original, primary verbal meaning of the words of themselves. It is this original, verbal meaning that the Holy Spirit brings to bear upon our minds, hearts and lives.—Walter C. Kaiser Jr. "The Single Intent of Scripture" - **Evangelical Roots**—ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers, 1978), Ch. 9, p.138

4. Dr. Philip E. Hughes

An important point at issue at the time of the Reformation was the sense in which Scripture should be interpreted. It was the contention of the English Reformers that the only proper

sense was that which the Holy Spirit intended, and this they defined as **the literal sense**. Prior to the Reformation, in the medieval period, it had become customary for the schoolmen to distinguish four senses of Scripture: literal, tropological, anagogical, and allegorical. But Tyndale rightly pointed out that the last three of these could all be placed under the one head of allegory. He said, 'The tropological and anagogical are terms of their own feigning, and altogether unnecessary, for they are all but allegories; and this word allegory comprehendeth them both, and is enough. For tropological is but an allegory of manners; and anagogical an allegory of hope. But the allegorical is not an alternative sense to the literal. The Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense.'

Moreover, an excessive addiction to an allegorical interpretation of Scripture had been the cause of much harm in the congregations, as Tyndale explains in a lively passage: 'The greatest cause of captivity and the decay of faith, and this blindness wherein we now are, sprang first from allegories. For Origen and the doctors of his time drew all the Scripture unto allegories; whose example they that came after followed so long, till they at last forgot the order and the process of the text itself, supposing that the Scripture served but to feign allegories upon. . . Yea, they are come unto such blindness that they not only say the literal sense profiteth not, but also that it is hurtful, and noisome, and killeth the soul.' But the literal sense is at the same time the spiritual sense, for Tyndale said, 'God is a Spirit, and all His words are spiritual. His literal sense **is spiritual**, and all His words are spiritual.'

This emphasis on the understanding of Scripture in its natural, literal sense represented a real revolution in the use of the Bible, which for generations had been the preserve of intellectual charlatans and religious sophists who pretended to an esoteric exegesis which was as fanciful as it was illegitimate. The Reformation helped restore an approach to the Bible which evinced a proper respect for it not only as the Word of God but for it also as a revelation which ordinary men could comprehend.

... It was like a fresh wind which blew away the intricate cobwebs that had been spun round the pages of Scripture over the centuries and now allowed the Word to live and breathe again and to speak for itself.—Philip E. Hughes, **Theology of the English Reformers** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), Ch. 1, pp. 27-28

5. Dr. William Whitaker

It is surely foolish to say that there are as many senses of Scripture as the words themselves may be transferred and accommodated to bear. For although the words may be applied and accommodated allegorically, etc., yet there are not therefore various senses, various interpretations and explications of Scripture, but there is but one sense, and that the literal ... There is but one true and genuine sense of Scripture, namely, the literal or grammatical. Now the reason why sound arguments are always derived from the literal sense is because it is certain that that which is derived from the words themselves is ever the sense of the Holy Spirit.—William Whitaker, **A Disputation on Holy Scripture Against the Papists**. Ed. William Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1849), p.402

6. Dr. J. Robertson McQuilkin

Does each Scripture passage have a single meaning, or are there hidden meanings to be derived through following special rules of interpretation or through the direct intuition of the Holy Spirit? There are at least two views on that question. Some hold that there can be only one meaning for a passage if language is to be reliable and communication possible. Those people do not deny the possibility of many applications of a single meaning. Others have difficulty with such an approach. They hold that there are passages in Scripture that cannot be explained as having a single meaning. . . they hold that additional meanings are there by Divine intent. The Holy Spirit inspired a message, and later revealed the secondary meaning through another

inspired spokesman. Most Scriptures about which there is sharp debate involve prophecy. . . . One rule must be observed, however. If the original author [of an inspired work] disclaims a hidden meaning, another person cannot, with certainty or authority, ascribe such a hidden meaning to it. In other words, the author himself is the only one who can legitimately identify the secondary meaning. That is the case with Scripture, if it is granted that there are such things as secondary meanings in certain passages. And it is the Holy Spirit who inspired the original author and who later inspired the [subsequent] interpretation of that author. . . . The question is whether or not the author had both an immediate and fuller meaning in his mind is complex and very important. Not just anyone can discern that fuller or final implication. . . . if one holds that certain passages in Scripture were deliberately encoded with a dual meaning, one obvious meaning, and one to be identified at a later time, once again, it is not just anyone who can “break the code” or find that hidden meaning. Whatever position a person takes on the question of a hidden, secondary meaning in prophetic utterances or a fuller meaning intended from the beginning, the Lord Jesus Christ or the inspired writers are the only ones who can designate that secondary or fuller meaning. When Christ spoke, He had every right to interpret the author. The same may be said of those apostles He inspired and authorized to reveal God’s will through the New Testament.

*Hence, to ascribe hidden meanings to Scripture, a person assumes an authority equivalent to or superseding that of the original author. The interpreter – whether an individual or a church – actually purports to be an authority standing above Scripture. But Scripture is to be the independent, final authority on what God says to His people. . . . If there is a hidden meaning, the human author or God Himself are the only ones with the authority to so affirm. The child of God who desires to know and do God’s will must study diligently that he may handle properly the Word of Truth. He will give himself to identify **the single intended meaning of the author**, not to searching for hidden meanings. When the Lord Jesus Himself or an author of Scripture has discovered a hidden meaning in a Biblical text,*

in that we shall rejoice. . . . But with all with all humility, we must leave that kind of interpretation to the Biblical authors since we have not been authorized by God to be His inspired, infallible spokesmen of additional revelation. - J. Robertson McQuilkin, **Understanding and Applying the Bible: An Introduction to Hermeneutics** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), Ch. 1, pp. 28, 29, 30, 31

Since the Bible is written in human language, any passage has only one meaning, unless the author himself says there is another meaning. A second meaning might be intended, since that is a legitimate literary device. But for the interpreter to be dogmatic about a secondary meaning, the author himself must first have affirmed it. . . . The question of a double meaning has to do with the author having in mind two meanings at the same time. For example, he may intend to communicate something concerning a historic event, and at the same time, he may be using that to prophecy some other event yet to take place.

Interpreters are not agreed as to whether that is ever true in Scripture. But once again, the author himself must identify any hidden meaning. In the case of the Bible, if the Lord Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, through a subsequent Biblical writer, designated such a meaning, that meaning may be accepted with equal authority as the initial, plain meaning of the passage. However, to determine the single meaning is the objective of Biblical interpretation. Otherwise, the fancy of the interpreter, or the preconceptions he imposes on the text, becomes the authority. . . . such restrictions as we have mentioned must be carefully observed lest Scripture become putty in the hands of the interpreter to mold into any form he desires. To say that there is only one meaning does not mean that all interpreters will agree on that meaning, or that the meaning is easily understood in every passage. To concede that there are different interpretations does not mean that all the possibilities are equally valid. The original author had only one meaning in mind.—J. Robert McQuilkin, **Understanding and Applying the Bible: An Introduction to Hermeneutics** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), Ch. 6, pp. 66-67

7. Dr. James M. Boice

Another need that follows upon the Bible's being a human as well as Divine book – an eighth principle—is to give attention to the meaning of words. Although it is possible that God can think without words, it is certain that we cannot. Thoughts cannot be expressed without words. Consequently, the meanings of words and an individual's use of them are of great importance.

The summary of this point is contained in what has come to be called the historical–literal or grammatical–literal method of Biblical interpretation. This simply means, as J. I. Packer puts it, 'the proper, natural sense of each passage (i.e., the intended sense of the writer) is to be taken as fundamental.' The intended meaning of the words in their own context and in the speech of the original writer or spokesman is the starting point.

In other words, Scripture statements must be interpreted in the light of the rules of grammar and discourse on the one hand, and of their own place in history on the other. This is what we should expect in the nature of the case, seeing that the Biblical books originated as occasional documents addressed to contemporary audiences; and it is exemplified in the New Testament exposition of the Old, from which the fanciful allegorizing practiced by Philo and the Rabbis is strikingly absent.

This principle is based on the fact that the Bible is God's Word in man's language. It means that Scripture is to be interpreted in its natural sense, and that theological or cultural preferences must not be allowed to obscure this fundamental meaning.—James M. Boice, **Standing on The Rock: The Importance of Biblical Inerrancy** (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1984), Ch. 4, pp. 80, 81, 82

8. Dr. Milton S. Terry

The systematic expounder of Scripture doctrine is expected to set forth. . . such teachings as have certain warrant in the Word of God. He must not import into the text of Scripture the ideas of later times, or build upon any words or passages a dogma which they do not legitimately teach. . . The interpreter is always bound

to consider how the subject lay in the mind of the author, and to point out the exact ideas and sentiments intended. It is not for him to show how many meanings the words may possibly bear, nor even how the first readers understood them. The real meaning intended by the author, and that only, is to be set forth. . . It can never be warranted, and is often dangerous to make that a primary and proper interpretation of a passage which is but a secondary, though it may be a very legitimate application of it. . . In all our private study of the Scriptures we do well to remember that the first and great thing is to lay hold of the real meaning of the sacred writer. There can be no true application, no profitable taking to ourselves of any lessons of the Bible, unless we first clearly apprehend their original meaning. . . the public teacher is bound to base his applications of the truths and lessons of the Divine Word upon a correct apprehension of the primary signification of the language.—Milton S. Terry, **Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), pp. 583,596, 600, - emphasis mine

9. William Tyndale

The Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense, thou canst not but go out of the way. The Scripture indeed useth proverbs, similitudes, riddles, and allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle, or allegory signifieth is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently.—William Tyndale, “The Works of William Tyndale” in **The Parker Society Publication of Early English Writers**. Ed. Henry Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848), Vol. 1, pp. 303-304

10. Dr. James I. Packer

*Scripture yields two basic principles for its own interpretation. **The FIRST** is that the proper, natural sense of each passage (i.e., the intended sense of the writer) is to be taken as fundamental; the meaning of the texts in their own contexts, and for their original readers, is the necessary starting-point for enquiry. . . . This is the much-misunderstood principle of interpreting Scripture **literally**. A glance at its history will be the quickest way of clearing up the confusion. The Mediaeval exegetes, following Origen, regarded the 'literal' sense of Scripture as unimportant and unedifying. They attributed to each biblical statement three further senses, or levels of meaning, each of which was in a broad sense allegorical. . . . Only the three allegorical senses, the Mediaevals held, were worth a theologian's study; the literal record had no value save as a vehicle of figurative meaning. Mediaeval exegesis was thus exclusively mystical, not historical at all; biblical facts were made simply a jumping-off ground for theological fancies, and thus spiritualized away. Against this the Reformers protested, insisting that the literal, or intended sense of Scripture was the sole guide to God's meaning. . . . Fanciful spiritualizing, so far from yielding God's meaning, actually obscured it. The literal sense is itself the spiritual sense, coming from God and leading to Him. . . . Scripture is to be interpreted in its natural, intended sense, and theological predilections [preferences and prejudices] must not be allowed to divert us from loyalty to what the text actually asserts. . . . **The SECOND** basic principle of interpretation is that Scripture must interpret Scripture; the scope and significance of one passage is to be brought out by relating it to others. . . . [Chapter 1, Article 9 of The Westminster Confession of Faith states it thus: 'The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; And therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.'] This is so*

in the nature of the case, since the various inspired books are dealing with complimentary aspects of the same subject.—James I. Packer, **Fundamentalism and the Word of God** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), Ch. 4, pp. 102, 103, 105, 106³⁴ – emphasis mine

CONCLUSION: Our approach to the New Testament should not be controlled by any other preconceived bias other than what the historical evidence demands up to that point in history. As Dr. Overbey correctly concludes, only when the common meaning cannot possibly fit should we then look for a new meaning that makes sense in that context.

We believe the only principle we can proceed on that has the agreement of scholars and that should satisfy our minds is the following. The common meaning of a word must stand in every place it occurs as long as it makes sense. When it fails to make sense then a new meaning or a rare meaning must be found in the context for the word. If a new or rare meaning will make sense in a given context we cannot accept it as long as the common meaning will also make sense. To do otherwise would make all language uncertain and confusing.

In other words, we must approach the use of *ekklesia* according to the golden rule of Biblical Interpretation that states:

*When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, **seek no other sense**; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise—**The Golden Rule of Interpretation.***—emphasis mine

The “plain sense” includes exhausting all the historical ways it has been ordinarily used. Historically, *ekklesia* has been used in the concrete and abstract senses. With regard to the abstract use, it has been clearly used in

³⁴ *Much of this material was borrowed from the following online source: <http://www.mountzionpbc.org/Pdf/Guidelines%20For%20Biblical%20Interpretation.pdf> 12/20/15*

the institutional sense. If the concrete and abstract use of *ekklesia* makes sense in a given passage then the common meaning must be accepted regardless if a new meaning might make sense.

I hope that you can see that the Landmark Baptist approach to the meaning and usage of *ekklesia* in the New Testament is the proper approach confirmed by all the above scholars and is essential in order to avoid complete biased speculative interpretations.

Therefore, the rule that will guide this study of *ekklesia* in the New Testament is to see if the common sense makes sense, and if it does, *even though a new meaning could make sense*, the rule states, seek no other sense. Specifically, each passage where *ekklesia* is found, it will be asked if the concrete sense makes sense. If not, then the second step is to see if the abstract sense makes sense. If neither makes sense in the passage then the context will be gleaned to determine a new meaning.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Write out the Golden Rule of Interpretation and memorize it.
2. Is it proper to consider all applications of the historical meaning of *ekklesia* when considering its usage in any given New Testament text, before assuming some new meaning that has no historical basis prior to that point?
3. Should you accept a new meaning, even though it makes sense in a given passage, if the normal meaning makes sense in that passage?
4. Should you apply the abstract use of *ekklesia* to a given passage as one valid application of the normal meaning, before looking for some new meaning?
5. If there is a secondary meaning, who is it that must establish such a meaning in a given text? Is it the reader or the author of the text?
6. What is the only legitimate approach to any writing by any writer? Should one approach a writing by seeking hidden or secondary meanings or by a literal common-sense approach?

REQUIRED READING:

The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament by Edward H. Overbey, pp. 18-28

Ecclesia—The Church, by B.H. Carroll, pp. 47-52

WEEK 3 LESSON 2

The Builder's Usage of Ekklesia—Part 1

LESSON GOAL: The goal for this lesson is to thoroughly examine the use of *ekklesia* by Christ in the immediate context of Matthew 16:13-19 to see if the common historical meaning can fit according to its concrete or abstract application.

INTRODUCTION: At the time of the writing of the New Testament the *ekklesia* had been established throughout the known world as part and parcel with the democratic feature of city government by Alexander the Great. Jesus Christ is the builder of the New Testament *ekklesia*. If the use of *ekklesia* by anyone in the New Testament should be definitive of the true nature of the New Testament *ekklesia* it should be its use by Christ—the builder. For example, Paul was taught directly by Christ with regard to the *ekklesia* of Christ (Gal. 1:11-12; Eph. 3:1-5), and Paul would not be promoting any different kind of *ekklesia* than the kind Christ spoke about and built. Remember, the only justified bias in approaching this text is the established historical meaning of *ekklesia* that “*always describes a corporeal, physical unity of people*” in either a concrete or abstract sense. If the common historical meaning of *ekklesia* fits, as used either in its concrete and/or abstract sense, then any new meaning must be repudiated, even if that new meaning can make sense.

I. THE CONTEXT

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that you are John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He

said to them, But whom say you that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also to you, That you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church [ekklesia]; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. - Mt. 16:13-19

This is the very first occurrence of *ekklesia* found in the New Testament. Here it is used by the very builder of the New Testament *ekklesia* in a context that is about building “my *ekklesia*.” We are going to explore this context in some detail. We will examine its historical, geographical, religious, and topical context. We will look at its Petrine context and its building context. Finally, we will examine how Peter interpreted this text.

A. The Historical and Geographical Context: This text is placed in the geographical area near Caesarea Philippi. The historical name was a combination of the name of the ruler over the whole Empire (Caesar) joined with the name of a subordinate representative ruler in the immediate province (Philip). Caesar was worshipped as a god. Philip was the localized representative for this god. The very confession of Peter with regard to Christ contains a combination of names (“*the Christ, the Son of the living God*”) that join together both his work as a representative man (“*the Christ*”) and his deity (“*the son of the living God*”). Caesar was far away, but he ruled through Philip. God the Father was far away but was presently manifest in His Son.

Caesarea Philippi was located upon a large limestone plateau near the foot of Mount Herman. Out of a cave at the base of Mount Herman flowed a spring that served as the primary headwaters for the Jordan River.

Just up the valley in sight of Caesarea Philippi stood a giant high rock upon which the fortress Baniyas (former name of Caesarea Philippi) stood to watch over the entrance of the valley to Caesarea Philippi. The fortress was situated to guard and protect Caesarea Philippi from invading armies. What a perfect historical and geographical backdrop to introduce the *ekklesia*

of Christ as it would later be identified as “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” and as the administrator of the keys of the kingdom in defense of the truth.

Caesarea Philippi... A city at the foot of Mount Hermon, at the main source of the Jordan, and in the angle of a small plain, with hills on all sides except the west. It has sometimes been identified with Baal-god. The worship of the Roman god Pan long prevailed in the locality: and Herod the Great having built a temple of fine marble near the sacred spot, the place was called Paneas (Antiq. Xv. 10, 3). The town was afterwards enlarged and adorned by Philip the Tetrarch, and its name altered to Caesarea in honor of the Roman Emperor Tiberius Caesar... - John B. Davis, A Dictionary of the Bible, [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker book house, 1954] “Caesarea Philippi”, p. 108

So, the historical and geographical context serves well for the whole conversation.

B. The Religious Context: Caesarea Philippi was a religious center. The temple of Pan was located at the foot of Mount Hermon. However, if you had walked into the temple you would have not found Pan.³⁵ In addition to Pan’s temple, there was a marvelous white marble temple dedicated to the worship of Caesar in Caesarea Philippi. However, if you had walked into that temple you would not have found Caesar. But that day there was the new “*house of God*” or the assembly of baptized believers (Acts 1:21-22) and within that “*house of God*” was tabernacled in human flesh the Creator of the Universe. Christ was present in his “*house of God*.”

However, the significant factor is that the combination of these two heathen temples encompass what later would be described as the “*Great Whore*” in Revelation. The name “pan” signified a universal religion inclusive of all things, while the temple dedicated to Caesar signified the anti-Christ counterpart as the god man of secular religion. The temple of Pan was attached to the exterior of the cave at the bottom of Mount Hermon.³⁶

³⁵ Prior to being called Caesarea Philippi, the city was called Paneas in honor of the god Pan.

³⁶ Pan in Roman mythology was Faunus, but in Phoenician mythology was Baal. The historical source of Baal can be traced to Nimrod the builder of Babel. Babel was the first organized false

C. The Topical Context: The topic of discussion was not “who do men say that Peter is?” or “who do you say that Peter is?” The topic of discussion was “*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am.... But whom say ye that I am?*” Peter comes into this discussion to supply the right answer. The proper interpretation of this passage will center on Christ, with Peter and everything else in the context being only supplemental in honoring Christ.

D. The Petrine Context: This passage begins by Christ asking all the disciples two questions concerning his own identity. Peter responds in behalf of all the disciples as all the disciples had previously made the same confession (Mt. 14:33). Divine providence had planned not merely for the location and topic for this discussion but the very name given to Simon for this very occasion.

Peter is first addressed as “*Simon bar Jonah*” in verse 17 and then that name is purposely dropped and the name “*Peter*” is introduced by Christ in verse 18. Simon bar Jonah was his given name at birth. However, “*Peter*” was the name given to him by Christ in John 1:42. It was given to him for the intent to characterize his person. In John 1:42 that characterization is spelled out as meaning *a rock*. This is the only place in Scripture (Mt. 16:18-19) where the Lord’s intent for characterizing Simon as “*Peter*” is applied by Christ. There is the intentional introduction “*thou art Peter*” for an intentional play on words. The Greek term translated “*Peter*” is *petros* whereas the Greek term translated “*rock*” in this same passage is “*petra*.” Hence an intentional play upon these very similar words is made by Christ. In response to this intentional play upon words, the Roman Catholic Church insists that the “*rock*” foundation in this passage is Peter and that the giving of the keys to him is the establishment of their papal office and authority.

However, I believe the word play is to distinguish the two from one another instead of identifying the two are one and the same as Rome demands. The distinction, I believe, is to characterize two different aspects in this building context. Evidence for this distinction between the two is as follows. For example, Jesus uses the **second** person singular “*thou*” in introducing the **masculine** form “*petros*” or Peter but uses the **third** person singular “*this*” when introducing the **feminine** form “*petra*” or “*upon this rock*.” The different

state religion to oppose God. The term “pantheism” consists of two Greek words “pan” and “theos” or many gods. The gates of Hades could well represent Mystery Babylon, the Great Whore, or organized false religion and its continuous attack on “the way of the Lord” since Genesis 4 until Jesus comes again.

pronouns with different nouns shows they are to be distinguished from each other rather than identified with each other. If he intended the Roman Catholic view he could have just merely said, “*You are Peter and you are the rock upon which I will build...*” However, he did not say that.

With regard to the masculine versus feminine forms, even as late as the Maccabean period, the masculine form *petros* was used to describe smaller stones while the feminine form referred to a larger rock. Hence, Peter was a small stone, but the foundation was a large rock. Furthermore, Jesus has not changed the emphasis of the topic from the importance of Christ to the importance of Peter as the Catholic interpretation would demand. Contrariwise, he has introduced Peter to magnify Himself. Peter has supplied the correct answer “*thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*” Significantly, the nearest antecedent to the second person singular “*this*” in verse 18 is “*it*” in verse 17 which has for its nearest antecedent the confession made by Peter in verse 16.

*And Simon Peter answered and said, **You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.***

*And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed **it** to you, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also to you, That you are Peter, and on **this** rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. - Mt. 16:16-18*

In other words, the foundation upon which Christ would build his church would be this profession revealed by the Father to Peter. However, there is another reason why Simon is introduced as Peter in this context.

E. The Building Context: Jesus introduces a building context. He names the builder “*I will build.*” He identifies what will be built “*build my church.*” He identifies the foundation “*this rock*” (the confession by Peter) “*upon*” which he builds his *ekklesia*. However, apart from the intentional characterization found in the masculine Greek noun *petros* there is no indication of what kind of material will be used to build his *ekklesia*. In verse 17 Jesus introduces the source from which Simon Bar Jonah obtained that profession. His profession, thus his status as a believer was the product of God the Father. It is in this divinely converted capacity (v. 17) that he is introduced as Peter

in verse 18. In other words, Christ would build his *ekklesia* out of the kind of material characterized by Peter—professors in Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” The term *petros* is given to intentionally characterize the kind of material Christ will build his church. *Petros* (“Peter”) is found in the anarthrous construction (without the definite article) which is often used by writers who intend to make a characterization of something, and that should be obvious since the whole purpose for giving him that name in the first place was to clearly characterize him as such. Although, proper names are often found in the anarthrous construct, there is no doubt by any scholar that there is an intentional play on words here, and this is an intentional characterization by Christ. Peter is being characterized as the kind of building stone that he, as the builder would use to build an edifice, and that edifice is “my *ekklesia*.” How would the name “Peter” (*petros*) be characterized in this kind of building context?

How was Peter prepared by God? God sent John the Baptist to “prepare a people made ready” (Lk. 1:17) for the Lord to build His congregation. When a builder needed stone for building, he would employ a rock mason to cut the stone out of the quarry to his precise specifications.

The rock mason in this case was John the Baptist. Later, when the office of Apostle was vacated and needed to be filled, the qualified candidate had to have been assembling together with Christ from the time of John’s baptism until the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:21-22) and his resurrection.

All the disciples first assembled around Christ were materials prepared by John (Jn. 1:35-53). John preached the gospel (Jn. 3:36) through which the Father “revealed” unto them that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Jn. 1:29) and then baptized them in preparation for Christ. Baptism finalized that preparation making them ready to be assembled around Christ and taught how to observe all things. Peter simply characterized every person within that assembly, all of whom had been prepared by John the very same way. They all believed the gospel and they all had been baptized with the baptism of John (Acts 1:21-22). In context, Peter simply answered in behalf of the rest who had had already previously made the same profession (Mt. 14:33). It is in this capacity as a representative of all members in the *ekklesia* (thus representative of the kind of materials the *ekklesia* of Christ consisted) that he is given the “keys of the kingdom” (Mt. 16:19). This is proven in Matthew 18:17-18 where the plural “you” (Mt.18:18) just previously

identified as “*the church*” (Mt. 18:17) is identified as the administrator of the keys of the kingdom. This proves that Peter was only given the keys as a representative of that plural “*you*,” or the *ekklēsia* described in Matthew 18:15–20. So, in this building context, Peter’s name is used to characterize the kind of building material Christ uses to build his *ekklēsia*—water baptized professing believers.

In the next 22 uses of *ekklēsia* by Christ this is the only kind of materials (baptized believers in Christ) used by Christ to form the membership of the very same kind of church he continues to describe by those next 22 uses of *ekklēsia*.

F. The Building Construction: Now, we come to the nature of the building being constructed. What kind of building is it? It is identified as “the *ekklēsia* of me” or “*my church*.” This is the very first usage of *ekklēsia* in the New Testament, and it is the definitive use, as it is explicitly identified as the *ekklēsia* which Christ claims to be “my” *ekklēsia*, the one built by him. Significantly, the nature of the keys defines the nature of the *ekklēsia* as the administrator of those keys as the administrator must be able to administer them as directed (next lesson will look at the nature of the keys).

In the New Testament the term *ekklēsia* is applied only to three kinds of *ekklēsiai* (1) The Jewish kind—Acts 7; (2) The Christian kind—Mt. 18:17; (3) The Greek city kind—Acts 19. The Greek pronoun *mou* or “of me” separates this *ekklēsia* from the other two types. This kind belongs to Christ or “*the ekklēsia of Christ*.” Hence, all following 22 uses of *ekklēsia* by Christ are this kind of *ekklēsia*, because there is no indication anywhere in Scripture that he built any other kind of *ekklēsia* but “the *ekklēsia* of me.” No New Testament writer speaks of a Christian *ekklēsia* that is not Christ’s. More importantly, he goes on to use the term *ekklēsia* 22 more times and he treats all 22 uses as describing what belongs to him or “my church.” In every following 22 cases, no one disputes that the common ordinary meaning fits.

For example, in Matthew 18:17 the very same construction is used as in Matthew 16:18, the singular noun with the definite article without any specific geographical location, and in direct connection with the use of the keys of the kingdom (Mt. 18:18). Yet no scholar denies that Matthew 18:17 refers to the common meaning of *ekklēsia*, just as no scholar denies that the next 21 uses by Christ in Revelation 2–3 and 22:16 fits the common

meaning of the term? Is it reasonable to suggest that the very *ekklesia* he claims to build in Matthew 16:18 is not the same kind of *ekklesia* he goes on to describe and address the next 22 times he uses the same term?

II. DOES THE NORMAL MEANING FIT MT. 16:18

Can *ekklesia* be understood in Matthew 16:18 to fit the normal historical meaning of *ekklesia*, if all common usages are considered? Remember, there were at least two applications used by Classical Greek writers; (1) The concrete, and; (2) the abstract. They spoke of specific assemblies where specific persons and events were involved. They also spoke of it abstractly as an institution.

Let us apply these two applications and see if either fit. With regard to the concrete application there is no contextual geographical restriction, or specific application. However, the same can be said of the next two uses of *ekklesia* by Christ in Matthew 18:17. In Matthew 18:17 there is no contextual geographic restriction or specific application, and yet no one disputes he is using it according to its normal meaning.

The Gates of Hades

The imagery is vivid. The ancient fortress of Banias was built upon a 1500 foot rock which stood in the background as he described his *ekklesia* being built upon a rock, thus describing the *ekklesia* as a fortress. In direct contrast is the fortress of Hades. Inscribed above the mouth of the cave at the foot of Mount Hermon where Pan worship occurred, the words “gates of Hades” were found. Ancient cities were surrounded by walls with the only places for entrance or exit would be its “gates.” Barnes says:

And the gates of hell, etc. Ancient cities were surrounded by walls. In the gates, by which they were entered, were the principal places for holding courts, transacting business, and deliberating on public matters. See Barnes “Mt 7:13”. The word gates, therefore, is used for counsels, designs, machinations, evil purposes. Hell means, here, the place of departed spirits, particularly evil spirits. And the meaning of the passage is, that all the plots, stratagems, and machinations, of the enemies of the

church, should not be able to overcome it — a promise that has been remarkably fulfilled.—Albert Barnes

With regard to the *concrete* sense of *ekklesia* none of the congregations in the New Testament now exists. The abstract *generic* sense of *ekklesia* (which demands what is true of the class is true of each one in the class) may make sense³⁷. With regard to the abstract *institutional* sense, death and hell and all of its plots have never been able to destroy the institutional *ekklesia*. Remember, the abstract institutional sense is part of the general usage of *ekklesia* in Classical Greek (Aristotle, Politics 6.1317b). T.T. Martin quotes Dr. B.H. Carroll, the founder of Baylor University with regard to the abstract use of nouns says:

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

³⁷ *If Christ is speaking about the administrative assault by the congregation on the gates of Hades with regard to the use of the keys of the kingdom (Mt. 16:19; 18:17-18), then, the generic sense may make perfect sense. The congregation administers the gospel key (Jn. 21:23) thereby delivering those from the kingdom of Satan which form the membership of the congregation. This is true of every congregation without which no congregation comes into existence. The gates of Hades cannot prevail against this gospel assault.*

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 Ephesians 3:10, 21.*

*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], Ch. 8—emphasis mine*

The abstract use of nouns includes the generic sense, the institutional sense and the collective sense. All of these are legitimate abstract uses of a noun. If the generic sense is rejected in Matthew 16:18 because the *gates of Hades* does prevail against many concrete *ekklesiai*, then, the abstract institutional use of *ekklesia* must be considered next. The institutional sense makes perfect sense in Matthew 16:18. Furthermore, since it is beyond question that all remaining 22 uses of *ekklesia* by Christ have the common meaning in view then there should be no doubt that it is the common meaning that is in view in Matthew 16:18. All following 22 uses are simply describing in concrete terms what Matthew 16:18 describes as an abstract institution.

At this point, Dr. T.T. Eaton's words as recorded by Dr. J.B. Moody should be considered:

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 it in 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 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 neglects 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 congregations,' '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 congregations.’ Certainly, here ecclesia means the local assembly.

Thus, in every one of the 21 instances in which 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*

III. PETER’S TESTIMONY:

However, there is the testimony of not only an eyewitness, but the very one Christ addressed in Matthew 16:17-19. Who could better determine whether the interpretation of Peter as a representative stone is correct other than Peter himself? How did Peter understand Christ words in Matthew 16:18-19?

It is clear from Peter's own epistle that He repudiated Rome's interpretation and adopted our interpretation to be the correct one. How so? Within five verses in 1 Peter 2:4-8, Peter provides this whole analogy to his readers concerning the material used by Christ to build His *ekklesia* and the proper identity of the *petra* or rock of foundation upon which the *ekklesia* of Christ was built.

“Ye also, as LIVELY STONES, are BUILT up a spiritual house...”—2 Pet. 2:5

The words “*built up*” represent the exact same Greek term translated “*build*” in Matthew 16:18.

Here is a spiritual “*house*” that is built out of living “*stones*.” Where did Peter get this concept of describing the building materials as “*stones*” if wasn't from Christ's use of Peter's own name in Matthew 16:18 as a means of characterizing the building materials Christ would use to build “*my church*”?

Furthermore, Peter identifies Christ, rather than himself, as the “*rock*” (feminine *petra*) that unbelieving Jews stumbled over, and it is that rock which forms the foundation upon which the church is built:

“To whom coming, as unto a living STONE, disallowed indeed of men.... Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner STONE... the STONE.... a STONE of stumbling... a ROCK (petra) of offense.”—1 Pet. 2:4, 6, 8

The intent of this context is that this “*rock*” (Gr. *Petra*) is the object of faith and therefore correlates perfectly with the profession of faith metaphorically described as the “*rock*” (Gr. *Petra*) in Matthew 16:16-18. Here, Peter speaks directly of building the church as a holy temple out of “*lively stones*” combined with identifying Jesus Christ as the *petra* all within five verses. This is too clear and decisive to be viewed simply as a coincidence.³⁸

However, if this is not enough, Peter denies the Catholic view of the primacy of Peter.

³⁸ *The institutional house of God in both Testaments has always been the visible administrative agent of the divine ordinances in the visible kingdom of God (Deut. 12; Mt. 18:17-18). Therefore, the “house of God” as an institution is the visible expression or representation of the “kingdom” and “nation” of God consisting of the citizens of the professing kingdom of God on earth (1 Pet. 2:7-9).*

“...whom am also an elder...Neither be lord's over God's heritage...”—2 Pet. 5:1, 3

Here would be the optimal point to assert his Papal office of primacy if that was intended by Christ in Matthew 16:18-19, and yet he condemns such an idea. Furthermore, it is James, rather than Peter that presides over the church in Jerusalem in Acts 15. If Peter was the first Pope as Rome demands, then why is James in the preeminent position of leadership? In addition, the church at Rome was under the apostolic authority of Paul, rather than Peter (Rom. 15:15-16). Neither Peter nor Paul constituted these congregations³⁹ (Rom. 16:10-11, 14-15) in Rome. Peter was instrumental in the foundation of these congregations in Rome on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11) and Paul was instrumental in their growth by his writings and presence during his imprisonment.

Hence, Peter himself provides ample evidence that his name was used to characterize the kind of material, or normal members that would make up “*my ekklesia*” in Matthew 16:18-19 (which is further identified as the plural “*you*” or the kind of “*the church*” he continues to describe in Matthew 18:15-18).

It is interesting to note that Peter uses one term (*lithos*) in 2 Peter 2:4-8 for both Christ and the members of the church, which corresponds perfectly with Christ using *petra* and *petros* in the same characterization of Christ with Peter.⁴⁰

Peter categorically denies every claim that Rome makes about Matthew 16:18-19. Peter categorically affirms every detail of the interpretation of Matthew 16:18-19 which is given above.

Therefore, when all the geographical, religious and contextual background of Matthew 16:13-19 are carefully considered, Jesus has selected a location where all the religious powers of the world are in opposition to God as the place where the very words “gates of Hades” are inscribed over a cave. He has selected a city built upon rock, a fortress built upon a rock. He has provided a building context with intentional characterization of a name specifically provided and given by Christ for this very occasion. All of

³⁹ Romans 16 demonstrates there were several congregations at Rome unto which Paul wrote.

⁴⁰ What is of keen interest in this context is the fact that the same Greek word translated “stone” (Greek “*lithos*”) identifies two different kinds of stone (1) church members (2) Jesus Christ. However, Peter reserves the use of the feminine “*petra*” for Christ alone.

this is carefully chosen to declare that He will build an institutional house of God composed of baptized believers who will be entrusted with the keys of the kingdom that will resist and oppose all the powers of Hades in this world. The common Greek city *ekklesia* was made up of people and as a body, any member could address the assembly and that assembly had authority to address any problem just as in Matthew 18:15-18.

CONCLUSION

The intent of this lesson has been to examine the first usage of *ekklesia* by Christ to see if the common historical sense makes sense. That historical usage includes the abstract sense. The abstract sense includes the generic, as well as, the institutional usage. Finally, remember even if a new sense could make sense in any given passage, the golden rule of interpretation states that when the common meaning makes sense seek no other sense. In every case it has been demonstrated that the ordinary meaning of *ekklesia* makes good sense in every single passage.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the topic of discussion in Matthew 16:13-16?
2. How is Peter brought into this discussion?
3. What are the elements of the building context?
4. What are the grammatical differences between *petros* and *petra* as used in this context?
5. Where did Peter get the analogy of the *ekklesia* being “built” out of “lively stones”?
6. Whom does Peter apply the feminine *petra* unto in 2 Pet. 2:8?
7. Can the common abstract institutional meaning of *ekklesia* fit Matthew 16:18?
8. Does it make sense to you that Jesus, as the builder of the *ekklesia* would introduce the word for the first time in Matthew 16:18 but without a single word of explanation go on to use it the next 22 times to mean something entirely different? However, is this not the position universal invisible church advocates are faced with explaining?

REQUIRED READING

Upon This Rock—by Mark Fenison pp. 7-17 <http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/UponThisRoc4.pdf>

The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament—by E.H. Overbey, pp. 42-43
<https://static.secure.website/wscfus/3107401/2463194/overbeys-book.pdf>



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 3 LESSON 3

The Builder's Usage of Ekklesia—Part 2

LESSON GOAL: The goals for this lesson are (1) to understand who was in possession of the keys of the kingdom prior to Christ giving them to Peter and, (2) to understand what is the nature and area of authority that they represent and, (3) to determine who is the present possessor of these keys.

INTRODUCTION: The official position of the Roman Catholic Church is that Jesus gave Peter the keys of the Kingdom as the first pope. They interpret the keys as Papal legislative authority to decree new revelation and rule over the church as the Vicar of Christ. However, it has been shown in our previous lesson that the keys of the kingdom were given to Peter only as a representative of the church and the keys are actually exercised by the church. This being the case, then, the church must be of such a nature that it can exercise the keys as directed. Let us explore the nature of these keys and what they represent.

I. THE SYMBOL OF THE KEYS

The metaphor of a key or keys is a universal reference to authority or one who is in the position of authority.

In Scripture, the only man who has been given all authority is Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:18). His complete authority as King is symbolized under the representation of a singular “key” as the “*key of the house of David.*”

And the key of the house of David will I lay on his shoulder; so, he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. - Isa. 22:22

*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things said he that is holy, he that is true, **he that has the key of David**, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens; - Rev. 3:7*

The key of the house of David represents **absolute royal** authority. However, when different areas within his authority are being described, there is the use of the plural form “keys”:

*I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen; and have **the keys of hell and of death**.—Rev. 1:18*

Hence, the plurality of “keys” defines various areas of his authority.

II. DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Since “*all authority*” resides only with Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:18) therefore all positions and institutions with heavenly authority have derived it from Christ, and it is therefore delegated authority. Delegated authority is never universal or absolute, but always qualified and limited.

For example, governmental authority is established by God. However, it is qualified and limited by God for the purpose of executing righteousness as defined by God—Rom. 13:1-5. Government does not have “*all*” authority but is authorized by God only to be a minister of his righteousness as revealed in His Word.

*For he is the minister of God to you **for good**. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger **to execute wrath on him that does evil**. - Rom.13:4*

Another example, the wife is to subject herself unto her husband in all things that are “*in the Lord*.” The husband does not have all authority over the wife. His authority is qualified and restricted by the phrase “*in the Lord*” or in keeping with God’s revealed guidelines.

Another example, the children are to obey the authority of their parents “*in the Lord*.” Parents have no authority to make their children violate God’s Word.

Christ gives no man authority to disobey Him or to violate His Word. Jesus recognized that the Pharisees and scribes had legitimate delegated authority to teach the word of God (Mt. 23:2) but they had no authority behind their unscriptural practices (Mt. 23:3). The Scriptures have been given as final authority for faith and practice (Isa. 8:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and no mere human or institution, however exalted by men has been given legislative authority.

It is blasphemous to suggest that any other human (e.g. the Pope) has legislative authority equal to Christ, and therefore, Christ does not have “all authority” but is merely a co-equal with some other human being.

III. THE PREVIOUS CUSTODIAN OF THE KEYS

The Spiritual leadership of Israel who ministered in the former house of God had been given this authority.

The fuller context of Matthew 23 is a denouncement of their improper use of the keys of the kingdom and why the keys would be taken from them along with the removal of God’s presence from “*your house*” or the temple. Under the New Covenant public administration (Heb. 9:1), there would be a change of the authorized custodian of the keys, and a change in the nature of the institutional public house of worship. The custodian and “*house*” would no longer be two separate entities but one (1 Tim. 3:15). All areas of authority represented by the keys of the kingdom can be found in the great commission given to Christ’s *ekklesia*.

A. THEY SAT IN THE SEAT OF MOSES

Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.—Mt. 23:2-3

The “*seat of Moses*” was another metaphor for the position of authority. Jesus recognized that the spiritual leaders of Israel had legitimate authority to administer the laws of God (“*they bid you observe*”) and that God’s people were bound to obey (“*that observe and do*”). However, they did not have

authority to enforce their unbiblical “works” or hypocritical lives or anything contrary to God’s revealed will. Hence, their authority or use of the keys was administrative and never legislative.

B. THEY HAD THE KEY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.—Mt. 23:15

They had the authority to make disciples and all that is included in the process of discipleship. This administrative area of authority has its counterpart in Matthew 28:19–20. The word “teach” in Matthew 28:19 represent the Greek term *matheteusate* which means “make disciples.”

C. THEY HAD THE KEY TO THE DOOR OF HEAVEN

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in.—Mt. 23:13

Jesus is referring to their abuse of this key. Instead of using it to open the door of heaven to men they abused it so that it closed the door of heaven against men.

This aspect of the keys has its counterpart in the Great Commission aspect “Go preach the gospel” (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15) and preaching repentance unto all nations (Lk. 24:47).

The Jewish leadership perverted the gospel by preaching a gospel of justification by works. When a perverted gospel is preached the door of heaven is closed and those who believe in that false gospel are made a “twofold more child of hell” as now they have been deceived to think they are saved when they are still lost.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.—Mt. 23:15

When the gospel is preached correctly then remission of sins is granted through faith in the gospel:

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

When the hearers refuse to repent and believe the gospel then their sins are retained:

*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*

However, remission or retaining sins is dependent upon correctly preaching the true gospel of Christ. The former custodians of the keys abused this power by preaching “*another gospel*” that could not save them or their hearers.⁴¹

D. THEY HAD THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE

*Woe to you, lawyers! for you have taken away **the key of knowledge**: you entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in you hindered.—Lk. 11:52*

They had been authorized to teach God’s people the Law of God (Lev. 10:10) and explain to them its meaning (Ezra 8:8). This aspect of the keys has its counterpart in the Great Commission aspect “*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*” (Mt. 28:20).

E. THEY HAD THE KEY OF DISCIPLINE

*They answered and said to him, You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us? And they **cast him out.**—Jn. 9:34*

They had authority to excommunicate from the house of God. This aspect of the keys has its counterpart in Matthew 18:15-18 where it is the

⁴¹ *This is what Jesus means in John 20:23. The power to remit or retain sins was given in connection with the commission to preach the gospel (Lk. 24:47). When the gospel was preached correctly, remission of sins were due*

explicit authority of the *ekklēsia* of Christ rather than the apostles or any ordained office or presbytery.

*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto **the church**: but if he neglect to hear **the church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 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*

The antecedent for “*ye*” in verse 18 above is “*the church*” in verse 17. The singular noun “*church*” is inclusive of a plurality of members. In 1 Corinthians 5 it is the church that exercises the authority of excommunication (1 Cor. 5:5) and it is the majority of the membership that determines this action (2 Cor. 6:2 “*the many*”).

to gospel repentance and thus granted as promised in the gospel message and the preacher could declare they were remitted. By refusing the gospel their sins were retained and the gospel preacher could declare they were retained (Jn. 3:36).

F. THEY HAD THE KEY OF ORDINATION

Qualification and ordination to the public ministry in the house of God was committed to those who served in the public house of God. The qualifications are set forth in the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

The apostle Paul sets forth the qualifications for the public ministry in the house of God in 1 Timothy 3:1-15 and in Titus 1:5-13. The church under the leadership of its ordained ministry administered this key (Acts 1:15-26; 6:2-6).

IV. THE KEYS WERE TAKEN FROM ISRAEL

*Therefore, say I unto you, **The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation [ethnos] bringing forth the fruits thereof.**—Mt. 21:43*

In some sense “*the kingdom of God*” was committed unto these spiritual leaders and could be taken from them. I believe the public house of God under both covenants is the visible representation of God’s kingdom where the rule of God is designed to be made manifest to his people on earth. It is where the word of God and the ordinances are visibly set forth. The “*house of God*” was always the public qualified house of worship, where a public qualified ministry publicly administered qualified ordinances. It is this public authority within the professing kingdom of God on earth that is taken from the Jewish house of God and given to the *ekklesia* of Christ as the new public and visible expression of God’s kingdom in the professing kingdom of God on earth.

In the context of Matthew 21 the ordained leadership of Israel confronted Christ and challenged his authority to do what they knew God had authorized them to do in Israel:

*And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, **by what authority do you these things? and who gave you this authority?**—Mt. 21:23*

Jesus refuses to answer them directly but then proceeds to answer them indirectly by two parables which they understood was aimed at them.

*And when the chief priests and Pharisees **had heard his parables, they perceived that he spoke of them.**—Mt. 21:45*

His parables declared their disobedience to God and the abuse of their delegated custodial authority over the Lord’s vineyard (visible professing kingdom). They had abused the keys of the kingdom or authority in the professing kingdom, and it would be taken from them and given to a “*nation*” (ethnos). The Greek term *ethnos* refers to a people with distinct characteristics

that separate them from all others. The *ekklesia* is such a distinguished type of people which ultimately would be “Gentile” in its overall character.

This transfer of custodianship of the keys in the kingdom was comprehensive. It was not merely a new custodian of the keys, but a complete change of a visible covenant administration in contrast to what occurred at Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai, there was instituted a new qualified public house of God with a new qualified public ministry, with new qualified public ordinances, with a new qualified mission all of which was ratified by public sacrifice and then publicly accredited by the Shekinah glory (Ex. 40:35). Likewise, with the coming of Christ, this visible public covenant administration was replaced with something new. There was a new mountain (Calvary) with a new public sacrifice that gave public ratification to a new covenant. There was a new qualified public house of worship (Heb. 9:1) with a new qualified public ministry (Eph. 4:11) along with new qualified public ordinances. There was a new public mission (Mt. 28:19-20), and this entire new public covenant administration (Heb. 9:1) was publicly verified by a new immersion in the Shekinah glory of God (Acts 2:1-3). Hence, a whole new public administration within the professing kingdom of God was established by Christ in His public ministry.

V. THE NATURE OF AUTHORITY REPRESENTED BY THE KEYS

*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. 18:18*

Previously we have looked at the various areas of administration of the authority represented by the keys, but now we want to examine the nature of this authority. Was it legislative or administrative authority? The exercise of the keys is described under the metaphors of “*bind*” and “*loose*.” These were common rabbinical terms to describe the nature of this authority within the professing kingdom of God.

To “*bind*” and “*loose*” was the rabbinical language in the day of Christ for declaring what was authorized, allowed, and permitted versus what was prohibited or not permitted. Dr. A. T. Robertson comments on Matthew 16:19:

To “bind” (δησις) in rabbinical language is to forbid, to “loose” (λυσις) is to permit.—A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures**, Online Study Bible, Mt. 16:19

The Greek text does not support legislative authority being conveyed, but administrative authority only. Take note of the future perfect indicative (εσται δεδεμενον, “shall have already been bound” and εσται λελυμενον “shall have been already loosed”). A completed state of action characterizes the use of these keys. In other words, Christ is giving the church authority to loose and to bind what shall have been already loosed and bound in heaven as a completed state of action. This is not a rubber stamp for the church to legislate new laws, but permission to administer what God has already established in heaven through His written Word—“*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven*” (Psa. 119:89).

VI. DICTATORIAL POWER IS CONTRARY TO THE CONCEPT OF AN EKKLESIA

The cultural understanding of an *ekklesia* from its earliest origin right into the apostolic age was a democratically governed assembly. Apart from the concept of local visible assembly, the democratic nature of it was the most clearly understood concept in the mind when the term was mentioned or used.

In Acts 1:13-26 when the assembly selected a new candidate to fill the vacated apostolic office of Judas, there was no board of elders or a pope who simply exercised authority in this selection. Significantly, Peter did not stand up and address the apostles as the ruling body. Peter stood up “*in the midst of the disciples*” which number 120 (Acts 1:15) and it is “*they*” who chose (v. 23) and it is “*they*” who cast lots (v. 26) to determine the ultimate replacement for Judas.

The final authority for conducting this business was the Scriptures (Acts 1:16, 20). The design for the office determined the essential qualifications for filling that office (Acts 1:21-22). The actual method for final selection was seeking God’s choice through prayer (Acts 1:24-25) and casting of lots (Acts 1:26).

Casting lots had been used among ancient religious Greeks with regard to selecting officers. In the secular Greek *ekklesia* casting lots permitted fate

or their gods to determine the outcome. The New Testament *ekklesia* left the decision in the hand of the Lord because apostle had to be personally selected by Christ—“*And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two **thou** hast chosen,*”—Acts 1:24

The same democratic process is true in Acts 6 with the selection of deacons. Unlike the case of the office of Judas, the Scriptures did not speak explicitly about deacons, but the principles of Scriptures were supportive for such an action. The apostles could not perform the duties of their office because their time was needed to care for widows. However, they did not simply meet together as a legislative body of elders to make their own selections. Instead, they presented their case before the assembly (Acts 6:2-4) and requested them to make the selection. It was not a command, but a request because Luke says “*the saying pleased the whole multitude.*” There had to be some manner in which the consensus of the multitude was expressed:

A.T. Robertson says of the word translated “*pleased*”:

Pleased (ἠρεσεν). *Aorist active indicative of ἀρεσκω like Latin placuit when a vote was taken. The use of ἐνωπιον before “the whole multitude” is like the LXX.—A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures of the New Testament**, - Acts 6:5*

In addition, it is the “*whole multitude*” that determined who was qualified within “*the whole multitude*” of disciples, and it is the congregation who “*chose*” (v. 5b) the ultimate seven to perform this duty. This very language demands that some kind of orderly process must have been used for such a selective process whereby the “*whole multitude*” could participate and conduct such an action.

The same is true in Acts 14:22 in the selection of elders in the congregations established by Paul and Barnabas. A.T. Robertson says of the Greek term translated “*appointed*”:

χειροτονω (from *χειροτονος*, *extending the hand*, *χειρ*, *hand*, and *τεινω*, *to stretch*) is an old verb that originally meant to vote by show of the hands, finally to appoint with the approval of an assembly that chooses as in #2Co 8:19—A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures in the New Testament**, - Acts 14:22

The same is true in Acts 15:2 where it is the assembly that “*determined*” Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem:

*The brethren appointed (εταξαν). “The brethren” can be supplied from verse Ac 15:1 and means the church in Antioch. The church clearly saw that the way to remove this deadlock between the Judaizers and Paul and Barnabas was to consult the church in Jerusalem to which the Judaizers belonged. Paul and Barnabas had won in Antioch. If they can win in Jerusalem, that will settle the matter. The Judaizers will be answered in their own church for which they are presuming to speak. **The verb εταξαν (τασσω, to arrange) suggests a formal appointment by the church in regular assembly.** - A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures of the New Testament**, - Acts 15:2—emphasis mine*

The same is true with regard to the church council in Acts 15. Luke says that the final decision was not that of one person or a select body of rulers within the church at Jerusalem but a joint decision under the leadership of the Spirit and through its leader James that the whole congregation was “*pleased*” to come to this decision:

*Then **pleased** it the apostles and elders, with the whole church... It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord... For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us... - Acts 15:22,25,28*

Finally, Paul appeals to the congregation at Corinth (not merely the elders) to remove the fornicator from its membership (1 Cor. 5). The action brought the sinning “*brother*” to repentance. In 2 Corinthians 2:6 Paul says that this action was administered “*by the many*”. Robertson commenting on this phrase says:

*By the many (υπο των πλειονων). By the more, the majority. If Paul refers to the case in 1Co 5, they had taken his advice and expelled the offender.—A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures in the New Testament**—2 Cor. 2:6*

The governmental character of the New Testament *ekklesia* denies it can be universal or invisible, Presbyterian or hierarchical in nature. It is congregational in government and its final authority is God's Word.

Early English Baptists considered this subject. In the Associational records of the early English Particular Baptists in 1655 it was asked if the authority symbolized by the giving of the keys was given to the ministry or to the church.

Query 1. Whether the power of the keys spoken of in Mat. 16:19, John 20:23, Mat. 18:18, be given to the church or to the eldership in the church?

Answer: the exercise of the power of Christ in a church having officers, in opening, and shutting, in receiving in, and casting out, belongs to the church with its eldership, Mat. 18:17f., I Cor. 5:4., III John 9ff., Acts 15:4,22–B.R.

White, ed., Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660. (Association Records of the West Country, 1655), p. 60.

VII. MATTHEW 18:15-20

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. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 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. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.—Mt. 18:15-20

Matthew 18:15-20 provides an example of the exercise of the keys of the kingdom by the church. The example here is the key of discipline. First, let me give a summary of this passage: (1) There is a personal problem between two church members—Mt. 18:15. (2) there is a proper process in dealing with that problem—Mt. 18:15-17; (3) There is a final court of appeal with authority to make final determination with regard to that problem—Mt. 18:17-18. (4) The church needs wisdom from Christ obtained through prayer to make that final determination, regardless how small the church may be, to ensure what is done is in keeping with God’s revealed will.—Mt. 18:19-20. Then the responsibility to forgive a repentant trespasser follows—Mt. 18:21-23.

A. The Grammatical Structure: In Matthew 18:17 the Greek term *ekklesia* is found in the singular number with the definite article. This contextual *ekklesia* is not restricted to any geographical area, as for example, “the *ekklesia* which is at Corinth” etc. Yet, no scholar would infer by the definite article and unspecified application that the *ekklesia* in this context refers to anything other than the common and ordinary well-established meaning of an assembly.

B. The Contextual Relationship to Matthew 16:18-19: There is a clear connection between Matthew 16:18-19 and Matthew 18:18-19. Both use the singular *ekklesia* with the definite article. Neither restricts *ekklesia* to any geographical location. Both mention *ekklesia* in connection with the use of keys of the kingdom. This is sufficient to show that if the normal meaning harmonizes with Matthew 18:17-18 when the very same characteristics are found in Matthew 16:18-19, then the normal meaning should equally harmonize with Matthew 16:18.

Matthew 18:18 denies the interpretation that the keys of the kingdom was given solely to Peter as an individual or apostle. The plural pronoun “*you*” (umiv -v. 18) demands the administrator exceeds one individual (Peter). Hence, either the characterization that was suggested in the former lesson, that Peter is characterized as the kind of common member used by Christ in building his church (which Peter confirms by his own analogy with regard to every member being “lively stones”—1 Pet. 2:5), or he is representative of the elders and their position of authority over the congregation in Matthew 18:17-18.

Reformed Baptists interpret the plural “you” in Matthew 18:18 to be the body of *apostles* in Matthew 18:1 but are only able to advance that interpretation by having to substitute a “ruling body of *elders*” (since they admit the apostolic office is not perpetuated). However, the terms “apostles” and “elders” are not found in Matthew 18 but the term that is found is “*disciples*.” They assume this has reference only to the apostles.⁴² However, Acts 1:21-22 informs us that “*disciples*” in addition to the apostles were assembling with Christ “***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...***” That proves non-apostles were present and thus inclusive in the term “*disciples*” during all of this period. Whenever Matthew wished to distinguish between the apostles and the rest of the disciples he would identify them as the twelve (Mt. 10:2, 19:28; 20:17; 26:47). However, no such designation is found in Matthew 18.

Furthermore, the only elder that administered such power in the New Testament is “*Diotrephes*” and he is condemned rather than commended by the apostle John -

*I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, **wholoveth to have the preeminence among them**, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and **casteth them out of the church.**” -3 Jn. 9-10*

Many feel the doctrine of elder rule (as a distinct internal body of elders) over the church is the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes which Jesus condemned in Revelation (Rev. 2:6). The name “*Nicolaitanes*” is composed of two Greek terms “*niko*” (conqueror) and *laos* (people) or conquerors of the people.

Suffice to say, in every case of proper church discipline in Scripture, it is the church (including its leadership) that administer discipline in keeping with the democratic character of the *ekklesia*. For example, Paul addressed the *ekklesia* (not the elders) at Corinth in regard to placing the fornicating member under discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-13) and he noted that this was done by “*the many*”

⁴² *They make the very same wrong assumption with regard to Matthew 28:16-20. This passage will be dealt with in some detail later.*

or majority (1 Cor. 2:20). In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14 it is the *ekklesia* body as a whole with its leadership that administers and enforces the discipline of the *ekklesia*. The elders do rule (1) by example and (2) by placing God's Word before the assembly as the final authority, but they have no authority to enforce their rule or administer the keys of the kingdom as a separate body or council. The elders in Scripture are in subjection to the *ekklesia* as a body (Mt. 18:17; Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-3). The idea of "eldership rule" authority is Papal in nature, rather than New Testament in origin. The text says, "tell it to the church" rather than to any council of elders or to a pope.

C. The Grammatical Continuity: Matthew 18:15-20 is grammatically connected as one complete topic. All those mentioned in verses 15-16 (the offended person, the offender, the two or three witnesses) are those who are brought before the *ekklesia* in verse 17. They are all members of this *ekklesia* or else that *ekklesia* would have no jurisdiction over them. The plural pronoun "you" in verses 18-20 has for its nearest grammatical antecedent "church" in verse 17. The English noun "church" and the Greek *ekklesia* are both collective singular nouns. A collective noun is noun that is inclusive of a plural number of persons, places or things—e.g. herd, assembly, group, family, etc.

*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto **the church**: but if he neglect to hear **the church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 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. **Again** [palin] I say unto **you**, That if two of **you** shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*
 - Mt.18:17-20 - emphasis mine

Please note verse 19 and the word "again" [palin]. The term "again" demands that verses 19-20 is a continuation of the previous subject rather than introduction of a new subject. The first section deals with the proper steps followed by the offended in bringing it before the *ekklesia* if previous reconciliation fails (Mt. 18:15-18). The second section ("again") deals with

seeking wisdom to properly apply that authority in a unified manner (Mt. 18:19-20). The final section (Mt. 18:20-21) is concerned with the repetition of this process in dealing with an offender. The first aspect authorizes use of the keys by the church to settle such internal issues, while the second directs them to seek proper wisdom in exercising the keys in a unified manner.

Some imagine that verses 19-20 are unattached from the preceding context and these verses supposedly provide instruction or at least permission for any two or three believers to constitute an *ekklesia*. That is pure imagination at work. First, if any “two” or “three” believers automatically form a church whenever they meet, then such a church would have been formed in verse 16 where there is at minimum four baptized believers (offended, offender and at least “two” witnesses) and perhaps five (or three witnesses) assembled together. However, this group of baptized believers is further instructed to “tell the church” in verse 17 proving that just any two or three baptized believers do not constitute a church. Nor is this given in context for the purpose to constitute a church. Indeed, the context is that of an already constituted church and how it is to deal with offenders. Verses 19-20 requires a prayerfully led majority to be in agreement in the administration of the keys. The phrase “in my name” demands the administration of the keys should be performed in keeping with the revealed will of Christ. At the time this instruction was given, there was no New Testament scriptures and so only oral tradition and prayer were the means to ascertain the will of Christ. Even with the addition of New Testament Scriptures, prayerful leadership on the part of the congregation is required to deal with each situation. Proper administration of the keys in verse 18 requires wisdom gained through prayer (vv. 19-20) by the assembly as it has no authority to administer discipline contrary to the Scriptures. An *ekklesia* is an “assembly” and by definition, an “assembly” requires two or more persons at minimum to exist. The point is that administration of the keys is not the action of one individual believer (v. 16, e.g. Pope, Pastor, the offended, etc.), but is the action by an assembly which by definition requires two or more (vv. 19-20). The exercise of the keys is serious business which requires serious prayerful commitment in seeking the wisdom of God in such matters before exercising such authority.

In both Matthew 16:18-19 and Matthew 18:17-18 the administration of the keys are found in connection with the *ekklesia*. However, Matthew 18:15-18 provides a practical illustration of how those keys are administered.

Therefore, the *ekklesia* administering the keys must be of such a nature that can administer the keys as directed. The only possible kind of *ekklesia* that can administer the keys as instructed is an *ekklesia* that fits the ordinary normal meaning of the term. In both Matthew 16:18-19 and Matthew 18:17-20 the abstract institutional sense of *ekklesia* harmonizes perfectly with the overall context of each passage. What would not fit is the idea of a universal invisible kind of *ekklesia* as both instances use the very same grammatical expression—singular with a definite article without any geographical designation, and yet both administer the very same keys.

VIII. EKKLESIA IN REVELATION 1-3

Every instance where *ekklesia* is found in the singular in the book of Revelation, it is geographically confined to a specifically named *ekklesia*.

*Unto the angel of **the church** [thḡ ekkłhsiaV] of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; - Rev. 2:1*

*And unto the angel of **the church** [thḡ ekkłhsiaV] in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; - Rev.2:8*

*And to the angel of **the church** [thḡ ekkłhsiaV] in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; - Rev. 2:12*

*And unto the angel of **the church** [thḡ ekkłhsiaV] in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; - Rev. 2:18*

*And unto the angel of **the church** [thḡ ekkłhsiaV] in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. - Rev. 3:1*

*And to the angel of **the church** [thḡ ekkłhsiaV] in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; - Rev.*

3:7 *And unto the angel of **the church** [τῆς ἐκκλησίαςV] of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; - Rev. 3:14*

No one disputes that the historical use of *ekklesia* makes common sense in all of the above passages. All other instances are found in the plural which demands the normal meaning of the term.

*John to **the seven congregations** [ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαιV] which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne, - Rev. 1:4*

*Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto **the seven congregations** [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιV] which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. - Rev. 1:11*

*The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven **congregations** [ἐκκλησίαιV]: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven congregations. - Rev. 1:20*

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto **the congregations** [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιV]; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. - Rev.2:7*

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto **the congregations** [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιV]; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. - Rev. 2:11*

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto **the congregations** [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιV]; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. - Rev. 2:17 And I will kill her children with death; and all **the congregations** [ταῖς*

ekklhsiaiV] shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. - Rev. 2:23

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the congregations [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιςV]. - Rev. 2:29

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the congregations [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιςV]. - Rev. 3:6

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the congregations [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιςV]. - Rev. 3:13

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the congregations [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιςV]. - Rev. 3:22

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the congregations [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαιςV]. *I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.* - Rev. 22:16

Therefore, it is indisputable that the historical use of *ekklesia* makes good sense in every single instance it is used by Christ in the book of Revelation. The hermeneutic principle that governs proper interpretation is, if the common sense makes sense seek no other sense.

In order to force another meaning into Christ's use of *ekklesia* in the book of Revelation, one must resort to spiritualization. The basis for such spiritualization is with regard to the symbolic significance of the number seven. Some feel that the number seven in connection to the plural "congregations" must refer to the one universal singular "church" which finds expression in seven different ages until the rapture. However, this entire interpretation is based upon the presumption of the reality of a new and different meaning of *ekklesia* introduced by Christ. However, even the most radical universal church advocate freely admits that 22 out of 23 uses by Christ must retain the ordinary common historical meaning of *ekklesia*. That leaves only Matthew 16:18 to base such a claim that Christ introduced a new concept for *ekklesia*. However, as we have previously seen, the immediate and overall context of Matthew 16, the nature of the keys of the kingdom, and Peter's own commentary demonstrate that the common ordinary historical meaning of *ekklesia* makes good sense if understood in the institutional sense.

Moreover, the symbolism of “seven” in Revelation can actually fit the common meaning of the plural “*seven congregations*”? These seven can be representative of the various conditions of all true New Testament congregations in all generations until Jesus comes again. Indeed, that is precisely how he ultimately applies each church letter “*let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the congregations.*” He did not say “*unto the congregation which are in Asia*” but “*unto the congregations*” without a specific geographical restriction. If this interpretation is doubted, then look at his final use of *ekklesia* in Revelation 22:16.

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things
in the congregations*

The common meaning makes common sense. No one can deny that all the plural uses must retain the common meaning. No one can deny that all the singular cases must retain the common meaning because each case is geographically located. Hence, every case retains the common meaning. Only by resorting to spiritualization and an unproven theory is it possible to force an uncommon meaning for *ekklesia* into the book of Revelation. The common meaning makes perfect sense in every single use by Christ in Matthew and Revelation.

CONCLUSION: First, there can be no question that the initial giving of these keys to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19 was not in an individual or apostolic capacity, because the same authority is committed unto the plural “*you*” in Matthew 18:18. This pronoun has for its nearest antecedent the collective definite noun “*church*” in verse 17. This highly suggests that Peter is brought into the discussion about the church and keys in Matthew 16:18-19 simply as the representative material used by Christ to form visible local assemblies of which “*the church*” in Matthew 18:15-17 is manifestly that kind, as the context demands.

Second, there can be no question that the exercise of the keys in Matthew 18:18 demand that “*the church*” which exercises those keys in the manner described in Matthew 18:15-18 cannot be any different in nature than what the normal ordinary historical meaning of *ekklesia* suggests. Therefore, the nature of the keys defines the nature of the church exercising those keys. The keys are introduced immediately in direct relationship to “*my church*” in

Matthew 16:18 as it is introduced directly in relationship to the second and third use of “*the church*” by Christ in Matthew 18:17.

Christ’s use of *ekklesia* in the book of Revelation is consistent with its historical meaning. Finally, remember even if a new sense could make sense in any given passage, the golden rule of interpretation states that when the common ordinary meaning makes sense seek no other sense. In every case it has been demonstrated that the ordinary meaning of *ekklesia* makes good sense in every single passage.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is the singular “*key*” and plural “*keys*” used in relationship to Christ’s authority?
2. Identify four areas of authority in Scripture characterized by the term “*key*”
3. Does the plural “*you*” in Matthew 18:18 support the Roman Catholic idea that Jesus was giving the keys of the kingdom to Peter as an individual or as an apostle in distinction from the other apostles?
4. How does the future perfect influence the interpretation of the use of the keys as legislative or administrative in nature?
5. What does it mean to “*bind*” or “*loose*”?
6. Where are the terms “*elders*” or “*apostles*” or “*the twelve*” found in Matthew 18?
7. What is the nearest grammatical antecedent to the plural pronoun “*you*” in Matthew 18:18?
8. Is “*church*” a collective noun?
9. Does Paul address the elders or the church with regard to the matter of church discipline in 1 Cor. 5?
10. Does Paul say it was the “*elders*” or “*the many*” in the church at Corinth that disciplined the offender in 2 Cor. 2:6?
11. If the church is the custodian of the keys as suggested in Matthew 18:17-18, does not the nature of the keys defines the nature of the church that exercises them? If not, why not?
12. Why do we speak of “*church*” discipline if the exercise of discipline is not administered by the church including its leadership?

13. Is there any instance in Revelation where the singular or plural form of *ekkllesia* is found that the ordinary historical meaning of *ekkllesia* does not make sense?
14. Is it possible for the symbolism of “seven” congregations to fit the common ordinary meaning of *ekkllesia*?
15. Is the spiritualization of the use of *ekkllesia* in Revelation based upon any contextual basis or upon a presumed theological basis?

REQUIRED READING:

In Search of New Testament Congregations by Mark W. Fenison, pp. 240-243



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 4

The Pauline Use—Part 1

The Pauline Use—Part 2

PAGETURNER
The Body of Christ Metaphor
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 4 LESSON 1

The Pauline Usage of Ekklesia—Part 1

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to understand the Pauline method in constituting and strengthening congregations and, (2) to examine the circulatory letters by Paul and the use of generic nouns and, (3) to examine the different uses of *ekklesia* by Paul.

INTRODUCTION: Paul is the foremost theological representative of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. Paul's writings provide the majority of New Testament Scriptures (14 if we include Hebrews). Paul claims that Jesus Christ personally taught him the gospel (Gal. 1:10-12). Moreover, Paul claims that the "mystery" of the church concerns the inclusion of Gentiles into its membership on an equal level with Jews was personally revealed to him by Christ (Eph. 3:5). The use of *ekklesia* and its metaphors by Paul is considered to be the stronghold for advocates of the universal invisible church theory. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to carefully study his use of *ekklesia* and its metaphors.

I. THE PAULINE PARADIGM

When studying the Pauline usage of the term *ekklesia* many scholars do not consider some contextual characteristics of Paul's ministry. First, Paul was sent out by a particular congregation (Acts 13:1-4) and reported back to that same congregation at the close of each mission (Acts 14:27; 15:40; 18:22). Second, Paul had a definite missionary pattern he practiced. He would go on a missionary journey and preach the gospel, baptize the converts and then constitute them into congregations. If time and circumstances permitted, he would continue with them strengthening them in the faith

before moving on. He would then customarily return and encourage and deal with any problems. When circumstances did not permit his physical return to the congregations, he would either send messengers to enquire of their state, and/or send letters with them to comfort, encourage and correct these congregations. In Prison he would send what many would call circular letters intended to be read by several congregations (e.g. Col. 4:16). This is the Pauline Missionary Paradigm.

However, a word must be said about the very reason Paul was called by Christ to be an apostle. The all Jewish congregation at Jerusalem had been commissioned with a worldwide mission that included the Gentiles (Mt. 28:19; Acts 1:8). However, the church at Jerusalem was reluctant to obey the extent of this commission. Indeed, there is no attempt to go to the gentiles in Acts 1-9. It was in Acts 9 that Christ called and commissioned Paul to explicitly go to the Gentiles and designated him the apostle to the Gentiles.⁴³ Even during Acts 9-11 there was not much attempt by the all Jewish congregation at Jerusalem to reach the Gentiles. Some feel this is one primary reason why Christ sent persecution upon the congregation at Jerusalem through Saul whom he would later call to do what they failed to do.

Gentiles would be received as equal members with the Jews into the congregations of Christ and his mission was to proclaim this among the Gentiles (stop here and read my booklet “The Middle Wall of Partition”).⁴⁴

A. ORGANIZING, TEACHING, AND REVISITING:

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with

⁴³ *The Holy Spirit never rejected Matthias as the successor to Judas. Indeed, from that point on there is constant reference to “the twelve” in the book of Acts. Paul was not called to succeed Judas but was specifically called and sent as the apostle “to the gentiles” whereas the “twelve” were apostles to the circumcision (Gal. 2:9).*

⁴⁴ <https://static.secure.website/wscfus/3107401/5621060/the-middle-wall2.pdf>

fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. - Acts 14:21-23

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. - Acts 15:36

And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. - Acts 18:22-23

When Paul could not go himself, he would write a letter and send it by the hand of a trusted helper in the ministry (Timothy, Titus, etc.).

So, he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.—Acts 19:22

For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.—1 Cor. 4:17

I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?—2 Cor. 12:18

Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.—Eph. 6:22

I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.—Philip. 2:28

Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; - Col. 4:8

And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: - 1 Thes. 3:2

And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.—2 Tim. 4:12

When Paul was imprisoned, he continued this nurturing ministry through circular letters:

Col. 4:16 *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

1Th. 5:27 *I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.*

It is in these prison epistles or circulatory letters in which we find the abundant use of abstract generic nouns. The generic noun is the perfect grammatical vehicle to teach about various subjects to various congregations that would read the same letter. The generic use of nouns makes the subject applicable to each relevant reader, or each congregation that reads the letter.

The prison epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians) contain several examples of generic nouns:

1. The wife—Eph. 5:23, 33
2. The husband—Eph. 5:23
3. The flesh—Col. 1:23
4. The body (human)—Col. 1:23
5. The children—Col. 3:6
6. The old man—Col. 3:9
7. The new man—Col. 3:10

The abstract use of “*the church*” and “*the body*” not only makes common sense with regard to the circular nature of the letters, but it is a perfect ordinary use of nouns that must be first considered before rejecting the common ordinary meaning of *ekklesia*. If the ordinary meaning makes sense, then it is wrong to interpret these terms by any other meaning, even if another new meaning can make sense.

B. THE CONTEXTUALIZED PRONOUNS

Another serious oversight by many scholars as they read the Pauline epistles is the failure to understand that Paul is writing to congregations of like faith and order. He is writing congregations that he constituted

and disciplined in “*the faith*.” He is not writing to Christians divided into denominations and by different doctrines.

Therefore, the pronouns “*we...us... our...you...ye*” refer to Christians who share the same faith and order. Those congregations and Christians who were the product of other apostles were still constituted and disciplined by those who are like faith and order with Paul. There were no denominational divisions in the apostolic period.

However, most scholars approach the Pauline Epistles and the pronouns “*we...us... our...you...ye*” with the mindset that Paul is addressing generic Christians without any contextual restrictions. Instead of recognizing he is addressing water baptized believing congregational members of like faith and order. They ignore that and simply interpret and apply these pronouns universally to any kind of Christian regardless of denomination affiliation or no affiliation at all. As will be seen later, this kind of interpretation leads to contextual contradictions, especially when it comes to texts that demand disciplinary separation from any “*brother*” who departs from the faith.

Moreover, when Paul speaks about things all his readers had in common with each other he would employ “*we...us... our*.” This not only included a common salvation, but a common way of service, ordinances, ministry and etc. However, when he is addressing a specific problem or issue with regard to a specific congregation he would employ “*you...ye*” exempting himself and those in his traveling party.

For example, when Paul addressed the specific issue of congregational discipline of the fornicating member at Corinth he employed “*ye...you*”

***Your** glorying is not good. Know **ye** not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*

*Purge out therefore the old leaven, that **ye** may be a new lump, as **ye** are unleavened.... I wrote unto **you** in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must **ye** needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto **you** not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.... do not **ye** judge them that are within?*

But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person. - 1 Cor. 5:6-11, 13

However, congregational discipline is not a practice restricted just to the congregation at Corinth but is a practice that all New Testament congregations have in common with each other. Therefore, when speaking in general about discipline and its relationship to the Lord's Supper he switches to "our...us"

For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. - 1 Cor. 5:7-8

The only "feast" that we "keep" wherein we celebrate "Christ our Passover" which requires the use of "unleavened bread" is the Lord's Supper. Paul is using the Old Testament command to remove all leaven from the houses of Israel prior to observing the Passover as an analogy for proper disciplinary preparation for observing the Lord's Supper by a congregation. This purging is applied to the preparation of the congregational body (1 Cor. 5) as well as to the individual personal body (1 Cor. 11:28-34). The Lord's Supper is common to all congregations in the New Testament period, and so Paul employs the plural pronouns "our...us" when referring to a general truth practiced by all the congregations.

However, the "unleavened bread" used in the Supper in addition to symbolizing Christ's literal body, also symbolized the metaphorical congregational body, or the particular congregation observing the Supper. Paul says that the particular "leaven" (fornicating member) will "leaven THE WHOLE lump" and only by purging out the "leaven" can this "whole lump" be made a "new lump." Hence, "the whole lump" or what would constitute "THE WHOLE" lump of unleavened bread used in the Lord's Supper symbolizes the actual congregational body eating it ("that ye may be a new lump" he did not say "we"). All Christians living all over the world cannot possibly be symbolized by "the whole lump." No congregation can administer discipline that removes a "brother" (v. 11) from Christianity! He is speaking about removal of a person from within their own congregation at Corinth—

“Therefore put away from **among yourselves** that wicked person”—v. 13. He did not say among ourselves but “*yourselves*.”

With regard to ecclesiastical corrections, it is an interpretational error to read into these pronouns present day Christianity divided into various denominations. These pronouns refer to congregations of like faith and order.

II. PARTICULAR TEXT TYPE USES

Paul uses *ekklēsia* in the singular 40 times.⁴⁵ He uses *ekklēsia* in the plural 20 times. So, in its singular and plural expression Paul uses *ekklēsia* a total of 60 times. It is among the 40 singular expressions that some believe Paul gave a new meaning to *ekklēsia*.

A. UNIVERSAL EXPRESSIONS

The phrase “*the whole church*” is found only three times in Scripture and two of those three times is by Paul. In both cases it refers to the congregation located in Corinth.

*Gaius mine host, and of **the whole church**, saluteth you.
Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus
a brother. - Rom. 16:23*

*If therefore **the whole church** be come together into one
place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that
are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?
- 1 Cor. 14:23*

The only other time this phrase is found is by Luke in Acts 15:22. However, in this passage Luke not only distinguishes Paul and Barnabas from the “*whole church*” but neither the congregation at Antioch nor the congregations established by Paul in Acts 13–14 are present. Hence, this is a reference to the congregation located in Jerusalem.

*Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with **the whole
church**, to send chosen men **of their own company** to Antioch*

⁴⁵ Three other uses of the singular are found in footnotes at the end of epistles (Rom. 16:27; 2 Tim. 4:22; Tit. 3:15)

with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: - Acts 15:22

The only instance where the phrase “*all the church*” is found is Acts 5:11 where it can only refer to the congregation at Jerusalem. Hence, every universal expression by Paul is restricted to a particular assembly. Therefore, discounting the twenty plural expressions, and discounting these two universal expressions that leaves only 38 cases where Paul uses the definite singular.

B. “*THE CHURCH*” AS A PARTICULAR CONCRETE CONGREGATION

In all of the following 12 cases the definite singular refers to a specific congregation:

*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of **the church which is at Cenchrea:** - Rom. 16:1*

*Unto **the church of God which is at Corinth**, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: - 1 Cor. 1:2*

*If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in **the church.** - 1 Cor. 6:4*

*For first of all, when **ye come together in the church**, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. - 1 Cor. 11:18*

*What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye **the church of God**, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. - 1 Cor. 11:22*

*Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of **the church.** - 1 Cor. 14:12*

*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto **the church of God which is at Corinth**, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: 2 Cor.*

1:1 *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in **the church of the Laodiceans**; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.* - Col. 4:16

*Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto **the church of the Thessalonians** which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* - 1 Thes. 1:1

*Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto **the church of the Thessalonians** in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:* - 2 Thes. 1:1

*(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of **the church of God**?)* - 1 Tim. 3:5

*If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not **the church** be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.* - 1 Tim. 5:16

That leaves 25 cases of the definite singular yet to be examined.

C. CLEAR INSTITUTIONAL USES OF “THE CHURCH”

In the following verses it is clear from the immediate context that the application must be the common meaning of *ekklesia*. The context shows that it is applicable to the congregation at Corinth but it is not restricted to just that particular congregation but is applicable to “*all the congregations*” (1 Cor. 14:33). He is referring to general truths applicable to each and every congregation, thus the use of the institutional abstract sense.

*He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth **the church**.* - 1 Cor. 14:4

1Co 14:5 *I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that **the church** may receive edifying.* - 1 Cor. 14:5

*Yet in **the church** I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.* - 1 Cor. 14:19

*But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in **the church**; and let him speak to himself, and to God. - 1 Cor. 14:28*
*And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in **the church**. - 1 Cor. 14:35*

Notice the context is within the public assembly where individual members exercise their gifts. This establishes the use of “*the church*” in the abstract institutional sense in the book of first Corinthians as a grammatical device used by Paul. This leaves 21 cases yet to be examined.

D. THE CHURCH IN HOUSES

*Likewise greet **the church that is in their house**. - Rom. 16:5*
*And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to **the church in thy house**: - Phm. 1:2*

These churches are located within houses and so, the common meaning makes perfect sense. This leaves only 19 instances where some feel that the singular with the definite article may take on a new meaning.

E. THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

*For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted **the church** of God. - 1 Cor. 15:9*
*For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted **the church** of God, and wasted it: - Gal. 1:13*
*Concerning zeal, persecuting **the church**; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. - Php. 3:6*

Some think Paul is using the term *ekklesia* in a new sense in these passages. However, Paul is referring historically to the time he was known as the unregenerate Saul. Luke specifically identifies “*the church*” Saul Persecuted:

*And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against **the church which was at Jerusalem**; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . . As for Saul, he made havock of **the church**, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. - Acts 8:1,3*

There can be no question that at this time the only church in existence was “*the church which was at Jerusalem*” which was “*the church of God*.” So, the normal meaning of *ekklesia* with the definite article makes perfect sense, even without considering its normal abstract institutional sense.

However, some use the critical text reading of Acts 9:31 and the singular with the definite article to object to the normal meaning of *ekklesia*.

*Then had **the church** throughout all Judaea, and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified. - Acts 9:31*

The Received text reads as follows with the plural form:

*Then had **the churches** rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. - Acts 9:31*

Which reading is correct? Paul, looking back at this very issue when writing the Galatians uses the plural, thus confirming the Authorized Version in Acts 9:31:

*Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto **the churches** of Judaea which were in Christ. - Gal. 1:21-22*

However, Dr. Overbey believes “*the church*” as used in the Critical Text could just as easily refer to the congregation at Jerusalem which had been scattered into these regions by Saul’s persecution. Later, these fleeing members of the congregation at Jerusalem may have been organized into separate congregations in the locations they had been driven. Either way the historical meaning makes sense and the rule is when the common meaning makes sense seek no other sense. This leaves 16 cases to be examined.

F. THE HOUSE OF GOD CHURCH—1 TIM. 3:15

*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.** - 1 Tim. 3:15*

Paul is writing Timothy as the Pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 13 “at Ephesus”). 1 and 2 Timothy along with Titus are commonly referred to as *the Pastoral Epistles*. The phrase “*the house of God*” and all of its derivatives (“the Lord’s house”; “God’s house” etc.) are used precisely 313 times in the Old and New Testament Scripture. 1 Timothy 3:15 is its 312th occurrence. In all 311 previous occurrences it is used only to describe the designated place of public worship, where a qualified ministry offered up qualified sacrifices and taught and observed a qualified faith and practice. This phrase (“*the house of God*”) refers to what God designed after a divine pattern where everything was to be performed in keeping with that pattern. Hence, it was a place where all who participated could and should “*know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.*”

The Jewish mind identified this phrase with the only qualified and designated place for public worship, where a designated and qualified ministry served, and administered designated and qualified offerings. Paul is a Jew writing to a young man trained in Jewish thinking (2 Tim. 1:5) and trained under the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). It is not likely that Paul would take a phrase known only to refer to the public appointed house for worship and use it for something entirely different without any explanation.

In context, Paul is describing a designated and qualified ministry that would serve in “*the house of God*” (1 Tim. 3:1-13) as a public place for worship. There is a qualified sacrifice (1 Tim. 3:16) that characterizes “*the house of God*” and a qualified doctrinal faith (1 Tim. 4:1). It is this carefully qualified ministry, ordinances and faith that made it the “*pillar and ground of the truth.*”

Can the ordinary normal meaning of *ekklesia* fit here? Yes! Could the abstract institutional use fit here? Yes! However, the phrase “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” cannot fit denominationally and doctrinally divided Christians scattered all over the globe.

15 cases are yet to be examined.

G. THE SINGULAR USE WITHOUT THE DEFINITE ARTICLE:

*Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, **no church** communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. - Php. 4:15*

*For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in **every church**. - 1 Cor. 4:17*

The normal meaning of *ekklesia* makes perfect sense in these two passages. Thus far the normal meaning of *ekklesia* makes perfect sense in 27 out of 40 singular uses of *ekklesia* by Paul. This leaves only 13 cases yet to examine.

CONCLUSION: Paul's missionary paradigm is patterned after the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 2:41. He would go to a certain place, preach the gospel, and administer baptism to those who received the word, and then constitute them into an *ekklesia* and teach them. He would then return as time and circumstances permitted and build them up in the common faith. When he was under arrest or in prison he would continue his nurturing ministry to these congregations through circular letters. The generic use of nouns is a common feature in such letters and necessary to the nature of a circular letter. Thus, it should be no surprise to find *ekklesia* and its metaphors used generically. After examining all the above instances of his use of *ekklesia*, there are no cases where the normal historical meaning of *ekklesia* does not make perfect sense. Finally, remember even if a new sense could make sense in any given passage, the golden rule of interpretation states that when the common ordinary meaning makes sense seek no other sense. In every case it has been demonstrated that the ordinary meaning of *ekklesia* makes good sense in every single passage.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Did the Pauline Missionary paradigm reflect the exact instructions in the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:19-20 and as practiced in Acts 2:41-42? If not, why not?
2. Does the very nature of circular letters promote the use of generic nouns?
3. What is the historic context of Paul's use of personal pronouns "we... us...ye...you"?
4. Who taught Paul the gospel and the doctrine of the church?
5. Would Jesus instruct Paul in the nature of the church differently than how Christ taught and employed it to the twelve?
6. Did Christ command the church at Jerusalem to go preach to Gentiles and baptize and constitute them into congregations?
7. Do you find any evidence that the Jewish congregation at Jerusalem obeyed the Gentile extent of the commission in Acts 1-9?
8. Do you find any great headway to the Gentiles in Acts 10-11?
9. Why did Jesus call another apostle and designate his primary mission was to the Gentiles?
10. Is there any use of *ekklesia* considered thus far that the normal historical meaning of *ekklesia* cannot make sense? If so, what case is it?

REQUIRED READING:

The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament, by E.H. Overbey, pp. 44-49

The Baptist Pattern Primer by Mark W. Fenison

The Middle Wall of Partition by Mark W. Fenison—p. 4-32

WEEK 4 LESSON 2

The Pauline Usage of Ekklesia—Part 2

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to examine the most debated uses of *ekklesia* by Paul and, (2) to continue to demonstrate that the common meaning of *ekklesia* can make good sense even in these debatable passages;

INTRODUCTION: Paul uses the term *ekklesia* a total of 60 times. 45 cases fit the normal historical usage. Out of these 45 cases there are 5 clear cases where Paul uses the abstract institutional meaning of *ekklesia* as demonstrated in the previous lesson. In the 40 cases where *ekklesia* is found in the singular, 27 cases have been examined in our previous lesson and have been shown to fit the normal historical meaning. In this lesson, the final 13 instances will be examined under the general heading of each epistle where it is found. All remaining 13 cases are found in four epistles of Paul - (1) 1 Corinthians; (2) Ephesians; (3) Colossians; (4) Hebrews. If it can be shown that the common historical abstract use of *ekklesia* can fit these final 13 cases then the case for the theory of a universal church is seriously weakened.

I. 1 CORINTHIANS

The abstract institutional use of *ekklesia* has already been established in the epistle to the Corinthians. Therefore, if the abstract sense of *ekklesia* can make sense in the remaining uses in 1 Corinthians, then no new meaning should be accepted. Two of the final 13 cases are found in the epistle to the Corinthians. They are 1 Cor. 10:32 and 1 Cor. 12:28.

A. 1 CORINTHIANS 10:32

*Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to **the church of God**: - 1 Cor. 10:32*

The congregation at Corinth is distinctly called “*the church of God which is at Corinth*” (1 Cor. 1:2). One of the issues causing offence within this congregation is described by Paul in the following verses:

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he? - 1 Cor. 10:20-22

Some members in this congregation were participating in feasts (at someone's home) where the food had previously been offered to false gods in the pagan temples at Corinth. Members who had been previously converted from such pagan worship would no doubt be offended by this practice by other members. Unbelieving Jews in Corinth would naturally be offended by this practice as they would identify the food with idolatry as well as unclean. However, those members participating in these feasts argued that it was just food and such gods had no real existence, and they were just being cordial by accepting the invitation to dinner. Paul responded as follows:

*If **any of them** that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if **any man** say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, **but of the other**: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: - 1 Cor. 10:27-32*

Paul is obviously addressing the local concerns with regard to “*the Jews*” and “*the gentiles*” in connection with “*the church of God*” located in Corinth where the impact of this practice was causing problems. However, the abstract uses (generic and institutional senses) can just as easily applied as the same instruction would be applicable to any specific congregation in any place then or now.

He does not specify a particular gentile or a particular Jew that would be offended, or a particular congregation. So, he is clearly addressing Jews and Gentiles in the abstract sense. Verse 32 does not specify a particular geographical church, although the immediate context demonstrates it is applicable to a concrete example. So once again, the abstract use of *ekklesia* can make sense. What would be true of the congregation located in Corinth would be equally true of any other congregation wherever it may be located. For example, the congregations at Rome dealt with the very same kind of potential offense between Jews and Gentiles in and outside of those congregations (Rom. 14-15). There now remains 12 instances by Paul to examine.

B. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:28

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. - 1 Cor.12:28

Some at Corinth had made tongues the preeminent (“*first*” Gr. *protos*) gift and sign of spirituality. Paul responds by providing a proper prioritizing of spiritual gifts and their use within the institutional church (v. 28). In Ephesians 4:11 apostles and prophets are identified as “*gifts*.” Indeed, the congregational service and the proper prioritizing of such gifts is the subject matter of chapter fourteen (14:4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 40). As demonstrated in the previous lesson, “*the church*” in chapter fourteen has its immediate application to the congregation at Corinth but Paul uses “*the church*” in its abstract institutional sense all five times because the ultimate application is to “*all the churches*” (1 Cor. 14:33).

The contextual pattern is clear. Paul provides abstract instruction concerning the congregational body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 followed immediately by a concrete application to the congregational body at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27). He provides abstract instruction concerning the prioritizing

of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28-13:13 followed immediately by a concrete application to the congregational body at Corinth (1 Cor. 14). There can be no doubt that 1 Corinthians 14 is the direct application of the previous abstract instruction found in 1 Corinthians 12:28-13:13.

Significantly, the use of *ekklesia* in chapter fourteen is used by Paul in the abstract institutional sense intended to be instruction for “*all the churches*” (1 Cor. 14:33). No doubt the immediate concrete application of chapter 14 is the congregation at Corinth but Paul uses the term *ekklesia* in such an abstract manner that it is applicable to “*all churches*” (1 Cor. 14:33-34).

Therefore, the abstract institutional sense not only makes perfect sense in 1 Cor. 12:28, but the abstract institutional sense perfectly fits this ultimate application to “*all the churches*” (1 Cor. 14:33-34). Hence, the axiom is, if the common sense makes sense seek no other sense. There now remains 11 instances by Paul to examine. 8 out of the final 11 instances are found in Ephesians, while 2 are found in Colossians with the final one found in the book of Hebrews.

II. EPHESIANS

Of the remaining 11 occurrences of “*the church*” ten are found in two epistles that are commonly included in what many call the “prison epistles” of Paul (Ephesians and Colossians). The definite singular occurs eight times in Ephesus, and two times in Colossians. Significantly, no one denies that these two epistles contain generic nouns (“*the husband*,” “*the wife*,” “*the flesh*,” “*the old man*,” “*the new man*,” “*the children*” etc.). Hence, the very nature of a circulatory letter is designed to address several congregations about common issues and it would naturally promote the generic use of *ekklesia* and its metaphors as the most common-sense way to apply what is being taught to each congregation reading these circulatory epistles.

Moreover, it shall be proven (see Lesson One: Week 13 under the topic “Language of Accommodation”) beyond any reasonable dispute that Acts 20:28 in context must refer to the *ekklesia* located at Ephesus.⁴⁶ If this kind of redemptive language can be applied to the normal historical meaning of *ekklesia*, then there is no passage in Ephesians or Colossians which the normal meaning of *ekklesia* cannot be applied.

⁴⁶ See E.H. Overbey, *The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament*, pp. 33- 34; The same “flock” in verse 28 is the very same “flock” in verse 29 that is further described in verse 30. It is the “elders” in verse 13 that are made the overseers of the “flock” in verse 28-29.

Many believe these epistles are designed to be circulated among the congregations in this region. Many congregations in this region are listed by John in Revelation 2-3 where Ephesus stands at the head of the list (Rev. 2:1) simply because anyone delivering mail from the West (Rome) to these congregations would begin at Ephesus.

Paul most likely sent both letters (Ephesians, Colossians) at the same time by the same messenger (Tychicus–Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). You will notice in any map provided in your Bible that the Meander River valley is accessible from Ephesus and that Tychicus would have to travel by Laodicea in order to reach Colossae. The congregations of Colossae and Laodicea were very close to each other. Paul instructed the church at Colossae:

And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.—Col. 4:16

There is reasonable evidence that these prison epistles were designed to be read by all the congregations in a certain region. The receiving church would keep the original but make copies and pass on the copies to surrounding congregations. Indeed, Tertullian in the 2nd century claims that the congregation which initially received an apostolic writing would retain the original copy, but yet the other congregations had copies of that original among them so that the whole New Testament canon was available to all the congregations.⁴⁷ The abstract use of *ekklesia* with its metaphors would be as natural in such a letter in keeping with the obvious abstract use of “*the husband....the wife....the flesh....the new man....the old man....the children....etc.*”

⁴⁷ “Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, run over the apostolic congregations, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, **in which their own authentic writings are read**, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally.”—Tertullian, **On Prescription Against Heretics**, Chapter xxxvi. p. 260—emphasis mine

However, Tertullian claimed that even the heretics Valentinus and Marcion had copies of the full volume of apostolic writings which they corrupted.

“One man perverts the Scriptures with his hand, another their meaning by his exposition. For although Valentinus seems to use **the entire volume**, he has none the less laid violent hands on the truth only with amore cunning mind and skill than Marcion.”—Tertullian, *Ibid.*, chapter xxxviii, p. 260

A. EPHESIANS 1:22

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, - Eph. 1:22

Context is everything here. The issue to resolve is whether the metaphor “*the head*” refers to spiritual union or merely to Christ’s position of authority? Notice in the context that he was raised to “*the right hand*” of the Father to be “*above*” all things:

and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, - Eph. 1:20-22

The “*right hand*” position clearly is a metaphor of position of authority. Then notice the second metaphor “*hath put all things under his feet.*” This is another metaphor to emphasize authority over those things beneath his feet. There is sufficient contextual evidence to prove that the metaphor “*the head*” also refers to authority “*over all things.*” Notice that he is “*the head over all things*” as much as he is head of the church. If the metaphor “*head*” refers to spiritual union, then he is in spiritual union with “*all things*” as much as he is in spiritual union with the church. That would teach pantheism, as pantheism teaches that God is spiritually one with nature and therefore all things are God.

The context is clearly using metaphors to emphasize his authority “*over all things*” whether it is “*principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but the world to come. And hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church.*”

The institutional use of *ekklēsia* makes perfect sense especially in the context of authority. Christ is the final authority over the institutional church. The institutional church is his metaphorical body (“*which is his body*”) consisting of water immersed baptized believers as represented by those individual assemblies reading this epistle. This instructs the congregation at Ephesus with regard to their relationship to Christ as a body of baptized believers to be subject to Christ’s authority. More significantly with regard

to His authority, the church as an institution is the visible expression of the kingdom where the exercise of “*the keys of the kingdom*” or the visible expression of His authority on earth is manifested. The nature of the keys demands that the administrator must be of such a nature that it can administer them. No universal invisible *ekklesia* can administer the keys. Therefore, the headship of Christ is manifested in and through the institutional church on earth.

The final phrase “*the fullness of him that filleth all and all*” does not refer to the church, but merely continues the contextual theme. The fullness of Him—meaning his full and universal authority—that filleth all in all—is just another way for saying that his authority is comprehensive over the whole universe.

Finally, the metaphor of “*the head*” is consistently used by Paul to mean final authority. Later in Ephesians, Paul says that Christ is “*the head of the church*” just as the husband is the head of the wife. This is a metaphor for the position of authority. The body of the wife is not headless, nor is the head of the husband transplanted on the top of the body of the wife. Paul’s intent is clearly manifested in his letter to the Corinthians:

*But I would have you know, that **the head** of every man is Christ; and **the head** of the woman is the man; and **the head** of Christ is God. - 1 Cor. 11:3*

He is clearly speaking of the position of authority established by God in creation ultimately with regard to the man and woman (see verse 8-9). Moreover, in the Divine Trinity, the Father is in a position of authority over Christ.

Remember, the rules that govern the proper use of metaphors will not allow for the use of the plural (“heads”) when the literal noun from which the metaphor is drawn does not inherently have that characteristic as a plural. Hence, Christ is “*the head of EVERY MAN*” just as he is the head of every church which conveys the same idea as plural “heads” but in the correct grammatical form.

The normal meaning of *ekklesia*, if understood in the abstract institutional use can make good sense in the context. There are only 10 more cases to examine.

B. EPHESIANS 3:10

*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by **the church** the manifold wisdom.* - Eph. 3:10

The angels in heaven are being considered. Rebellion took place in heaven before it took place on earth. God has designed the worship service of the *ekklesia* to reveal “*the manifold wisdom*” of God unto angels in heaven.

In the tabernacle and temple, cherubim were carved into the lid of the ark in the holy place as well as woven into the fabric within. Angels are in the presence of God in heaven, and it should be no mystery that angels are present in the *ekklesia* because it is the “*house of God*.” During the public worship, which is characterized by Paul as the place of “*prayer and prophesying*” angels are said to be present (1 Cor. 11:10).

Peter says that angels are interested in learning the things of God with regard to the redemption of man:

*Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.*** - 1 Pet. 1:12

The *ekklesia* is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” because it is the “*house of God*.” In the Old Testament the “*house of God*” was the designated place for public worship because all things that characterized it are in keeping with a divine pattern, and thus the revelation of the glory of God. Everything about it revealed a “*due order*” according to a divine pattern. The house was constructed according to a divine plan. The ministry was qualified according to a divine plan. The ordinances were performed according to a divine plan. The “*house of God*” by its very constitution and administrative order revealed the “*manifold wisdom of God*.” So, in the Jewish mind the words “*the house of God*” brought to mind the place for designated public worship because all things manifested the divine pattern whereby the wisdom of God was revealed. The New Testament *ekklesia* is called the “*house of God*” because it is constituted according to a divine plan (Mt. 16:18; 28:19-20; Acts 2:41). Its ministry is qualified according to a proper divine pattern (1 Tim. 3:1-

13), and its ordinances are qualified and administered according to a proper divine pattern.

The presence and glory of God is manifested wherever an *ekklesia* is constituted and functioning after the due order set forth in Scripture. It is this “*due order*” that makes possible public worship ‘*in truth*’ (Jn. 4:24). When the true order of public worship is joined with worship “*in spirit*” then what is offered up are “*acceptable*” sacrifices or true worship (1 Pet. 2:5). Hence, every assembly that is not constituted according to the divine pattern is not “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” but a perversion of the truth (e.g. infant baptized membership). Hence, where the ordinances are not administered in keeping with the divine pattern of Scriptures acceptable public worship is absent (e.g. pouring, sprinkling, or baptizing in order to be saved, etc.).⁴⁸

Moreover, the words “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” are oxymoronic when it comes to Christianity per se in its divided denominational and diverse doctrinal condition, or if used to describe the doctrinally divided state of all Christians in this world.

The abstract use of *ekklesia* makes perfect sense in this context and the maxim is “*if the common sense makes sense, seek no other sense.*” There are 8 more cases to examine.

C. EPHESIANS 3:21

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. - Eph. 3:21

Not everything done and said by Christians glorifies God. As previously stated, the most visible expression for glorifying God by the people of God is in the institutional house of God as “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” There the manifold wisdom of God is being preaching, taught and practiced in a visible manner as it is nowhere else on earth.

The New Testament pattern for glorifying God in the institutional house of God is set forth by Paul in Ephesians 4:1-15. The following is a brief outline for glorifying God by Christ in the congregation as an institution:

1. It is the chief responsibility of the institutional congregation—4:1

⁴⁸ For further study true worship see my book “**Worship: Personal and Public**” on our church website. <http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/books/by/mark/fenison.html>

2. It requires the right attitude (worship in spirit)—4:2-3
3. It requires the right constitutional elements and maturity in truth (worship in truth)—4:4-15
 - a. It requires essentials for proper constitution of body membership—4:4-6
 - b. It requires essential gifts of leadership—4:7-11
 - c. It requires conformation to “*the faith*” once delivered—4:12-14
 - d. It requires the committed application of all previous essentials to reach the goal of glorifying God by Christ in the congregation—4:15

Paul introduces the essentials for glorifying God in the institutional house of God by first setting forth their obligation to glorify God (4:1).

The Greek language used by Paul presents a picture of a scale. The riches provided by Christ are placed on one side of the scale. Our responsibility to “*walk worthily*” of those riches are placed on the other side of the scale. The first essential to glorify God through Christ in the institutional house of God is unity in attitude which is necessary to worship “*in spirit*”—vv. 2-3

The second essential to glorify God through Christ in the institutional house of God are those things which are necessary to worship “*in truth*”—vv. 4-14. They consist of doctrinal and practical essentials, gifts, body membership and maturity in the truth.

Why does Paul begin with “*one body*” instead of “*one Lord*” or “*one Spirit*” or “*one hope*” etc.? Because the most visible “*bond*” of practical unity is “*one body*.” The word “*bond*” in verse 3 is the term used in the fields when a sheaf of wheat was bound together by wrapping a cord around it, as an assembly of wheat. The right attitude is essential for practical unity of diverse people in “*one body*.” Existing in “*one body*” is the most practical expression of unity.

Furthermore, this is a prominent Gentile congregation at Ephesus. Previous to the New Testament administration they would have existed in a highly segregated condition in the former house of God. Paul reminds them of this segregated worship in the former house of God due to “*the middle wall of partition*” (Eph. 2:14) that separated them from all other bodies of worship within the temple compound. Indeed, as one advanced beyond the “*middle wall of partition*” within the former house of God there were multiple segregated bodies (court of women, court of men, Levite’s in holy place). The former house of God was not “*one body*” with regard to

worship but multiple bodies divided due to race, gender and social status. Hence, what stood out and separated the New Testament house of God from the former was meeting together as “*one body*” without racial, gender or social segregation.

This “*body*” is “*one*” in number and in kind. It is “*one*” in number because it is the “*one*” and only body which the individual reader/listener of the epistle would be a member. If the reader resides in Ephesus, then it is the “*one*” at Ephesus. If the reader resides in Corinth then it is the “*one*” at Corinth. However, both the *ekklesia* in Ephesus and Corinth are also “*one*” in kind. The very same kind of church “*body*” existing at Ephesus also exists at Corinth, as Paul tells the Corinthian that “*Ye are a body of Christ*”.

The next series of ones are logically connected to the prerequisites for membership in that “*one body*.”

New Testament congregations receive into body membership only those who professed to be Spirit born again believers. They do not believe the new birth was obtained by ordinances but by the Spirit. When a person confessed their salvation (e.g. “*one faith*”) as the prerequisite to be received into “*one body*” (thus metaphorical “*members*”) they had to confess a Spirit born conversion experience that encountered the “*one Spirit*” in new birth. This Spirit is also “*one*” in number, as well as “*one*” in kind. We are commanded to try the spirits because there are many spirits. However, there is only “*one*” in number and “*one*” in kind for the Christian in relationship to his salvation experience, which is a necessary profession to be received into the membership of the institutional body of Christ, as well as, for service in the institutional body of Christ.

Inseparable from the “*one Spirit*” is “*the one hope*” of that calling. There is no such thing as new birth apart from being called to “*the one hope*” as it is that very hope proclaimed in the gospel that the Holy Spirit makes effectual as His creative Word to effectually call the elect out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (2 Cor. 4:6). There are many different kinds of hopes. However, for the Christian there is but “*one*” in number and in kind with regard to personal salvation. The “*one*” in number is the hope revealed in the gospel by the power of the Spirit. The “*one*” in kind is that revealed in the true gospel, as opposed to “*another gospel*.” That “*one hope*” revealed in the true gospel is that which the Spirit makes effectual (1Thes. 1:4-5; 2 Cor. 4:5-6; James 1:18; etc.).

That “*one*” hope expressed in the Gospel is inseparable from the Person and work of “*one Lord*.” For the Christian there is but “*one*” Lord in number and in kind. There are many “*lords*” but only “*one*” for the Christian—The Lord Jesus Christ is “*Lord of lords*.” There are many kinds of lords (good, bad, human, none human, etc.) but only one in kind that is recognized as our sovereign—the God man—The Lord Jesus Christ.

This encounter with “*one Spirit*” through the effectual call unto “*one hope*” that is centered in the Person and work of “*one Lord*” is expressed by “*one faith*.” This “*one faith*” is both “*one*” in number and “*one*” in kind. It is one in number because it the “*one faith*” professed at the point of initial salvation. It is one in kind because there are many different kinds of faith (dead faith, vain faith, etc.). This “*one faith*” is confessed in conjunction with “*one baptism*.” There are many kinds of baptism (water, Spirit, suffering, baptism unto Moses, etc.) but there is only “*one*” which follows “*one faith*” as part of a public profession of salvation (Mt. 16:15-16), and that is water immersion. The so-called “spirit baptism” of the universal invisible church theory, according to their theory, precedes rather than follows “*one faith*.”⁴⁹ Moreover, the only baptism that has been promised “*until the end of the world*” (Mt. 28:19-20) is water baptism. There is no command in Scripture to seek any other kind of baptism but that “*one baptism*” in water.

We now come to the final “*one*” in this series of ones. Ephesians 3:21 says that it is God (the Father) who is glorified in the church by Christ Jesus. All of these preceding ones finalize unity with “*one God and Father*.” We are brought into this institutional body for the very purpose to glorify God the Father by Jesus Christ. The “*one body*” is the body of Christ whereby the Father is glorified. The “*one Spirit*” is the Spirit of Christ whereby the Father is glorified. The “*one hope*” is the Person and substitutionary work of Jesus Christ as declared in the gospel of Christ whereby the Father is glorified. The “*one faith*” is the faith that has its sole object in the Person and Work of Christ whereby the Father is glorified. The “*one baptism*” declares visibly and publicly the substitutionary death and life of Christ whereby the Father is glorified (see Luke 7:29-30).

Moreover, there is but “*one*” Father both in number and in kind for the Christian. There are many kinds of fathers, (human, non-human, God,

⁴⁹ In a later lesson we will deal exclusively with the nature of the baptism in the Spirit

Satan; etc.) but there is only “*one*” in number for the Christian in relationship to his salvation and service in the institutional body of Christ. These are the essentials for bringing a person into the institutional body of Christ, but these are not the essentials for sustaining that unity. The essentials for sustaining that unity are listed in Ephesians 4:7-14.

D. THE GIFTS FOR EQUIPPING, MATURING AND SUSTAINING THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH—VV. 7-14

Verses 7-10 express the ministry of Christ on earth from his incarnation to his ascension. His Person and work from the incarnation (sinless man) to the resurrection was required in order to bring captive what held his people in captivity. In His life and death, he conquered sin, Satan and death and sits victorious in heaven holding the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:15). The language in verse 8 is drawn from the practice of Roman Conquerors who led captive their enemies through the streets of Rome and took the spoils of victory and gave the spoil as gifts to the citizens of Rome.

It is these “*gifts*” that Christ gave to the institutional congregation that provides maturity and sustains unity in the institutional body of Christ enabling the assembly to glorify God by the Son in the congregation. Paul is saying that those who initially provided the Word of God (Apostles and prophets) and those who first ministered the word and constituted congregations (evangelists) along with those who continue to minister the word in the congregations (pastors and teachers) are all gifts to the institutional assembly⁵⁰ in order to sustain the unity of that body.

The Inspired written word was provided by Apostles and prophets and is thus, the metaphorical “*foundation*” of the institutional church (Eph. 2:20). The “*evangelists*” were those who took the word and preached the gospel, baptized the converts and organized them into congregations. The Pastor and teachers were those who took over the abiding responsibility to minister

⁵⁰ *Not just anyone can perform these ministries. They are called by God to these ministries and in keeping with qualifications that are set forth in the Scriptures (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13). The “house of God” is further qualified by a ministry that is according to the divine plan or due order set forth in the Scriptures.*

the word within those congregations. Therefore, these are gifts to the institutional body of Christ. Glorifying God by Christ in the congregation requires the commitment (4:1) in a right attitude (4:2-3) bound together as “*one body*” by the effectual calling of the “*one Spirit*” to embrace the “*one hope*” which has its basis in “*one Lord*” vocalized in “*one faith*” manifested in “*one baptism*.” These are very practical instructions to New Testament congregations concerning what it requires to bring members into the institutional body and then sustain that unity.

Such gifts are for the purpose of “*perfecting*” (lit. Gr. equipping—v. 12) the saints so that God will be glorified by Christ within the congregation. Remember, service by the saints in the first century was characterized in and through the institutional assembly. Serving God outside the institutional congregation in the first century was condemned (Heb. 10:25) and contrary to the normal practice found in the pages of the New Testament. Indeed, those gifted men (4:11) placed within the institutional congregation were to sustain such congregations “*in the faith*” so that they would not be “*tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*.” Here, “*the faith*” refers to the body of apostolic doctrine in opposition to the errors of false prophets (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:1). The words “*till we all come into the unity of the faith*” is not a reference to heaven or the Second Coming but is the present goal of the ministry in order to prevent the assembly at Ephesus, and all such congregations from being presently “*tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*”. Remember, Paul’s warning in Acts 20:29-30 to the elders of the congregation at Ephesus? He warned them in tears that the congregation would be attacked from both the outside and the inside in order to turn them from the faith. Paul was not concerned about obtaining unity in heaven, but sustaining unity in the congregation now on earth, or else the Father would not be glorified in the congregation by Christ Jesus in this age, and therefore not in the age to come.

E. PRACTICAL UNITY CHARACTERIZED—VV. 15-16

Practical unity in a visible display is obtained and sustained only when the right attitude (vv. 2-3) is joined with essentials that actually unite them together into one worshipping body (vv. 4-7) under the leadership of Spirit gifted men (vv. 7-11). In that condition, the body becomes equipped and stabilized and mature (vv. 12-16).

These elements are essential to be “*the house of God*” and “*the pillar and ground of truth*.” These elements are essential for true worship “*in spirit*” (Eph. 4:2-3) and “*in truth*” (Eph. 4:4-14).

Notice that Paul uses the present tense in verse 16 demonstrating that he is describing a present condition of maturity due to those preceding things (vv. 11-15), rather than a condition only possible in glory as taught by most universal church advocates.

Universal church advocates claim that the words “*every joint*” and “*every part*” denies present application to the institutional body. However, Paul praised the *ekklesia* located at Thessalonica that “*every one of you*” is presently found in such state being built up in love as a unified working body of members:

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

Another example is where Paul encouraged the divided church at Corinth toward this same kind of matured 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. This passage is describing how the institutional assembly is equipped to glorify God through Christ in attitude (vv. 2-3), in essentials for body membership (vv. 4-7) and in doctrinal unity (vv. 11-15). This instruction not only harmonizes with the historical meaning of *ekklesia* as a local visible body of baptized believers but is crucial to sustain the unity of such an *ekklesia*. The normal meaning of *ekklesia* in this context can make good sense.

There are two examples from Paul’s writing that indicate the universal invisible theory is forced upon Paul’s use of *ekklesia* and its metaphors. The first example is 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 and the second example is Galatians 1:22.

1. 1 Cor. 6:13-20

*Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now **the body** is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord **for the body**.*

And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

*Know ye not that **your bodies are the members of Christ**? shall I then take **the members of Christ**, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.*

What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

*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?*

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. - 1 Cor. 6:13-20

There can be no question that Paul is referring to the literal physical body of the believer in this passage. The question is, in what sense are physical “*bodies the members of Christ*”?

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. - 1 Cor. 6:15

A saved member of the congregational body of Christ at Corinth had committed fornication (1 Cor. 5). This member is defined as “leaven” in chapter five that must be removed by church discipline before the rest of the congregational body can observe the Lord’s Supper. Hence, the “*unleavened*” bread represents the “*body of Christ*” at Corinth partaking of it as well as representing the literal physical body of Christ. Christ was without sin and that is why the bread must be “*unleavened*” bread and the congregational body of Christ partaking of it must be without known sin before partaking of that bread. That is chapter five.

In chapter six Paul continues to develop the metaphor. The congregation is a metaphorical body of Christ which means that each person in that body is a metaphorical “member.” Paul confirms this metaphorical analogy in 1 Corinthians 12:27 (“*members in particular*”). Today, we acknowledge this by addressing every person belonging to a congregational body as “members” of that body. Believers existing outside of that body we do not address as metaphorical “members.”

In chapter six Paul continues to give a reason for the discipline of that metaphorical “member” from the metaphorical congregational body of Christ at Corinth. Each person in the congregation is a metaphorical “member” of Christ’s metaphorical body. It is an assembly of physical bodies that are metaphorical “members” of the metaphorical congregational body of Christ at Corinth. Hence, if one of those metaphorical “members” uses their physical body in a fornicating relationship then by extension of the metaphor they are bringing the whole metaphorical body into that fornicating relationship, just as a little leaven by extension of this metaphor “leaveneth the whole lump” in chapter five. Their sin affects the whole metaphorical body and in order for that metaphorical body to be metaphorically fit to partake of the Lord’s Supper such a member must be removed. This is impossible for a universal invisible church. You cannot remove a member of a universal invisible church.

In the book of first Corinthians the congregation at Corinth is identified metaphorically as a “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor. 3:16) and metaphorically as “*one lump*” of “*unleavened bread*” (1 Cor. 5) and as metaphorical “members” in a metaphorical “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 6:15; 12:27).

As a metaphorical “temple” of the Holy Spirit these members are joined with one Spirit in this metaphorical relationship. God is omnipresent, but since the beginning of Genesis God has dwelt in a special sense in the worship assembly. Cain is said to have “*went out from the presence of the Lord*” when he left the altar where God’s people assembled for public worship. The metaphor “*house of God*” has always been applied to the appointed place where God assembles with his people (the tabernacle, temple, church).

The physical body of the believer is “*joined to one Spirit*” as the Spirit of God indwells that physical body (1 Cor. 6:17). The metaphorical body of Christ is “*joined to one Spirit*” as the entire metaphorical body is the metaphorical “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor. 3:16).

Paul identifies the PHYSICAL BODY of the believer as inclusive of being a “*member*” of the metaphorical body of Christ at Corinth. This repudiates the invisible church theory or universal body of Christ theory as that kind of body cannot include the physical body.

Remember, that the phrase “*body of Christ*” when applied to the church is not speaking of his literal physical human body because his physical body is seated in heaven. The phrase “*body of Christ*” and “*members*” are to be understood as metaphors. The church is metaphorically “*the body of Christ*” and therefore each water baptized believer brought into the church is a metaphorical “*member*” of that body. Christians use this language incessantly when speaking of their relationship to their church—they are “*members*” of such and such a church.

The common understanding of *ekklesia* such as the one located at Corinth consists of many physical bodies that gather together “*in one place*” (1 Cor. 11:20). When gathered together it is the metaphorical “*body of Christ*” (1 Cor.12:27) and each individual is a metaphorical “*member*” of that body.

However, the only kind of church body that consists of physical human bodies is the concrete or abstract kind. The so-called universal invisible kind of church theoretically consists of spirits united together as a spiritual body.

This text is a complete repudiation of the so-called universal invisible body of Christ theory. The kind of “*body of Christ*” described by Paul in the Corinthian letter is the kind composed of physical human bodies as metaphorical “*members*” gathered together as a metaphorical “*body of Christ*” located at Corinth. In fact, this is explicitly declared by Paul to the Corinthians when he later says:

*Now ye are **the body of Christ**, and members in particular.*—1 Cor. 12:27

Notice, Paul did not say “we” but “ye” excluding himself as he was not a metaphorical member of the metaphorical body of Christ located at Corinth.

2. Galatians 1:22

*And was unknown by face unto **the congregations** of Judaea which were **in Christ**.* - Gal. 1:22

Big church advocates claim that “*in Christ*” is synonymous with membership in the singular mystical universal invisible church body of Christ. However, Paul is clearly speaking about local visible congregations located in “*Judaea*.” This application of the prepositional phrase “*in Christ*” proves it is applicable to the membership of each and every individual *ekklesia* or else it could not be used to describe plural “*congregations*.” Moreover, since it is applicable to the singular assembly, then it is equally valid to apply it to the church in the abstract sense as an institution. Therefore, since it is applied in these three manners (singular, plural, institutional), there is no text where it is used to describe the church that cannot fit the normal ordinary meaning of the term *ekklesia*.

If the universal advocate responds by claiming that Paul is merely using the *language of accommodation*, that is, regarding the whole membership in each congregation in keeping with their profession, rather than what might be the actual spiritual condition of every member in each church, then the same can be said for the very texts for which they insist describe the church as consisting of only the saved when the very same kind of language is found (see section dealing with Acts 20:28, etc.). However, to admit that is to admit total repudiation of their own theory. The *language of accommodation* reinforces the thesis in this book that the term *ekklesia* never is used or understood by the writers of the New Testament in any other sense than its common historical sense.

These two Scriptures (1 Cor. 6:13-20 and Gal. 1:22) completely demonstrate how the historical meaning of *ekklesia* fits perfectly with the metaphors “*members*” and “*bodies*” and its relationship characterized by the prepositional phrase “*in Christ*.”

3. Ephesians 5:22-31

One of the most popular texts used by universal invisible church advocates is Ephesians 5:26-30. However, what is overlooked is the context. Furthermore, no one disputes the clear generic use of “*the husband*” and “*the wife*” as no scholar attempts to assert a new kind of husband and wife simply because these nouns are found in the singular with the definite article without any specific application.

Moreover, no one disputes that “*the wife*” has her own physical head attached to her shoulders, and thus no one denies that “*the husband*” is

“*the head*” of “*the wife*” in only a metaphorical sense of *authority* as the text clearly and repeatedly states she is to be in “*submission*” to “*the husband*” in all things. Therefore, if the relationship between “*the church*” and Christ is being presented as the example to follow by every wife to their husband, then obviously Christ is “*the head*” of “*the church*” in the very same manner—final authority—unto which every church is to be in “*submission*” to Christ in all things. Who would deny this is Christ’s design for every church—to be in submission to Christ’s authority????

However, since the metaphor of presentation as a bride is part of this passage, many assume the *ekklesia* in view must be larger and more comprehensive than the normal meaning of *ekklesia* can supply? Why so? Is not the very same metaphor necessarily implied in 2 Corinthians 11:2 where it is expressly applied to the normal meaning of the *ekklesia* at Corinth and in the very same futuristic presentation to Christ as an espoused virgin? Espousal among the Jews was considered a lawful marriage only dissolvable by divorce.

Since, individuals receive rewards for obedience, why is it difficult to accept that congregations would also receive rewards according to their faithfulness? Does not Christ address individual congregations in Revelation 2-3 with regard to their “*works*” and rewards as individual congregational bodies of baptized believers (Rev. 2-3)? Many of the rebukes and instructions in Revelation 2-3 cannot be corrected by individual members alone but must be enacted by the congregation as a whole or by the majority. It is the church as a body that stands to lose its “*candlestick*” condition, rather than an individual member. Why is it difficult to accept that the church as an institution will be rewarded according to its works at the coming of Christ as much as individuals (Rev. 19:6-9)? If individual congregations can be rebuked, corrected and instructed as a body, why can’t they be rewarded as a body?

In Revelation 17-21 there are two metaphorical women being contrasted. One is characterized metaphorically as a “*harlot*” or impure woman, while the other is characterized metaphorically as a pure woman or “*bride*” who hath made herself ready for the Lord. One is metaphorically characterized as an earthly city (Rev. 17:18) while the other is metaphorically represented as a heavenly city (Rev. 21). Both contain saints within them (Rev. 18:4; 19:6-8; 21:1-3). Both have saints dwelling outside of them (Rev. 19:6-8; 21:24). Therefore, neither can be representative of all the saved or all the lost.

The defiled woman is not secular government as she sits on the back of what metaphorically represents secular governments. She is specially characterized metaphorically as false religion—“*Mystery Babylon*” in an unholy alliance with secular government describe metaphorically as “*fornication with the kings of the earth.*” That phrase proves she is distinct from secular governments. She is representative of institutional false religion and the “*mother of harlots*” or the source of all false religions. At the time of John, her seat of power was located in Rome, and at the coming of Christ her seat of power will be located in Rome. She is “*the way of Cain*” (Jud. 11) and she has been the first state religion institutionalized at the tower of Babel, incorporated with all the world powers from Egypt to Rome. She also penetrated and polluted the state of Israel prior to the Babylonian Captivity and during the ministry of Christ on earth. She also incorporated the pagan religion of the Roman Empire with Christianity under Constantine. She is institutionalized false religion in all of its flavors. In direct contrast, the “*bride*” metaphorically represents the institutional church of Christ as the direct counterpart to institutionalized false religion. The metaphorical “*bride*” incorporates the institutionalized “*house of God*” under the Old Covenant, as well as the institutional “*house of God*” under the New Covenant, and that is metaphorically represented by the 24 elders in Revelation sitting on thrones and is represented by the 12 names of the tribes of Israel and 12 names of the apostles that metaphorically characterize the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21.

Those children of God who entered into the polluted or harlot institutions (Rev. 18:4) will be found outside the city in the new heavens and earth dwelling upon the earth (Rev. 21:24). They will be given only the “*leaves*” of the tree of life (Rev. 21:3) while over comers within God’s ordained institution of service will be able to “*eat*” of the tree (Rev. 3:7).

In 2 Corinthians 11:2 the congregation at Corinth is exhorted to remain faithful to Christ as characterized metaphorically as a “*chaste virgin.*” In direct contrast they are exhorted not to be “*corrupted*” from that “*chaste virgin*” condition into a polluted condition (2 Cor. 11:3-4) through embracing false doctrines. The metaphorical “*chaste virgin*” who has been “*corrupted*” from that condition would be a metaphorical “*harlot.*” I believe that the Roman Catholic Church whose center of power has been located in the city of Rome from the time of Constantine until the present is the “*mother*” of

all polluted Christianity (Reformation and Restoration Christianity) and is the ecumenical force attempting to unify all false religion today. She is a state religion, and she is willing to embrace Buddhism, Hinduism, Mohammedism, and all other isms. She is the “*mother of harlots*” meaning that all false institutionalized state religions originate with her (as do the Reformers).

From the very beginning, marriage between Adam and Eve was designed to metaphorically represent the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:30-31). It must be remembered, that more than Eve came from the body of Adam, as the whole human family ultimately came from Adam's body. Hence, there is a distinct difference between the wife of Adam and the children of Adam, just as there is a distinct difference between the bride of Christ and the family of God. Not all children of God make up the Bride of Christ as Revelation 18:4; 19:8-9 and 21:24 clearly demonstrate.

The normal historical meaning of *ekklesia* can make good sense in every passage in the book of Ephesus and Colossians. The last use of the definite singular of *ekklesia* is found in Hebrews 10:25.

III. HEBREWS

The final use by Paul of *ekklesia* in the definitive singular is found Hebrews 12:22. However, let's consider the anarthrous singular in Hebrews 2:12 where the only other use of *ekklesia* is found in the book of Hebrews:

A. HEBREWS 2:12

Saying, I will declare your name to my brothers, in the middle of the church will I sing praise to you. - Heb. 2:12

Hebrews 2:12 is found in a context dealing with the apostles who first heard Christ (Heb. 2:3-4) while he was on earth. Hebrews 2:12 is a prophecy taken from the book of Psalms that has its only possible fulfillment in Matthew 26:30 while Christ was on earth with these same apostles:

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. - Mt. 26:30

Luke informs his readers that Christ had been assembling not merely with the twelve but other disciples from the time of John's baptism until the day he ascended into heaven (Acts 1:21-22). Hebrews 2:12 refers to an actual assembly in keeping with its historic usage.

B. HEBREWS 12:22

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, - Heb. 12:22

Here is Paul's final use of the definitive singular *ekklesia*. Thus far, 39 out of 40 uses show that the common meaning can make perfect sense. Hebrews 12:22 is unquestionably one of the most commonly used proof texts by the universal invisible church advocates. However, a careful contextual analysis will demonstrate it is the institutional congregation that is being referred to in this text.

1. The Overall context of Hebrews

The book of Hebrews falls into two major parts; (1) Hebrews 1-10:18; and (2) Hebrews 10:19-13:25. Hebrews 1-10:18 deals with the various aspects of "*so great of salvation*" through the provision of the Person and work of Christ. Hebrews 11:19-13:25 deals with drawing near unto God in order to "*hold fast to the profession of your faith.*" Thus, Hebrews 1-10:18 deals primarily with our **salvation in Christ** whereas Hebrews 11:19-13:21 deals with our **service in Christ**. Based upon our complete provision of salvation in Christ (Heb. 10:1-18) we can come boldly before the throne of grace (Heb. 10:18-25) and "*draw near*" to God in order to obtain what we need to "*hold fast*" to "*the profession of our faith.*"

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) - Heb. 10:22-23

The primary appointed means to “*hold fast to the profession of our faith*” is through the “*assembling of ourselves*” whereby we provoke one another to love and good works:

And let us consider one another to provoke to love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching. - Heb. 10:24-25

In the apostolic era public identification with Christ and Christianity occurred in baptism and membership in his congregations. To openly forsake the assembly was in essence the same as repudiating Christianity (Heb. 10:26-30). Hence, it is rare to find any believer outside the membership of the *ekklesia* in the Acts and epistles.

Hebrews 10:24-13:21 deals with faithfulness to our profession as it relates to the Christian assembly or *ekklesia*. The book closes with encouragement to be faithful to the assembly in Hebrews 13:7-21 where Paul addresses the superiority of God’s new house of public worship with its elders over the Jewish temple.

Between Hebrews 10:26 and Hebrews 13:7 Paul provides warnings and encouragements in order to provoke them not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. He first explains what forsaking the assembly declares and the consequences of such a declaration (Heb. 10:26-31). He then proceeds to encourage those who have not forsaken the assembly to remain faithful (Heb. 10:32-39) and how faithfulness distinguishes them from lost professors (v. 39). Next, he defines faith and provides examples of what it means to be faithful (Heb. 11).

In Hebrews 12:1 he portrays all of these Old Testament examples of faithfulness as an audience watching and rooting for them to finish running the race, not to obtain salvation but for special inheritance in the coming kingdom. Christ and his example are likened to their coach (Heb. 12:2-4) and the Father is disciplining them to endure as that very discipline distinguishes them from false professors (Heb. 12:5-10).

Paul now turns to three “*firstborn*” examples and the firstborn inheritance rights (Heb. 12:11-26). The first two are negative examples (Esau and Israel). Esau never lost his sonship or his inheritance as a son, but he lost his position

above his brethren and rights of a double portion as firstborn. Israel never lost their election to salvation (Rom. 11:25-28) but they lost their double portion kingdom inheritance as firstborn (Heb. 12:18-21). The faithful congregation does not merely enter the kingdom (salvation) but are “*receiving the kingdom*” as its firstborn inheritance rights. Jesus said to his institutional congregation “*fear not little flock it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” What he promised would be given is what the institutional congregation receives as their firstborn inheritance due to faithfulness.

Last of all, he closes his arguments for “*not forsaking the assembling themselves together*” by declaring the New Testament house of God is superior to the Old Testament house of God (Heb.13:7-17).

2. **The Immediate Context - Heb. 12:18-26**

For you are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor to blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

But you are come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven: - Heb. 12:18-25

The first key to take note of are the two phrases “*for you are not come*” in verse 18 versus “*But you have come*” in verse 21. Paul uses the perfect tense in both phrases. He is **not** talking about something in the future yet to occur but is referring to a place they have already arrived.

Israel assembled at Mount Sinai in the presence of God and angels. Heaven came down to earth and remained that way within the institution of the “*house of God*” or the tabernacle at Mount Sinai. There God met man and all of heaven assembled when Israel assembled at the Tabernacle for worship. However, they could not bear his presence at Mount Sinai or in the “*house of God*” because they assembled before him based upon their own goodness and righteousness. Clouds had to shield them from his presence on the mountain and the veil between the holy place and holy of holies had to shield them from his presence within the house of God.

Now, in direct contrast, these Hebrew Christians (the ones not forsaking the assembling) have also already come and remain in the presence of God and all of heaven whenever they assemble together as the congregation is “*the house of God*” where God meets his people in public worship on earth. Take note it is their “*names*” rather than their persons which are “*in heaven.*” They are still on earth. When they meet together with God in public worship based solely upon the righteousness of Christ in the New Covenant there is no wrath but rather they “*draw near*” to God/ angels/heaven and he provides them all they need “*to hold fast the profession of their faith.*”

In addition, as members of the Lord’s congregation they are in the position of “*firstborn.*” The literal Greek text uses the plural “*firstborn ones*” referring to the inheritance rights of the congregation of Christ. They are in a position for double portion in the kingdom to come. They do not merely enter the kingdom but “*receive*” the kingdom as their inheritance.

They should not “*forsake the assembling of themselves together*” because in the assembly they meet with God, angels and “*spirits of just men*” when they worship. That is why the congregation is called the “*house OF GOD*” because God is present. Angels are present (Eph. 3:10; 1 Cor. 11:10). The former saints are pictured as present in the assembly viewing them (Heb. 12:1).

From the beginning, heaven met with God’s people in public worship. Moses said that Cain “*went out from the presence of the Lord*” when he left the designated place of public worship - the altar. Job worshipped in the presence of God and heaven (Job 1:5-6). David went to the “*house of God*” to meet God (Psa. 84).

In the apostolic era people identified publicly with the Christian faith in baptism and membership in the congregation and they maintained that public profession by not *“forsaking the assembling of themselves.”* Moreover, in that act of assembling they not only provoked *“one another”* in love and good works but they drew near unto God, angels and heaven as public worship is where heaven met men on earth.

Therefore, this text can be contextually interpreted in such a way that it harmonizes with the historical and normal meaning of *ekklesia*.

CONCLUSION

The common historical meaning of *ekklesia* (concrete and abstract applications) can easily fit all 60 uses by the Apostle Paul just as it easily fits all 23 uses by Christ. Paul said *“follow me as I follow Christ”* (1 Cor. 11:1) and therefore Paul would never promote any kind of *ekklesia* that Christ did not institute and promote. Finally, remember even if a new sense could make sense in any given passage, the golden rule of interpretation states that when the common ordinary meaning makes sense seek no other sense. In every case it has been demonstrated that the ordinary meaning of *ekklesia* makes good sense in every single passage.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. If the term *“head”* metaphorically represents *“spiritual union”* between Christ and the church body, then, must it not also have the same application to *“all things” as he is said to be “head over all things” as much as “head” over the church?*
2. Can any kind of assembly regardless of its attitude, constitutional elements and ministry glorify the Father by Christ Jesus?
3. Is the right spirit (Eph. 4:1-3), right constitutional elements (Eph. 4:4-6) and right ministry essential to glorify the Father by Christ Jesus in the local visible *ekklesia* of Christ?
4. How can the physical body of a believer be the metaphorical member of Christ’s metaphorical body unless that metaphorical body is an assembly of physical bodies of believers?

REQUIRED READING:

In Search of New Testament Congregations, by Mark W. Fenison, pp. ix-xxiii
The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament, by E. H. Overbey, pp. 33-37
Recommended/not required reading is *The Bride of Christ* by Mark 197



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 4 LESSON 3

The Body of Christ Metaphor

LESSON GOALS: The goal for this lesson is to examine the metaphor “*body of Christ*” to see if the common meaning of *ekklesia* makes sense in all instances where this metaphor is found.

INTRODUCTION: The metaphor “*body of Christ*” in the genitive case is expressive of personal possession. It is the body “*of Christ*” or belonging to Christ, and therefore Christ’s claims it as “*my ekklesia*.” Does the metaphorical use of “*the body of Christ*” harmonize with the normal meaning of *ekklesia*?

I. THE PRE-NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE GREEK TERM ΣΩΜΑ

Paul uses the Greek term *soma* (σῶμα) metaphorically to describe the congregation of Christ as an assembly of water baptized believers (1 Cor. 12:27). The metaphorical use of *soma* to describe a group of people is extremely rare prior to Paul. Some of the cases that scholars give as evidence for pre-Pauline use of *soma* as a metaphor are very questionable as most seem to be comparisons or uses as a simile rather than metaphorical examples.

In Classical and Koine Greek literature there are many other different Greek terms that refer to a group of people that are translated “*body*” by modern day translators. However, all these terms were technical terms that refer to specific institutions or organizations where *soma* is not found in the text.

Lexicographers consistently define the use of *soma* in Classical and Koine Greek literature as a term that describes the literal physical body of people, plants or planets. It was used to describe slaves. However, its use

as a metaphor for an assembly or group of people is at best rarely found in pre-New Testament literature.

II. THE METAPHOR “THE BODY OF CHRIST”

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

The metaphor “*the body of Christ*” expresses Christ’s direct ownership of his congregation. In the Greek text, the genitive case is found behind the expression “*my church*” (lit Gr. “church of me”) in Matthew 16:18, as well as, in the repetitive phrase “*the body of Christ*.” Both express ownership by Christ. This corresponds perfectly with the common use of *ekklesia* by New Testament writers in using the genitive case of ownership (e.g. “*the church of God which is at Corinth*”).

However, there is nothing more misunderstood and abused than the metaphor “*the body of Christ*.”⁵¹ Are we to understand that when the Scriptures refer to the congregation as the “*body of Christ*” that the congregation is the **literal physical** body of Christ or is it a **metaphorical** representation of the body of Christ? The **literal physical** body of Christ is now in heaven “*seated at the right hand of the Father*.” The “*body of Christ*” when applied to the congregation is a metaphor, and a metaphor conveys the idea of representation.

For example, 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 **metaphorical** representation of himself, as the way to enter heaven? The failure to distinguish the **literal** from the **metaphorical** and properly understand what a metaphor is, and how metaphors are to be properly used has produced confusion and false doctrines. The universal invisible church theory rests firmly upon the misunderstanding and abuse of metaphors. Of all the metaphors used for the congregation there is none more abused and misunderstood than the metaphorical use of the human body.

⁵¹ *51 Students should have already finished the required reading from Charles Hunt’s The Body of Christ; Separating Myth from Metaphor, pp. 4-24*

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:

*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” sheep) but the metaphor is more direct in stating that one thing **is** another thing (“are” sheep). 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 verb (“is” “are” “am”) with the word “represent” 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 congregation 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 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 noun being used as the source of the metaphor (“*body*”) must first be understood in its most literal sense, because it is the literal characteristics of what that noun describes which are being transferred to the other noun (“*ye*” or “*church*”) and that is the entire basis for representation by the secondary noun (“*ye* or “*church*”).

What are some literal characteristics found in his literal physical body that can be transferred metaphorically to “*ye*” or his congregation? The literal physical body of Christ is **visible** and **local** (e.g. “*the church which is at Corinth*”). The physical body consists of 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, no literal characteristic of a literal body can represent the doctrinally and geographically divided state of Christendom, nor is it possible for such a concept to convey such divisive characteristics. Neither can the body convey universality or invisibility as no such literal body exists or can exist in that condition.

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 some extent of universality, but, such terms are never once used to describe the church or used as a metaphor for the *ekklesia*. Indeed, every single metaphor used in Scripture for *ekklesia* is by nature without the ability to convey either universality or invisibility. Every single one! These facts should be regarded as quite strange if the true nature of the *ekklesia* was invisible and universal! However, if the true nature of the *ekklesia* is local and visible, then these things are very supportive of the institutional and concrete use of the term *ekklesia*.

Finally, we never find the metaphorical use of plural “bodies” or plural “heads” of Christ in Scripture! Why? Universal church advocates suppose this absence of the plural is proof that this metaphor cannot be confined to the common *ekklesia* or else the plural would be used in connection with plural “congregations.” However, such plural usage is not found simply because that would violate the proper use of a metaphor. The literal physical body of Christ is not a plurality. It has no plural heads and he does not have plural **literal** physical bodies. For the metaphor to be used in the plural there would have to be a corresponding **literal** plural and there is none.

However, that does not deny that there is a proper grammatical way to convey the plural idea. For example, consider 1 Corinthians 11:3:

*But I would have you know, that **the head of every man** is Christ; and **the head of the woman** is the man; and **the head of Christ** is God.*

Although Paul could not say Christ is the “head” of plural “men” he could be grammatically correct in saying Christ is “*the head of every man*” meaning each man, and thus, all men. Therefore, in each individual case Christ is “*the head*” of that man. The same is true with “*the woman*” in each individual case with “*the man*.” The man is “*the head*” in each individual case of that woman - his wife.

The same is true with each individual congregation, or the congregation considered as an institution, or considered generically. In Scripture, the metaphor of “*the head*” **always** conveys the position of “authority.” Christ is in the position of authority over the metaphorical congregational body. The husband is in the position of authority over the wife (“*in the Lord*”). The Father is in the position of authority over Christ. The metaphor of “*the head*” is never used for spiritual union between Christ and the church, simply because physical union between the head and body is mutually dependent upon each other for continuance of life for both the head and the body. If the body is decapitated it dies, but the head dies also. Therefore, the “*head*” is not a fit metaphor to convey spiritual union as that would imply the life of the head (Christ) is dependent upon the life of the body (congregation) and that is simply not true.

In every single context where the metaphor of “*head*” is used in relationship to the congregation as “*the body*” of Christ it is a context of authority and sanctification, and never spiritual union or salvation.

B. 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, Dr. Edward Overbey gives this exposition:

The argument for this theory in these passages is that the church is spoken of as His body and Jesus is the head of His body. Body and church in these passages are singular. Local congregations are many so they cannot be the church spoken of here. 1 Corinthians 12 is also taken in conjunction with this passage where the church as a body is discussed at length. These arguments for the invisible church theory at first hearing sound quite plausible but upon closer examination they are seen to be without any real force. First, Christ is the head of every church in the sense He rules over that church and is its final authority. Christ is the head of every man, that is, he is each man's authority or ruler (1 Cor. 11:3).

In Revelation the first three chapters we see the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of seven candlesticks. The seven candlesticks are interpreted as seven particular congregations. Jesus in the midst is clearly revealed as their ruler, authority, head. He praises, rebukes, exhorts, warns, directs, as only a head can do. Jesus is clearly revealed as their head here. He is head of each of these local congregations and no problem is involved. In this connection we should note also that the church as a body is discussed most fully in 1 Corinthians 12 and in that passage the head, eye and ear are represented as various members of a New Testament church. The head over the body is Christ. He directs it; He is its final authority. But each part of the body including the head is like unto certain members of a church. The husband is the head of the wife in the same sense. She has a head on her shoulders but still the husband is her head or authority. 1 Cor. 12:12 states that a human body is one but has many members, and that is also true of the Lord's body, which is the church. The text actually says "so also is Christ" but the context makes it very clear that "Christ" refers to His body, the church.

We believe the writer is using "Christ" metonymically. The fact that it says the body is one, is used as an argument that the body here must refer to something different from a local church because there are many of them, whereas there is only one of this church. This is the universal invisible church that is referred to here as a body according to those who hold this theory. This interpretation is very superficial. It is evident that the body spoken of in verse 12 is a human body and that it has two characteristics that are like the Lord's church. The human

body is one and has many members. These characteristics are very clearly seen upon examining any human body. It is a unit; it has oneness; yet it is composed of many different parts each having a particular function. This is true of a New Testament church. The members are bound together as one body having certain things in common. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one purpose, one Bible, etc. are some of these things that make the church a unit but still each member is different. God has given various gifts to each. One may be a good teacher, another a song leader, another can visit, another is very capable in business matters, etc. all of which are needed for the work of a church. The Corinthians needed this message; they were divided and needed to learn that the various gifts were all important and could work together in harmony in their church. In verse 27 this lesson is applied directly to the Corinthian church. The definite article before body is not in the Greek and so it would be better to translate this, "Now ye are a body of Christ and members in particular."

1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to water baptism administered under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This baptism admits us into the membership of a New Testament congregation where each member exercises one or more spiritual gifts for the mutual edification of that body. Therefore, all the members of a congregation are partakers of gifts being exercised by any of its members. That is exactly what the context goes on to teach in the clearest possible terms (vv. 14-27). As we read this passage we notice certain situations that perfectly fit a local congregational body but are quite contrary to the universal invisible body theory. Two of these are seen in verse 26. In a local congregational body, it is possible that one member suffers or rejoices due to a given situation and all other members of that congregational body suffer or rejoice with that member, but how is that possible in a universal invisible body? Christians in Africa, China and South America cannot suffer with a Christian in our country. They have no way of knowing about such a loss.

Hort is help on this passage and the one in Romans 12 when he says,

*He points out that in a body the whole is dependent on the diversity of office of the several members, and that each member is dependent on the office of the other members. Then he adds, "But ye are a body of Christ (**soma chistou**), and members severally." ... Here evidently it is the Corinthian community by itself that is called a 'body of Christ': this depends not merely on the absence of an article but on **humeis**, which cannot naturally mean "all ye Christians."*

*In Romans 12:3-5 **all** is briefer, but the ideas are essentially the same. The central verse is, "As in one body we have many members, and all the members have not the same office (action), so we the many are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.' Here the language used is not formally applied to the Roman community in particular: but the context shows that St. Paul is still thinking of local communities, and of the principles which should regulate the membership of the Roman community, as of all others - F.J. Hort, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 145-146.*

*Ephesians 1:23 speaks of the church as "his body" which means it belongs to Him. He purchased it; He directs it; and He is served by it. We believe this passage and other similar passages that refer to the congregation as a body with Christ being its head refers to the local congregation and not to some universal invisible church. The common meaning makes good sense so it should be retained. The fact that the words congregation and body are singular and have the definite article are no proof against these passages referring to the local congregation. Remember, the abstract institutional use of the definite noun *ekklesia* is part of its historical meaning and application. Hence, it must be proven that the abstract use does not make sense. The abstract use of the word with the definite article in this circular letter intended to be applied to each congregation that reads it makes good sense.*

Ephesians 3:10 and 21 also make perfect sense according to the historical meaning of ekklesia. The word in both places is in the singular with the definite article. In the former lesson it was shown how the ekklesia is "the house of God" and is therefore constituted and operates according to a divine plan. The manifold wisdom of God is revealed through every aspect of the congregation of Christ from its message, membership, mission, ministry and ordinances. His wisdom is seen particularly in this passage by the fact that Jews and Greeks can be members of the same congregation working together for Him. God is and will be glorified by a New Testament congregation throughout time and eternity when the saved are brought into its membership as they remain saved in this age and in the age to come. The God given work of a New Testament congregation brings glory to God forever. Referring to Ephesians 3:10 Dayton says,

The idea in the first of these two passages is, that the angels of God, who are elsewhere called principalities and powers, might look at this wonderful contrivance of Jesus Christ for the execution of his laws and the promotion of the comfort and piety of his people, and see in it evidences of the wisdom of God. It was a Divine contrivance, and characterized by infinite wisdom. Nothing else could possibly have done so well. Men have not believed this. Men have all the time been tinkering at God's plan, trying to mend it. Men have set it aside, and substituted others in its place; but to the angels it appears the very perfection of wisdom. And it was one object of God in having the church established, that his wisdom might, through it, be known to those heavenly powers and principalities. But now, what was this plan? What was this church? It was, as we have seen a local assembly, in which each member was the equal of every other, and by whom, in the name of Christ and by authority from him, his ordinances were to be administered and his laws enforced. What is there in these texts which requires a grand collection of all the congregations into one, in order to make the language appropriate? Suppose a friend in England

*should write to me that he is about to publish a new history of the steam-engine, in order that unto kings and princes, in their places and on their thrones, might be made known through, the engine the manifold skill of the inventor: what would you think of that man's common sense, even though he were a Doctor of Mechanics, who should insist upon it, that though the steam-engine was a definite and well-known machine, and there were a vast multitude of separate and distinct steam-engines, yet there must also be, in some way or other, a vast conglomerate 'universal' engine, consisting of all the steam-engines in the world united into one; or else the language of my friend, when he speaks of 'showing the manifold skill of the inventor,' through or by 'the engine,' is altogether unintelligible? Yet this is the way that doctors of divinity reason upon a similar expression of Paul [A. C. Dayton, **Theodosia Ernest**, Vol. II, pp. 120- 121]—Edward H. Overbey, **The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament**, pp. 35-39*

The readers of these epistles would understand that Paul is talking about “one” body both in **number** and in **kind**. They would understand that the “one” in **number** refers to the congregational body wherein the particular reader’ membership resided where he lived. They would understand that it was also “one” in **kind** with every other congregational body of Christ located in other cities.

Finally, a proper understanding of Ephesians 2:11-22 will shed light on the true meaning of “one body.” The primary theme of the book of Ephesians is glorifying God (Eph. 3:21-4:1). Ephesians 1-3 provides the Ephesian readers with reasons they ought to glorify God, while Ephesians 4-6 instructs them how to glorify God in every aspect of life.

Ephesians 2:11-3:5 provides reasons why Gentile believers ought to glorify God because they were saved under the New Covenant Administration rather than under the Old Covenant Administration. Salvation has been the same under both administrations (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2; as gentiles had been saved under that administration - Rahab, Ruth, Nineveh, etc.) but the Old Covenant was a Jewish privilege administration. From Abraham to Jesus Christ the redemptive work of God was primarily

restricted to the nation of Israel. After the nation of Israel rejected Jesus Christ, God turned his redemptive work away from Israel as its primary focus unto the Gentiles (Rom. 11). The cross is the dividing point between the Old and New Covenant administrations. The Ephesians were primarily Gentiles and a product of this new redemptive missionary focus.

In verses 11-14 he gives a quick contrast between gentile status under the Old versus the New. Under the Old they would not be regarded as mere sinners equal to other sinners (as in Eph. 2:2-3; 4:17-20) but rather they would be seen racially distinct as “*Gentiles*” and racially inferior to Jews. They would be seen as unclean through the external differences due to uncircumcision versus circumcision. As “*uncircumcised*” they would be viewed as heathen, or without Christ, and thus, without God and without hope. In that uncircumcised state they would be alienated from the “*common wealth of Israel*” and thus strangers from the covenants of promise given to Israel alone. Moreover, with respect to the **public** worship of God they would be restricted and restrained behind “*the middle wall of partition*” (v. 14) erected within the temple compound to keep them from joint worship with Jews as one body.

The previous house of God was divided by race, gender and social status. It was divided into multiple bodies (court of Gentiles, court of women, court of men, Levitical holy place, High Priest holy of holies) as segregated worship. However, in the New Testament temple or public house of worship there is but “*one body*” without racial, social, and gender division in public worship. The “*middle wall of partition*” (Eph. 2:14) no longer divides worshippers but it is “*one body*.”

Within the temple there were multiple divisions, multiple bodies that gathered for worship that were divided from each other (court of Gentiles, court of women, court of Jewish men, court of priests, etc.). These were divisions according to race, gender and social status. However, under the New Covenant, there is “*one body*” without division of race, gender and social status that assemble together for worship. Hence, “*one body*” was a declaration of practical physical assembled unity in public worship without any “*middle wall of partition*” (Eph. 2:14).

In Ephesians 2:17 “*afar off*” and “*nigh*” refer to a geographical separation between Gentiles and Jews in relationship to the public house of God in Jerusalem. It does not refer to a lost versus saved condition:

*And came and preached peace to you which were **afar off**,
and to them which were **nigh**.—Eph. 2:17*

Notice that those “*nigh*” are as just as lost as those “*afar off*” as the same gospel is preached to both. Hence, the contextual meaning of “*nigh*” and “*afar off*” refers to geographical distance from the house of God in Jerusalem. This house dwelt in the Jewish homeland and thus the Jews were “*nigh*” to it. Gentiles lived outside of Palestine and thus were “*afar off*.” Now, the same gospel preached to both under the New Covenant brings them together in public worship in a new temple where there is no division based upon race, gender or social status but equal membership in “*one body*.” This new house of God or temple is the local congregation which the congregation at Ephesus was such a holy temple (Eph. 2:22 - note the indefinite article “*a*” with the second person pronoun “*ye*” rather than “*we*”).

C. 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 all over the Roman Empire or separated from each other in heaven and earth? How can “*all the members*” of such a universal body even know each other much less suffer “*with one*” of its members? That is impossible.

However, this is possible in each New Testament congregational body, as illustrated in the case of the congregational 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 congregation at Rome (Rom. 15:14). At least this is possible for any local visible New Testament congregational body, but it has never occurred among all the members of the so-called universal invisible church body and never will on this earth.

D. 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

This description can and does fit many local visible congregational 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 congregation 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.

E. 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 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 the 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. 11:20). 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]⁵² 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 congregation as the representative body of Christ. There can be no question that the bread represents the congregation of Christ in the Supper, as Paul explicitly tells them this in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

Notice that the congregation 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 universal 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??? Such a procedure would require the loss and recovery of salvation as to be in that kind of body is to be saved and to be outside of that kind of body is to be lost.

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

⁵² *Paul is using a metaphor which conveys representation*

Paul explicitly tells the church at Corinth “*YE are the body of Christ*” (1 Cor. 12:27).

Some stumble over the interpretation provided above 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 pronouns “*we...us*” but whenever he makes a concrete application of this metaphor he always says “*ye...you*” and never “*we...us*.” Why? **As a general rule, all believers during the apostolic era were baptized members of such local congregations.** Therefore, when speaking of this metaphor abstractly he could say “*we*” as it applied to all his readers which were members of this same *kind* of congregational body concretely located and found at Corinth, Ephesus, etc. But when applying this abstract teaching to a specific congregation he could never say “*we...us*” as he was not a member of that particular congregation. Hence, in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, he speaks of it abstractly and uses the plural pronoun “*we*” but in I Corinthians 10:20-21 where he applies it to the congregation 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*.”

Furthermore, each New Testament *body of Christ* (I Cor. 12:27) is “*one body*” **in number**, as well as one **in kind**. From the view point of the historical individual reader or listener of these epistles, that individual would be a member of “*one*” body in both number and kind. In number, each reader would be a member of the “*one*” body where his membership resides. They also recognize that the “*one*” in which their membership resides is “*one*” in kind with all other New Testament congregations. It is the same 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 to post-apostolic Christians found within and without diverse denominations which are neither “*one*” in number nor “*one*” in kind.

Moreover, the New Testament design is not intended to support future predicted apostasy (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:13) and divisive denominations. Indeed, the apostles set in place warnings and proper responses to those who

would alter or leave the first century apostolic pattern of like faith and order (Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Thes. 3:6; Acts 20:29-30; etc.). So, for anyone to argue that the New Testament was written to first century congregations of like faith and order, but equally applicable to all future Christians regardless of their denominational or doctrinal character is a fallacious and an irrational argument.⁵³ It is an argument that supports apostasy from the apostolic pattern instead of condemning and separating from such an apostate state of existence.

Finally, in both Romans 12:4 and in 1 Cor. 12:12 the literal physical human body is what Paul uses to first introduce 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 this 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*

How does each reader understand this application to “*one*” physical body with the pronoun “*we*”? He applies it to the “*one*” physical body he possesses which is both “*one body*” in number (his own physical body) and “*one body*” in kind (the same kind that all the readers “*we*” 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 is 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 for the metaphorical use of *ekklesia* 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*

⁵³ *That does not mean that general salvation truths can't be applied to those outside New Testament congregations and the New Testament period but it does mean that those truths that characterize the New Testament faith and order can be applied to all Christians in all times irrespective of their beliefs and practices.*

The historical readers (“*we*”) all share in common one kind of metaphorical congregational body wherein “*every one*” within the concrete framework of that “*one*” body are “*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. Within that “*one body*” the membership is in unity or “*one of another.*”

This interpretation is the same 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 a specific application he drops “*we*” and uses “*ye*” or “*you.*”

For example, in 1 Corinthians 5:7-10 where he speaks of general truths applicable to himself and his readers because they shared membership in the *same kind* of congregation, he uses “*we*” and “*us.*” However, when he makes a specific application of these general truths to the congregation at Corinth (1 Cor. 5:1-6, 11-13) he changes pronouns and says “*ye*” or “*you.*” The same is true with regard to the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 10:16-21. When he is speaking of general truths applicable to all who are members of the same kind of congregation using the same ordinance he says “*we*” in I Cor. 10:16-17. However, when he makes a specific application he switches to “*ye*” in I Cor. 10:19-21.

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

F. 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 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, when it comes to the words “*the church*” in the same text, 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 (v. 20) to authority in the sphere of marriage as a matter of progressive sanctification. 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 marriage sanctification. 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 are described as smelling, seeing, and hearing and all of these have their position in “*the head*” of a metaphorical body as positions of leadership/authority in the body but the whole body is ultimately under Christ as its metaphorical head.

These texts in their contexts have to do with progressive sanctification and not salvation. Church membership and the ordinances have to do with progressive sanctification not entrance into salvation. In salvation there is spiritual union between Christ and the individual believer (obtained by regeneration spiritually and by 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 congregational body under the authority of Christ.

Paul tells the Corinthians that the “*head*” of “*the woman*” is “*the man*” just as the “*head*” of every man is Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). 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 in response to our position. They argue that for Christ to be the head of every congregation creates a monstrosity of many physical bodies all sharing the same literal physical head and that would make Christ a polygamist having countless wives. They ignore it is merely a metaphor for authority over others but must literalize it in order to make this argument against our position. This is not only a failure to understand simple metaphors, but a clear demonstration of abuse of metaphors.

He is the final authority over the congregation (institution), as well as over all things. Christ is the final authority over all his congregations, 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, just as Christ went about doing the work of the ministry when he was in his own physical body while on earth. The institutional congregation has been given authority by Christ for 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 congregational 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 congregation acts in Christ’s behalf upon earth and is the final administrative authority. This is repeated again in Matthew 28:17-20 in the giving of the Great Commission.

G. 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 interpretation 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 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 with regard to the gospel (1 Cor. 2) or with regard to the administration of baptism (1 Cor. 3:4-10) in composition 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 congregation at Corinth through preaching the gospel and baptizing them into the membership of that body. In verses 1-4 he characterizes 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 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 congregational 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). Take note of the pronouns. He does not use the pronoun “we” or “us” but “ye” and “you” which is contrary to the universal invisible concept.

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 therefore, it was God the 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 body 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 through the gifted members 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 assembly at Corinth is true of all New Testament congregations with their individual members.

Furthermore, this is equally true with regard to spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 4:7) which is the topic under consideration in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

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 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 as 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 congregations (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 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. Hence, all members in the Corinthian body were made partakers of these benefits of spiritual gifts that characterized that body.

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. The members of the body of Christ at Corinth partook of the various manifestations of the Spirit within the membership.

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 Comforter would “*lead them*” in regard to the administration of baptism (I Corinthians 3:8-9) and building congregations.

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.

H. 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

Notice that Christ is “*the head*” not only over “*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.*”⁵⁴ 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 congregation (institution), 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 congregation understood generically has reference to each and every one of His congregations, each

⁵⁴ ⁵⁴Much 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

of which is a metaphorical “*body*” of Christ. Christ is the final authority over all his congregations, 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, 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 congregation 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 congregational 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 congregation 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 congregations, as He is over all things, but the congregations 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. 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 congregation. 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*” and therefore the fullness of that authority fills all in all or reaches the entire universe. However, on planet earth His authority is visibly manifested in and through the congregation. The New Testament assembly 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 congregation 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 congregation 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 congregation, 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 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

I. THE VISIBLE CORPOREAL TEMPLE

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

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ...For ye are the body of Christ and members in particular”—1 Cor. 12:12,27

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. Paul identifies the congregation located in Corinth as “*ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building*” (v. 9). 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) as a corporate metaphorical body but were individual metaphorical “*members.*” This is the **institutional** “*temple of the Spirit.*” It is a visible and physical congregation.

The second verse (1 Cor. 6:19) in context refers to the literal physical body of each member at Corinth. This “*body*” could be joined together with a harlot in the act of fornication.

*Know ye not that **your bodies** are the members of Christ? shall I then take the **members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot**?²⁵⁵ God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be **one flesh.**—1 Cor. 6:15-16*

This text follows an actual case where a member of the metaphorical body of Christ is described as committing fornication (1 Cor. 5:1-3). In that previous chapter (1 Cor.5) the “*whole lump*” refers to the “*one bread*” (1 Cor. 10:17) as the “*unleavened*” bread (1 Cor. 5:8) is used in the Lord’s Supper as a metaphor of the congregational body at Corinth. The presence of such a fornicating member in the congregational body acts as leaven and such a member “*leaveneth the whole lump.*” Paul’s argument is that Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit indwells their physical bodies, and if you take that physical body and join it to a harlot you are joining the temple of Christ to a harlot. In addition, that physical body is a metaphorical “member” of the corporate body of Christ and “little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” proving this church body is composed of visible physical bodies.

Paul consistently uses the term “*member*” in the book of 1 Corinthians as a metaphor for congregational members (1 Cor. 12:12, 27).

Their literal physical body is “*the temple of the Holy Ghost.*” This literal physical corporeal **individual** “*temple of the Holy Ghost*” assembled with like kind (“*members*”) and as an assembly of physical human bodies they were the corporate physical “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” located at Corinth. Speaking of their combined physical bodies in assembly he says:

*Know ye not that **your bodies** are the members of Christ?—1*
Cor. 6:15

*For **ye are the body of Christ** and **members** in particular—1*
Cor. 12:27

Hence, the metaphorical institutional “*body of Christ*” which Paul says is made up of “*members in particular*” (1 Cor. 12:27) must be a **physical** corporeal local congregational body of Christ, as its membership consists of literal **physical** corporeal “*bodies.*” Significantly, Paul excludes himself from this metaphorical body as he says “*ye*” not “*we*” demonstrating he is speaking of the congregational body at Corinth where the fornicating “*member*” resided.⁵⁵ This Pauline concept repudiates the idea of a so-called universal visible and/or invisible body of Christ made up of all believers in diverse locations.

⁵⁵ Charles Hunt provides a different interpretation of 1 Corinthians 6:15 in his book, *The Body of Christ: Separating Myth from Metaphor*. See pages 45-49. Basically, bro. Hunt argues that verse 15 means that their members form part of their own physical bodies which are redeemed by Christ rather than part of the metaphorical congregational body of Christ.

CONCLUSION

The metaphor “*the body of Christ*” fits perfectly with the normal historical meaning of *ekklesia*. Indeed, universal church advocates have robbed the congregations of Christ of valuable instruction necessary to their own internal operations and relationship with Christ. The universal church theory completely ignores the historical first century context in which this language is found. Indeed, that very theory is a justification for departing from the apostolic pattern of like faith and order along with the protective measures to deal with those who depart from that apostolic pattern. Indeed, the very thing this pattern was designed to prevent and protect Christians from is the very thing that the universal invisible church represents—doctrinal division within the kingdom of God.

The universal church doctrines (visible/invisible) are the doctrines of the Great Harlot and the primary doctrines essential to justify her existence.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Does the Bible use the metaphor of “*the temple of the Holy Spirit*” for both the *ekklesia* as a corporate body and for the individual believer?
2. Does it not make perfect sense that the plural physical bodies of the believers at Corinth are metaphorical “*members of Christ*” (1 Cor. 6:15) because the *ekklesia* at Corinth is a metaphorical but physical “*body of Christ*”?
3. Identify two historical contextual factors concerning the use of plural pronouns with the body metaphor for the local visible *ekklesia*?
4. What “*sacrifice*” do Christians keep that includes “*unleavened*” bread and is associated with the “*Passover*” as described by Paul in 1 Cor. 5:5-8?
5. If the unleavened bread of the Lord’s Supper symbolizes the body of Christ, how is it possible to purge leaven out of “*the whole lump*” so that it is a “*new lump*” through local church discipline unless that bread represents the local church membership?
6. How do the principles provided in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 resolve divisions over spiritual gifts in the congregation at Corinth if 1 Cor. 12:12-26 is not speaking abstractly of the local body membership (1 Cor. 12:27)?

7. How is it possible for “*all*” the members of a universal invisible body spread over all the earth to “*rejoice*” or to “*sorrow*” with the “*one*” member of that body, much less even know that “*one*” member exists (1 Cor. 12:25-26)?
8. How is it possible for a doctrinally and geographically divided universal invisible body of Christ to have “*one mind*” so that it is without division (1 Cor. 12:24)?
9. If you had to strain at providing an answer contrary to the normal meaning of *ekklesia* in the previous 8 questions, then why should anyone else seek any other sense than the common meaning of *ekklesia* when it is the easiest answer to all the above questions?

REQUIRED READING:

The Body of Christ: Separating Myth from Metaphor, by Charles Hunt, pp. 26-53



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 5

The Kingdom of God–Part 1

The Kingdom of God–Part 2

The Kingdom of God–Part 3

PAGE TURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 5 LESSON 1

The Kingdom, the Family and the Church of God—Part 1

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to show that the Kingdom, Family and Church of God are not synonyms and, (2) to show the true nature of the kingdom of God as the rule of God first within man and then manifest through man's words and actions.

INTRODUCTION: In this Lesson you will discover many *prima facia*⁵⁶ differences between the kingdom, family and church of God. Even if the student disagrees 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 proof texts but are based upon sound etymological and contextual distinctions.

I. SOME APPARENT DIFFERENCES

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

*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,* - 1 Cor. 1:13

Furthermore, the following lessons will sustain these are to be distinguished from one another rather than interpreted as synonyms.

⁵⁶ ⁵⁷*Prima facie may be used as an adjective meaning "sufficient to establish a fact or raise a presumption unless disproved or rebutted;" e.g., prima facie evidence.*

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- k. Geographical names are given to the church—“*the church of God at Corinth*” but no such restricted geographical locations are 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 nor 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 by a king
- c. The family conveys a paternal relationship between a father and his children

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 in the world” (Mt. 13:39) - Eph. 3:15
- b. “*Kingdom*”—Is God’s rule over the entire universe but in regard to his spiritual kingdom on earth (Mt. 13:39) it includes only “*the seed*” presently in the world at any given time
- c. “*Church*”—includes baptized believers gathered out of God’s kingdom and family on earth who actually assemble together - Acts 2:41

6. **The difference in entrance**

- a. “*Family*” is by birth “*born*” a child of God - I Jn. 3:18
- b. “*Kingdom*” is by translation/birth - Col. 1:13/Jn. 3:3-6
- 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 consists of 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 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 rule and 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 by the same gospel, way, Savior—Mt. 13:38
- c. “*Church*” All who publicly profess to be already in God’s 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*” system—Jn. 17:9
- b. Family of Satan—Jn. 8:44; Gen. 3:15 “*seed*” “*tares*” etc.
- c. Church of Satan—Rev. 17:5; 18:4—“*synagogue of Satan*”—Rev. 2:9; “*corrupted*” virgins (2 Cor. 11:3-4)

II. OTHER NOTABLE SCHOLARS ON THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE KINGDOM, FAMILY AND CHURCH OF GOD

A. Dr. Roy Mason, a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary summarized the differences between the kingdom, family, and church of God as follows:

“Usurps the Family and Kingdom of God”

Many don't realize it, but the Universal theory usurps the Family of God, and the Kingdom of God as set forth in the Bible. There just isn't any place for the Family and Kingdom of God, if the Universal theory is true. But the Scriptures make a very clear distinction between the three. Let us get some exact distinctions, based thoroughly on the Scriptures.

1 - WHAT IS THE FAMILY OF GOD? The Family of God includes all of the children of God in heaven and on earth.

Proof: Ephesians 3:15, where Paul speaks of the “whole Family in heaven and on earth.” The Family includes all believers, for we are told in Galatians 3:26 - “Ye are all the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.” All believers are God's children regardless of time or age. Since the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in the Christ to come (Acts 10:43; Romans 4:16) they are all members of God's Family. And note that God's Family is much larger than the Kingdom or Church of God, for it now contains all of the saved from Abel to the last

person saved today. 'God has only one Family. All believers are children and heirs of God.

*2 - WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD? **The Kingdom of God includes all the saved-on earth at any given time.** In the parables in **Matthew 13**: the kingdom is used to include all professors. But in **John 3:3-5; Matthew 16:19; 11:11; Luke 16:16; Romans 14:17; Colossians 1:13; John 18:36**, the Kingdom is composed of all born again on the earth. This is not the kingdom of **Daniel 2:44; Acts 1:6** and kindred passages. Those relate to the Millennial Kingdom yet future. What is often spoken of as "the spiritual kingdom" is composed only of the truly born again, and who have been "translated out of darkness into light and into the Kingdom of God's dear Son." In **John 3** he plainly says that except one be born again, he cannot see - he cannot enter, the Kingdom of God.*

*Recapitulating, **the Family of God includes all of the saved of all ages, whether in heaven or on earth. The Kingdom of God includes that part of the Family of God who are on the earth NOW.***

*3. - WHAT IS THE 'CHURCH OF GOD? The church of God is never used of any institution, except of an assembly or congregation of baptized believers in some given locality. For example, "**The church of God at Corinth.**" (**1 Corinthians 1:12**).*

The statements just made will bear any sort of investigation, and the more investigation is made, the deeper will become the conviction that Satan has palmed off a tremendous hoax with his Universal Invisible theory.

*Why do the Scriptures speak of the Kingdom of God and the Family of God, if there is no distinction to be made between these and the church of God? The Universal theory certainly engulfs the Family and Kingdom, and along with this likewise swallows up a lot of truth.—Roy Mason, **The Myth of the Universal Invisible Church Exploded**, - <http://doctrine>.*

landmarkbiblebaptist.net/NormanWells/invisible-church.html
1/12/15

B. Boyce Taylor expressed it as follows:

*“The local individual church is the only kind of church that God has on this earth today. There is only the Family of God composed of all of the redeemed of all 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 congregations of God on earth. Every individual Baptist Church is a church of God. When a man is born again, he is born into God’s Family, and he is a member of God’s Family forever. The relationship does not change. Whether in heaven or in 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 God’s kingdom on earth and enters “his heavenly kingdom.” (See **2 Timothy 4:18**). After he is born again, he is **NOT YET IN THE CHURCH OF GOD**, but is now a scriptural subject for admission into a church of God. Note **Acts 2:47** - **“The Lord added to the church daily the saved.”** Church membership is not something that one gets with salvation, but a subsequent blessing he gets after salvation by being added to the church. Baptism is not essential for entrance 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 Kingdom of God, but they are baptized into a church of God (water baptism) **I Corinthians 12:13**. The one body referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:13 was the church of God at Corinth. The local church at Corinth was the body of Christ at that place. The members of the church at Corinth belonged to only **“ONE BODY”** of Christ. That body of Christ probably did not contain all of the saved at Corinth (**I Corinthians 1:2**) and none of the saved anywhere else except at Corinth. Since they belonged to only **“one body”** and that was the local church at Corinth, Christ has no other kind of church or body except a local church. If they had belonged to the local church*

*at Corinth, which Paul said was a body of Christ, and then to the kind of church that some believe in, composed of all the saved everywhere, they would have belonged to two congregations or bodies of Christ – one local and visible, the other universal and invisible. The New Testament knows nothing of any such confusion as this. The church which Paul called “**the House of God**” was a local church. The church which Paul said was “**the pillar and ground of the truth**” was a local church. The church to which Christ promised perpetuity (**Matthew 16:18**) was a local church, for He never spoke of any other kind. The meaning of ecclesia permits of no other kind.”*

- H. Boyce Taylor, Sr., Why be a Baptist, (Bryan Station Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky).

III. THE CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE KINGDOM AND CHURCH

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 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 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 its 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 Congregations**," 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 congregations.

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 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 *basileia* had, therefore, come to carry with it the inevitable associated notion of world range and mastery. Our Lord's allusion to a new *basileia*... 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, **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 an entirely new administrative authority within the kingdom (replacing the Jewish administration within the kingdom).

IV. DEFINING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and **his kingdom** ruleth over all.—Psa. 103:19*

Lexicographers and Theologians are fairly unanimous concerning both the Hebrew and Greek terms translated “kingdom.”

The Hebrew term *malkut* and its Greek equivalent *basilea*, both of which are generally translated “*kingdom*” refer to the *person, rule, authority and domain* of a king. This full definition is important to remember as we advance in the study of God’s kingdom.

“Basileia...1. *Kingship, royal power, royal rule, kingdom....2. kingdom, i.e., territory ruled over by a king....3. esp. royal reign or kingdom of God.*” - William F. Arndt, trans., F. Wilbur Gingrich, trans., Walter Bauer, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature**. [Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan, 1975] 18th edition, p. 134

“Basileia...1. *Royal power, kingship, dominion...2. A kingdom i.e., the territory subject to the rule of a king...*”-Joseph Henry Thayer, **Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament**. [Grand Rapids, MI; Baker, 1981] pp. 96, 97

“Basileia...1. *Prop. Abstract, sovereignty, royal power, dominion...2. By meton., concrete...a kingdom, the territory or people over whom the king rules...the royal majesty...the king himself...*”-G. Abbott Smith, **A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament** [Edinburg England, T. & T. Clark, 1981] p. 77

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*

In a nutshell, the Kingdom of God has three primary dimensions or applications in Scripture when it comes to mankind on planet earth; (1) The present invisible dimension or spiritual rule of God **within** His people; (2) The present visible dimension or expression of that rule **through** His people, and (3) The Coming universal visible dimension or the rule of God **in the person** of the King by his manifest presence **over** all the earth.

The second application is the sphere in which the *ekklesia* of God exists and where Satan's counterfeit program exists. The third application is further divided into two phases (1) The coming visible millennial reign on this present earth; and (2) The eternal rule of God over the new heaven and earth.

A. THE INVISIBLE SPIRITUAL RULE OF GOD WITHIN HIS PEOPLE

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).

*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*

*What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and **hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.** -Psa. 8:4-6*

From the very beginning God established His theocratic kingdom **in** and **through** man over the whole world. Man acted as God's 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** man's words and actions over this world. Hence, the internal "*upright*" moral condition established the rule of God **within** man, which in turn manifested God's rule **through** man's words and actions. That is the dual nature of God's kingdom/rule on earth **in** and **through** man.

1. **Overthrowing God's Kingdom on Earth**

The overthrow of God's kingdom on earth began by destroying the righteous moral image of God **within** man, and thereby destroying God's *manifest* rule **through** man. Theologians call the overthrowing of God's kingdom on earth "the fall" of man. They call it "the fall" because man fell from a higher moral condition ("*upright*") to a lower moral condition. Man fell from his high and holy relationship with God to a lower relationship with Satan.

This fall was an act of treason and rebellion against God. Sin is rebellion against God's law (1 Jn. 3:6). More importantly, sin separates man spiritually from God, which leaves man in a state of spiritual death/separation. God is the source of life, light, love and holiness, and therefore, spiritual separation from God is separation from life, light, love and holiness, thus spiritual death. Since the spirit of man is the moral governor of the soul of man, this act of separation from God left the soul of man in a state of moral darkness, enmity and depravity, thus spiritually dead. This condition of death, darkness, enmity and depravity characterizes the kingdom/ rule of Satan and Satan's moral image. Therefore, the fall introduced the kingdom/rule of death into this world.

The fall began with a single action by man (sin) which immediately brought death into the human family (Rom. 5:12). Death is best described in Scripture as separation. Adam was spiritually separated from God at the very moment sin was conceived in his heart (Gen.2:17) but made manifest by the external act of disobedience. This immediate spiritual separation from God was separation from life which has its sustaining source in God. As a consequence, the physical body of Adam was subject to the "*law of sin*" and began to deteriorate until 930 years later another separation occurred, the

separation of Adam's physical nature from his spiritual nature. If Adam had died in a state of spiritual separation, then his spirit at physical death would have been separated from God in a place called *Sheol/Hades*. There he would have been reserved for the day of judgment when his spirit and body would be reunited in resurrection, judged and separated from God forever in a place called *Gehenna* or the lake of fire which is the "second" death (Rev. 20:12-15). Satan with all of his kingdom (demons and men) would ultimately be cast into this same place separated from God forever.

As opposed to the "second" death, the first death of man began with an immediate state of spiritual separation, then a progressive state of separation which concluded in separation of the immaterial from the material part of man. The "second" death only occurs after the immaterial and material man are reunited. The "second death" is the act of being cast forever into the lake of fire, thus separated from God spirit, soul and body forever.

2. **Re-establishing God's Kingdom in and through man**

The "everlasting covenant" of redemption (Heb. 13:20; Eph. 1:4-14; Rom. 8:28-31) is God's program for re-establishing His rule within and through fallen man in this age and the age to come.

God's program for re-establishing His rule in and through man is after the same pattern as the fall of man. He begins with an immediate action that re-establishes spiritual union with God by new birth (Jn. 3:3,5). This is a creative act of God that reinstates the holy and righteous inward condition of man, thus establishing the rule of God within man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Tit. 3:5). Once spiritual union with God is established within man, then, that spiritual union is progressively made outwardly manifest through man's words and deeds. It is not made perfectly manifest because the influence of sin (law of sin or principle of "corruption" - 1 Cor. 15:53-55) still remains, which will not be completely removed until glorification at the last day. In the resurrection, the remaining principle of sin will be removed and redeemed man will perfectly manifest the rule of God in and through him in a new heaven and earth. Thus, paradise lost will have been restored.

Presently, the internal rule of God in men on earth constitute the true spiritual kingdom of God on earth. These kingdom citizens on earth are part of a larger group known as the "family of God" which consists of all true believers on earth as well as those who have left earth and dwell in heaven

(Eph. 3:15). However, there is a manifest or professing kingdom realm on earth and it is in this professing realm both the *ekklesia* of God dwells as well as false professors. The *ekklesia* of God is the visible public authorized administrator in the professing kingdom of God. It administers the visible ordinances and conducts public worship under the oversight of a qualified public ministry.

V. THE PRECISE RELATIONSHIP OF THE EKKLESIA WITH THE KINGDOM

As previously stated, there are three dimensions of the kingdom of God as pertaining to this earth. The rule of God is first established within the elect by the new birth. This is the universal invisible dimension. The rule of God is then worked out or manifested through the words and actions of the elect. This is the manifest dimension of profession and actions. The final dimension is at the Second Coming of Christ when he ushers in his universal visible rule over all the earth.

However, it is in the present second dimension or the visible manifestation of God's rule through man where Satan wars against the saints. Satan cannot prevent the saints from entering heaven, but he can rob them of rewards in heaven, and he can take their minds captive through temptations and confusion in order to prevent them from manifesting God's rule in their daily life. It is in this visible dimension that Satan battles to confuse and control the mind of believers through deception, false religions, false prophets, false doctrine, false churches and false professing Christians (Mt. 13) Satan's aim is to prevent and/or confuse the manifestation of the rule of God through the words and actions of professing people of God.

It is in this precise area of the manifest rule of God or the visible realm of service that God has established his *ekklesia* as the "*house of God and the pillar and ground of the truth*" to expose and battle the counterfeit program of Satan.

The *ekklesia* of Christ is called "*the house of God*" because it is the designated place for public worship and instruction. There has been such a designated public place where God meets with his people for worship and instruction since Genesis 4. From Adam to Moses it was established around the altar and spiritual leadership of the firstborn within the chosen family lineage. From Moses to Christ it was the "*tabernacle*" or "temple and

the chosen Levitical Priest occupied the place of “*firstborn*.” From Christ to the Second Coming it is the New Testament congregation or the “*church of firstborn ones*” (lit. trans. Heb. 12:23). It is built after a divine pattern, and its ordinances and ordained ministry are established according to a divine pattern. The “*house of God*” in all ages is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” and established by God within the **manifest** kingdom in order to teach the truth and combat the deceptive program of Satan.

Many of the kingdom parables deal with the **manifest** kingdom wherein Satan’s counterfeits mingle with the true people of God (Mt. 13). The Sermon on the Mount was delivered by Christ chiefly to distinguish between true and false professors within the manifest kingdom of God (Mt. 7:13-23). The manifest kingdom of God is the totality of *professing* Christendom at any given time on earth. It is the field of battle with regard to profession, truth and deception all of which claims to be a manifestation of the true Kingdom of God.

Ultimately, Christ will come and destroy the kingdom of Satan on earth and establish a manifest kingdom consistent with His rule within His people. In the model prayer he taught his disciples to pray “*thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*.” That day has not yet arrived when His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. Satan now rules over this present world through its secular institutions and governments. Satan’s religious rule is symbolized as “the Great Whore” and her harlot daughters. This Great Harlot and her daughters consist of all false religions including false professing Christianity and its institutions.

There are clear distinctions between the kingdom, family and church of God. However, it is part of Satan’s strategy to deny and confuse the people of God with regard to these clear distinctions. The reasons should be obvious, as the *ekklesia* of God is designed to combat this very counterfeit program of Satan. Therefore, the church of God has been the focus of Satanic attack, confusion and deception.

Both the universal visible and universal invisible church theories not only include but promote the very things that the *ekklesia* of Christ was instituted to expose, condemn and separate from. Both theories include Satan’s program of counterfeit confusion and false doctrines.

The universal invisible church theory by its very nature is inclusive of saints from every sort of denomination embracing every sort of false

doctrine and confusion. Such a concept is anything but “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” This theory confuses the *ekkleisa* of Christ with the internal rule of God by new birth. The doctrine of the universal invisible church is the doctrinal justification of the Great Harlot and her daughters and as a doctrine is part of Satan’s counterfeit program.

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 rule is manifestly 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:

*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 worldwide flood (Gen. 6). The second intervention was the confusion of Babel (Gen. 10). When Satan’s kingdom infiltrated the corporate manifest kingdom of God (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 congregations of God, (“*and deceivers shall wax worse and worse*”) it will result in persecution by the Great Harlot and her harlot daughters (Rev. 17:5)

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.

CONCLUSION

The universal visible church theory as defended and defined by Augustine includes both the tares and the true seed in an undisciplined state of confusion. Augustine claimed that if church discipline were enforced it would completely decimate the Catholic church.

The *ekklesia* of Christ was instituted to be the bastion of truth against the counterfeit program of Satan. It was instituted to be the guardian and authorized administrator of the ordinances. Its primary mission was to evangelize the lost and then teach them how to properly observe all things Christ commanded (Mt. 28:19-20).

However, the universal church theory has replaced the congregation with a concept that characterizes complete confusion and deception. They have replaced it with a concept that in no way can be characterized as “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” Instead, their concept of the “true” church consists of those who embrace every error under the sun. It consists of those of every denominational flavor and doctrine. Instead of a bastion of truth it is a citadel of error and confusion. It is Satan’s attack on the church of God.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name at least four different “applications” of kingdom, church and family that demonstrate they are not synonyms.
2. Would ancient Greeks regard *ekklesia* to be a synonym with *basilea* or a contrast?
3. Did God create Adam to exercise dominion over this world?
4. Which comes first, the internal rule of God in man or the external rule of God by man?
5. Does sin separate man from God spiritually or physically?
6. If God is the source of life, light, holiness and love then what does spiritual separation from God entail?
7. What are the opposites of life, light, holiness and love?
8. What are the three dimensions of God’s kingdom on earth?

9. Was Abraham justified by faith prior to the cross?
10. Were Prophets indwelt by the Spirit of Christ before the cross?
11. Were saints born again prior to the cross?
12. Were saints walking by faith and experiencing progress sanctification and fruits of the Spirit (love, faith, longsuffering, patience, etc.) before the cross?
13. If the cross was essential prior to salvation application then how do you explain such pre-cross salvation applications?



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 5 LESSON 2

The Kingdom, the Family and the Church of God—Part 2

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to show how both the universal visible and universal invisible church theories originated with misinterpretation of the parable of the tares, and, (2) to set forth the proper interpretation of the parables in Matthew 13 and, (3) to demonstrate that the *ekklesia* of God is the New Testament expression of the “*house of God*” or the public and visible administrative agency within the professing kingdom of God.

INTRODUCTION: The second dimension of God’s kingdom or the manifest professing kingdom/rule of God on earth is the spiritual and theological battleground between heaven and hell. It is where Satan’s program of counterfeiting and confusion now reigns. It is also where God has ordained and established his *ekklesia* to be “*the pillar and ground of truth*” so that his citizens will not be deceived by Satan’s program of confusion. Therefore, the *ekklesia* of God has been and still is Satan’s primary target in his program of deception and confusion. Satan’s warfare against the *ekklesia* of God has one aim and that is to diminish it as the “*pillar and ground of the truth.*” In all ages his attack plan has been the same (1) persecution; (2) false doctrine; (3) internal corruption (4) counterfeits. In the fourth century Satan devised a counterfeit doctrine of ecclesiology based upon the misinterpretation of the kingdom parables thereby confusing the kingdom with the *ekklesia*. This confusion of the manifest kingdom with the *ekklesia* of God gave rise to a manifest kingdom church, or state church known as the Holy Roman Catholic Church. This initial confusion between the kingdom and church produced a church salvation doctrine or sacramentalism. This false doctrine was further developed in the 16th century into a spiritual

kingdom/church ecclesiology which gave theological justification for a plethora of counterfeit *ekklesai*, as well as further establishing the idea of church salvation.

I. THE DEBATE OVER THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

In 411 A.D. in the city of Carthage in North Africa, Emperor Honorius forced the Donatists to enter into a debate with pro-state church bishops who were represented by Augustine of Hippo. The Donatists entered this debate full of fear and distrust. The only record of this debate is provided by Augustine who spent much time publishing it for the churches he represented. The Donatists claimed that Augustine's record of these debates was distorted. The editors of Augustine's record say:

The writer takes no responsibility for the ecclesiological tenets of the great Father, nor will he enter here into any criticism of the text and truth of the documents, upon which the historical argument was so laboriously and peremptorily built, to the utter ignoring of the Donatist archives, and the protests of their scholars against the validity and integrity of their opponent's records.—Philip Schaff, ed., **A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church**, [Grand Rapids: MI, Eerdmans, 1979] “*Against the Donatists*” Vol. IV, p. 372

However, both sides were in agreement that they opposed each other's interpretation of the parable of the tares in Matthew 13 and especially the phrase “*the field is the world*” (Mt. 13:38). Augustine interpreted, and defended this phrase to mean the visible church, while the Donatists denied it had anything to do with the church but the “*field*” is precisely what Christ interpreted it to be “*the world*” and in this world the professing kingdom of God consisting of true and false believers exist.

Dr. August Neander, a Lutheran church historian, was characterized by Dr. Philip Schaff (who was the author of the nine-volume set, *The History of the Christian Church*, and editor of *The Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-*

Nicene Fathers) as the “*father of church history*.” Neander says that Augustine interpreted the word “*world*” in Matthew 13:39 to be the church:

While the Donatists made it appear that Christ himself, in explaining the parable, would have us to understand that the field is the world, Augustin maintained, on the other hand, that Christ, in this case, put the world for the church.—August Neander, **General History of the Christian Religion and Church**. [Crocker and Brewster: London, 1872], Vol.2, p. 242

Philip Schaff when introducing “*The City of God*” written by Augustine candidly says that Augustine considered the kingdom and church of God to be one and the same:

He confines the Kingdom of God to the narrow limits of the Jewish theocracy and the visible Catholic Church.—Philip Schaff, ed., **A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church**. “*Augustin’s City of God*” [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], Editor’s Preface, p. vi

Prior to this point in history, no one had ever taken the position that “*the world*” equaled “*the church*.” Hence, the ecclesiological idea of a *universal visible* church was born. Neander says that this interpretation opened up a basis for the Donatists to charge Augustine with teaching two different kinds of churches:

*In this way they furnished occasion to the Donatists of charging them with supposing the existence of **two churches**; but they were extremely uneasy under this accusation, and would allow of no other distinction than that of two different conditions of one and the same church, inasmuch as it was at present a mortal church, but would hereafter be an immortal one.”* Ibid., pp. 246-247 - emphasis mine

Prior to Augustine, the term “universal” or “Catholic” was a collective term which was inclusive of each and every individual congregation:

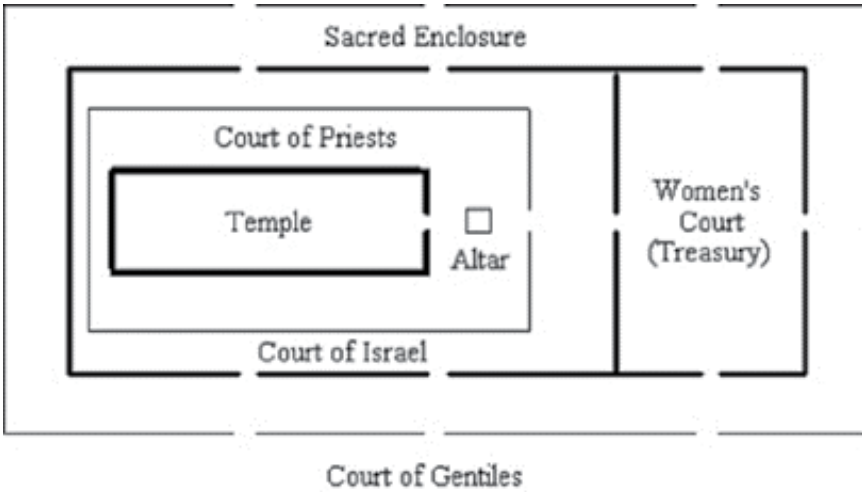
The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to the church of God sojourning in Philomelium, and to all the congregations of the Holy and catholic church in every place;—Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nice Fathers*, (Erdmann's Pub. Grand Rapids, MI, 1973), Vol. I, p. 39, “**The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrna concerning the Martyrdom of the Holy Polycarp.**”—emphasis mine

Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the catholic church which is in Smyrna. - Philip Schaff, ed., **The Ante-Nicene Fathers**, [Grand Rapids: MI, Eerdmans, 1978] Vol. I, p. 42 chapter xvi—Polycarp. - emphasis mine

Moreover, the term “Catholic” was first used and understood in the cultural context as the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian in contrast to the Jewish assembly. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith or the Westminster Confession acknowledges this is the ante-Nicene meaning under their 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—emphasis mine.

The distinguishing characteristic between the Christian and Jewish assembly, was that the Christian assembly was not divided by ethnicity, gender or status, but was “catholic” or universally inclusive. In direct contrast, the Jewish assemblies were divided according to ethnicity, gender and status. The Christian assembly had removed the “*wall of partition*” (Eph. 2;14) that divided Gentiles from Jews, Jewish women from men, and Jewish priests from others as clearly exhibited in the Jewish temple court divisions:



The above illustrates the distinctions between gender, race and class that characterized the public worship in the Jewish house of God. The Christian “*house of God*” was “catholic” or universally inclusive without regard to gender, race and class distinctions and divisions.

However, it is the doctrine of church discipline that was the primary issue that led up to this dispute over the meaning of “*the field*” in Matthew 13 and thus gave rise to the invention of a universal visible church concept.

There were two issues with regard to church discipline which divided the state churches (represented by Augustine) from the non-state churches (Donatists). During periods of persecution many denied Christ, and were placed under discipline by the churches, but when the persecution ended these disciplined members sought restoration only to do the same thing again under the next persecution. The state churches admitted them back into membership while the non-state churches refused them admission to church membership. Second, the state churches had increased their membership by Christianizing pagan rituals and holidays so that pagans would more easily become Christians, thus drastically increasing their membership size. However, these Christianized pagans continued to live an unholy and pagan lifestyle without any true evidence of repentance. As a consequence, the major part of membership in such churches consisted of Christianized pagans. The non-state churches refused to recognize such state churches as apostolic churches. In response, the state churches labeled the non-state churches as “Donatists” and later labeled such as “Anabaptists”

because they treated members of such state churches who came to them as unbaptized believers, thus refusing the ordinances of the state churches, thus refusing to acknowledge them as true churches of Christ.

Neander states the Donatist position this way:

The Donatists maintained that the church should cast out from its body those who were known, by open and manifest sins, to be unworthy members. To prove this, they adduced the fifth chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, where the apostle has given certain rules for the practice of church discipline. "When the church did not act in accordance with these rules," said they, "but tolerated such unworthy members in their communion, she lost the predicates of purity and holiness." ... Augustin, taking the position of the Catholic church, replied that, it was true, church discipline should, by all means, be vigorously maintained; but that still such a complete separation from the rest, even of manifest transgressors, was, in the existing state of the church, impractical; that the evil must be patiently endured, to avoid a still greater one, and to give opportunity for reformation to such as could be reformed, especially in those cases where the wickedness which was to be corrected by church discipline, was shared by too many.—Ibid., p. 241—emphasis mine.

Augustine admitted the corruption of their congregations was so great, that to practice discipline in this manner would virtually destroy their congregations, thus producing what he believed a greater of two evils.

The Donatists believed that “a little leaven leavened the whole lump” and the massive numbers of leavened pagans being brought into the membership of the state churches invalidated them as churches of Christ but made them synagogues’ of Satan. Neander said:

The Donatists... held that every church which tolerated unworthy members in its bosom was itself polluted by the communion with them: it thus ceased to deserve the predicates of purity and holiness, and consequently ceased to be a true Christian church, since such a church could not subsist without these predicates.—Ibid. p. 238

Therefore, Augustine and the pro-state churches sought refuge in the parable of the tares in Matthew 13 and argued the “*feld*” equaled “*the world*” which equaled “*the kingdom*” which equaled “*the church*” thus making the church coextensive in area with “*the world*” and thus a *universal visible* church. In this way they defended the presence of such paganized Christians within their membership because Christ commanded not to remove the tares from “*the field*” = “*the world*” = “*the church*.”

Therefore, the doctrine of the universal visible church was born as an attempt to undermine the Biblical teaching of church discipline. Church discipline preserves the Great Commission reproductive cycle as a closed system of like faith and order. Church discipline was designed to preserve the purity of the congregation and to prevent ecumenicalism. Church discipline was designed to protect and preserve the unity in faith and practice (2 Thes. 3:6; Rom. 16:17). Undermining church discipline not only brought ungodliness into the congregations but doctrinal disunity within each congregation and between congregations (ecumenicalism). For example, the early “Catholic” state church included Arians as well as Trinitarian under the banner of “orthodox” Christianity. Indeed, Constantine as the first “Christian” emperor seemed to identify with the Arians.

However, in the final part of this lesson it will be seen that Augustine’s interpretative paradigm of this parable is false. The true “*seed*” are the *spiritual* kingdom of God found in the larger *professing* kingdom consisting of both the true “*seed*” and the “*tares*” in “*the field*” (this present “*world*”). The “*world*” is neither the kingdom nor the church but just the domain in which the professing kingdom and church exist.

However, Augustine’s misinterpretation was a watershed event in history, as it served as a refuge for the Reformers in the 16th century when they also found themselves excommunicated from what they believed to be the true universal visible church. The Reformers were Catholics who only sought to “reform” what they considered to be an apostate condition of the true universal visible church of Christ. They had no intent on leaving Rome. Thus, they and their followers were, and are, reformed Catholics or Protesting Roman Catholics, who are still seeking to return to Rome at this very hour. The Reformed doctrine of the church also served as the source for ecumenicalism among British and American Baptists between 1689 and 1950.

However, from the end of the apostolic age unto the council of Carthage in 411 A.D., the term “church”, or *ekklesia* was consistently used according to its ordinary meaning, as either a collective noun, abstract noun (institutional, generic), or a concrete noun. No one believed in a *universal visible* or *invisible* church prior to Augustine. In 411 A.D. Augustine introduced for the first time in history the concept of a *universal visible* church. From 411 A.D. to the Reformation no group can be found that believed in a *universal invisible* church. Prior to Augustine no union between state and church existed. The only union of religion and state had been the Jewish state religion and the Roman state religion, both of which, persecuted the New Testament churches. With Augustine came the first union of state and church within professed Christianity. The only other application of the term “church” previous to the Reformation, besides the common meaning and the Augustinian universal visible” church model (that characterized the state church from 411 to 1525 A.D.) was in reference to the total aggregate of all the elect which would not be assembled until after the coming of Christ. Thus, it was used to describe the yet future eschatological assembly. However, the “Anabaptist” groups denied Catholics would be part of that eschatological assembly of the elect because they did not believe any saved person could embrace the state church religion.

Neander admits that the Novationists, Donatists and Catholics did not believe in a *universal invisible* church. Neander laments that fact because he believed the Catholics could have been easily led to embrace such a theory had someone taught them:

Both parties [Novationists and Donatists] were involved in the same grand mistake with regard to the conception of the church, by their habit of confounding the notions of the invisible and of the visible church with each other. Proceeding on this fundamental error, the Catholic fathers maintained that, separate from the communion of the one visible Catholic church, derived, through the succession of the bishops, from the apostles there is no way of participating in the influences of the Holy Spirit and of obtaining salvation. On the other hand, the Donatists, owing to this same confusion of notions, held that every church which tolerated unworthy members in its bosom was itself polluted by the communion with them:

it thus ceased to deserve the predicates of purity and holiness, and consequently ceased to be a true Christian church, since such a church could not subsist without these predicates... (p. 238)...*Since the Catholics, in their controversy with the Donatists, distinguished the church on earth, in which genuine and spurious members are mixed together, from the church in heaven, purified from its spurious members, **they might easily have been led, by pursuing this distinction still further, to distinguish the conceptions of the visible and of the invisible church.** In this way they furnished occasion to the Donatists of charging them with supposing the existence of two churches; but they were extremely uneasy under this accusation, and would allow of no other distinction than that of two conditions of one and the same church, inasmuch as it was at present a mortal church, but would hereafter be an immortal one.—Ibid., pp. 238, 246–247—emphasis mine*

Here is a candid admission that the universal invisible church theory was not only unknown prior to the council at Carthage in 411 A.D. but unknown prior to the Reformation. The Donatists did not believe in either a present church in heaven or an invisible church on earth. They accused the Catholics of believing in “two churches” because the Catholics believed in a church on earth made up of believers from all denominations (Donatists, Arian and Orthodox Catholics, etc.) in addition to the totality of local congregations. None of the ancient Anabaptists from the Donatists to the Reformation Anabaptists believed in an invisible church on earth made up of members from all denominations or a church composed partly of members on earth and in partly in heaven. They embraced only local visible congregations presently on earth and a yet unassembled future church consisting of all the elect in heaven after the resurrection (which they believed excluded Catholics and other heretics). So, no group of Christians between the end of the first century and the Reformation believed in an invisible church on earth made up of all Christians from all denominations.

II. THE PROPER INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLES OF MATTHEW 13

The error of ecclesiology from the 4th century forward to the Reformation is rooted in the confusion of the kingdom of God with the church of God. The misinterpretation of the parable of the tares in Matthew 13 played a significant role in producing this error. First, we need to properly understand these kingdom parables and then secondly, we must make the proper application to ecclesiology and to the present state of Christianity.

A. THE CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 13

Context is everything! The contextual arrangement provided by Matthew for the parables in Matthew 13 is different than can be found in either Mark or Luke. Each gospel writer had their own reason for writing their gospel, and each provides a different emphasis from the other gospel accounts. For example, only Matthew and Luke begin with the birth of Christ. Mark begins with the ministry of John the Baptist while John begins “*in the beginning*” before the world was created (Jn. 1:1-3) and then skips to the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist (Jn. 1:6) along with a few remarks about His incarnation (Jn. 1:10-14).

Each gospel writer had a different intent. For example, it is quite clear that the intent behind John’s account is to emphasize the absolute deity of Jesus Christ as he begins his account in eternity past. Mark wrote to give a fast-moving brief chronological order of the last three years and half of Christ’s life. Mark’s gospel is characterized by the Greek word εὐθέως which is translated “*immediately*” and “*straightway*.” Luke wrote to give a more expanded chronological account of the first few years of Christ’s life and the last three and half years.

Matthew does not follow the chronological order in his listing of the teachings of Christ as do Mark and Luke. John omits these kingdom parables altogether. Matthew is more concerned in providing a theological order rather than a chronology order of these teachings. Some feel that Matthew wrote to provide a discipleship manual for early Christians which only gave the basic chronological order of Christ’s early days, and of his last days, but arranged the teachings of Christ in between in more of a

theological order than a chronological order. So, Matthew's intent behind his account is different than the other gospel writers. Matthew's arrangement of the parabolic teachings of Christ seems to be more about providing a context that reveals Christ's intent behind the parables. Indeed, Matthew's arrangement seems to be designed to intentionally provide a contrast between true and false kingdom professors.

For example, Matthew 13 follows a consistent theme of rejection of the ministry and teachings of John the Baptist and Christ (Mt. 8-12). Matthew 13 concludes with rejection of Christ by his own home town and his own family (Mt. 13:54-58). The intent for placing these parables in this kind of context seems to provide his disciples with the specific explanation for this open rejection. He claimed to be the Messiah that Israel had been looking for, but yet the vast majority of the only nation on earth that professed to be the people of the true and living God rejected him. Whole cities were rejecting him (Mt. 11:20-24). Those who were recognized as the Biblical scholars and Bible teachers were rejecting him (Mt. 12). This consistent theme of rejection comes to a head in Matthew 12 with the outright accusation by the religious elite of Israel that his ministry was empowered by demons.

Naturally, his disciples were observing this increasing rejection. There is no doubt that such rejection caused some questions in their own mind whether He was the Christ since the majority of God's professing people were rejecting him. Matthew's placement of the kingdom parables at this point in this context was to provide reasons and answers to his own disciples seeing and hearing this rejection. This is implied by the question he asks the disciples after explaining these parables in Matthew 13:50-51:

Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Jesus tells them if they truly understood these parables they would be like a "scribe" and like a "householder." The scribe was responsible for making copies of the scriptures. His constant exposure to the scriptures made him more familiar with the Scriptures, and therefore an authority on their meaning.

A “*householder*” was the person put in charge by the owner of a house over the affairs of his house. He was particularly responsible for making sure that his master was ready for any need that may arise. Therefore, he prepared himself for any likely occasion he may be called upon to meet by storing “*new and old*” in his “*treasury*” so that he would always be prepared for any occasion.

Therefore, Jesus is telling his disciples that if they understood these parables they would be like scholars whose understanding would be superior to others with regard to the cause and nature of such rejection, and they would be prepared for all occasions when such rejection manifested itself. The parables are designed to explain the true sources of this rejection among the professing people of God. The internal source of rejection is due to the condition of their hearts (Mt. 13:1-23). The spiritual source of rejection is the counterfeit program of Satan within the professing kingdom of God (Mt. 13:24-50). This counterfeit confusion will only be dealt with ultimately at the end of the world.

The structure of Matthew 13 and these parables is also necessary to understand. Between the parable of the soils and its interpretation, is instruction that is meant to be a preface to the final interpretation of this parable. Also, placed between the parable of the tares and its interpretation are two minor parables designed to further highlight and expand the emphasis of that parable. Immediately following the parable of the tares are short parables designed to highlight and expand the conclusion of the parabolic instruction. These parables are concluded by the question in Matthew 13:50-51 which demonstrates all these parables are by design related to each other in order to convey a single intent by the Lord. That single intent is to explain why professing people of God reject Christ and his teachings. That explanation is as valid today as it was then. Understanding these parables is essential to avoid confusion within the professing kingdom of God today.

B. REJECTION IS A HEART PROBLEM—PARABLE OF FOUR SOILS - MT. 13:3-23

The significance of this parable is recorded by Mark 4:13 And *he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and **how then will ye know all parables?*** This parable is not only the basis for understanding the next primary

parable (parable of the tares) but is the basis for understanding all of Christ's kingdom parables because the ultimate nature of Christ's kingdom or rule deals with the issues of the heart. Christ did not come to usher in an external manifest kingdom, but he came first to establish His redemptive provision and rule within the hearts of men. Entrance into the spiritual kingdom of God in connection with a repentant and believing heart must precede entrance into any manifest kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3,5). The four soils represent four conditions of the human heart in all who profess to be subject to God's rule. In each case the ground represents the heart, and in each case the seed represents the word of God and in each case, it has been "received" in some kind of manner. Thus, this parable describes what manner of reception the word has been received and the condition of the heart receiving the word.

The first three soils represent various conditions of the unregenerate heart and/or the fallen nature.⁵⁷ The first three soils are represented by the "tares" in the next parable. They represent the "many" of the religious professors in Matthew 7:13. The fourth soil alone is called "good" and alone represents the regenerated heart in all true believers. Among true believers there are diverse productivity in fruit bearing. However, all four conditions represent the professing kingdom of God.

1. Brother and Sister Hard Heart = soil number one—hard soil
2. Brother and Sister Superficial = soil number two—shallow soil
3. Brother and Sister Worldly = soil number three—weedy soil
4. Brother and Sister true believer = soil number four—deeply plowed weedless fruit bearing soil

The fourth soil and its condition are directly attributed to God as explained in the inserted section placed between the parable and the explanation of the parable (Mt. 13:10-17). These parables are only for those who have "ears to hear" (Mt. 13:10) and it is only the fourth soil that is enabled to hear (Mt. 13:11). Even among those who have ears to hear, God determines the degree of productivity (Mt. 13:12-15). It is God who must "give" such ability (Mt. 13:11), and He does not give it to all (Mt. 13:16-17).

⁵⁷ When true believers are at times dominated by their fallen nature such traits may be manifest.

If you understand this parable, you will understand the major characteristics of the unregenerate in the professing kingdom of God. The three major characteristics of false professors are (1) inability to understand God's Word regardless of how much they are exposed to it; (2) religious superficiality ultimately manifested by inability to persevere in faith when tested by tribulation for identity with God's Word, and; (3) low priority of God's Word in daily life decisions.

Although fruit production may differ quantitatively among true believers, no such fruit production occurs among the first three hearts. Fruit is the product of true repentant faith (Mt. 3:6) which is produced by God thoroughly plowing up the human heart (no hardness) and removing everything (subterranean rock, weeds) that would prevent growth unto fruit production. This is the work of God. The difference in fruit production from one child of God to another is due to the measure of grace and faith bestowed upon them by God (Rom. 12:3,5) according to His purpose for their life (Philip. 2:13; Eph. 2:10b).

So, this parable explains the internal reason for rejection by the majority of the professing kingdom of God that they were witnessing first hand.

C. REJECTION IS A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM—THE PARABLE OF THE TARES - MATTHEW 13:24-50

Three out of four soils represent "*tares*" or false professors. So, such false professors give the professing kingdom of God an external manifest larger size than the true size of the spiritual kingdom of God. Just as leaven gives an unnatural size to dough, and just as a mustard plant manifests an unnatural size in comparison to the mustard seed, so the professing kingdom of God is largely dominated by the "many" (Mt. 7:12) whereas the true size of the spiritual kingdom of God is "*few*" (Mt. 7:13) in comparison. This unnatural and increasing size of the professing kingdom of God is due to Satan's counterfeit program in planting tares (look alike wheat) in the world and the leaven of false doctrine.

There are several different ways within the "*broad way*" whereby Satan produces such "*tares*." One primary way is through "*false prophets*" (Mt. 7:15-20) or the "*birds*" that roost in the oversized professing kingdom. Another way is by the institutional harlot (as opposed to the "bride" of Christ) whereby

leaven (symbol of false doctrine) is “*hid*” within the manifest kingdom of God. But behind all false doctrine, false professors, false churches, and false prophets is a demonic source (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:6) under the leadership of Satan.

*He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; **The enemy that sowed them is the devil;** the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.—
Mt. 13:37-39*

The parables of the woman with the leaven and of the mustard seed are placed between the parable and its explanation to further explain the unnatural size of the professing kingdom of God. The parables placed after the explanation of this parable are to further explain how the true spiritual kingdom (treasure in contrast to the mustard tree) and the true church (pearl of Great Price in contrast to the woman) are hid among the professing stuff of the professing kingdom and why they are so difficult to find, as though they were “*hid*” among the professing stuff, and when and what it will take to clearly distinguish the true from the false.

If you understand these parables correctly, you will understand that false professors, false churches, false prophets and false doctrine are the direct results of Satan’s counterfeit program in this world. You will understand that the obvious result of his program is an inflated oversized professing kingdom of God. You will understand that the parables of the woman with leaven provide the basis for increasing apostasy in every generation until Jesus returns so that “...*evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” (2 Tim. 3:13). You will understand why Jesus rhetorically asked “...*when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*” (Lk. 18:8). Therefore, you will understand that the prediction in the last days is not a great revival among the true children of God on earth, but a great apostasy that has apostolic like power (Mt. 24:24-25; 1 Tim. 4:1).

More importantly, you will understand why you should expect the rejection of basic Biblical truths by the vast majority within the professing kingdom of God to be the norm, and increasingly so, as time proceeds toward the coming of Christ.

Indeed, if you will study Biblical history since the book of Genesis, the true way of the Lord is the way of the “few” in contrast to the multiplicity of ways taken by the majority of God’s professing kingdom citizens. Paul gives a perfect example in the days of Elijah where the professing kingdom of God was in such apostasy that Elijah actually believed that no one in Israel but he alone still stood for God’s truth. Even though God revealed to Elijah that He had reserved 7000 that had not bowed their knee to Baal. 7000 was a tiny fraction among the professing people of God.

For example, how much of God’s professing kingdom on earth at this very time oppose justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Christ alone without works? Roman and Orthodox Catholicism alone make up nearly 75% (1.5 billion out of 2.1 billion) of professing Christianity on planet earth and they repudiate that basic truth. How much of God’s professing kingdom on earth at this very time oppose the simple truth of water immersion of born-again believers? Roman and Orthodox Catholicism, along with much of Reformation Protestantism or nearly 90% of professing Christians on planet earth reject this basic New Testament truth. Apostasy is the norm that characterizes the vast majority of the professing kingdom of God. If the reader is among the very “few” that embrace these two basic Bible truths that should be recognized as a tremendous blessing, rather than a curse (as the majority would have you believe). Is it any wonder that the vast majority oppose the truth of ecclesiology since their views of salvation is inclusive of the church and its ordinances which demands either a universal visible or universal invisible concept??? Should it be a surprise that only a very “few” embrace the truth of ecclesiology?

This parable has been a battle ground for ecclesiology since the time of Augustine of Hippo. The corruption of this parable has been manifested in the doctrines of the universal visible, and universal invisible church which are crucial masks for hiding the true identity of the Great Harlot within the professing kingdom of God.

Perverting the nature of these parables is crucial to Satan’s plan in confusing the kingdom of God with the congregation of God, thereby confusing the doctrine of the church with the doctrine of salvation. It is this basic confusion that produced the doctrine of church/salvation embraced by more than 97% of professing Christendom. In other words, 97% of Christendom embrace some form of salvation/church doctrine:

1. The Catholic doctrine is no salvation outside the church—universal visible church
2. The Reformed Catholic doctrine is no salvation outside the church—universal invisible church.
3. The Restoration doctrine is no salvation outside of a particular kind or denomination of local churches (Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Mormon’s, etc.).

Landmark type Baptists are the only Christians on planet earth that believe that spiritual union with God has absolutely nothing to do with the church. They are the only Christians who consistently believe spiritual union must precede water baptism into any kind of church membership. Therefore, they believe there are many saved persons in other denominations in spite of what they have been falsely taught, but the overall kingdom count of true citizens in the world is drastically “few” in comparison to the number of professing Christians.

CONCLUSION

The doctrine and application of salvation by spiritual union begins in Genesis while the congregation of Christ with its revelation and foundation begins with the earthly ministry of Christ.

The congregation of Christ is the manifest administrator of the New Covenant ordinances and public worship within the professing kingdom of God. The true kingdom or rule of God is first internal and originates with spiritual union before it can be manifest through man. It is the manifestation of God’s rule in the daily lives of his people which is the manifest professing aspect of the kingdom and it is in this manifest aspect where Satan operates his counterfeit program.

The counterfeit professing citizens of God’s manifest kingdom are exposed by their (1) inability to understand the truths of God’s word; (2) superficiality and inability to persevere in faithfulness to God’s word when tested by fire, and; (3) the low priority of God’s Word in their daily lives. The counterfeit prophets and institutions are manifest by false doctrine. This counterfeit program dramatically increases the manifest size of the professing Kingdom of God. The true citizens of God’s kingdom on earth are “*hid*” among the professing stuff and the congregation of Christ is a

rare pearl hidden deeper yet. The true kingdom citizens and congregation of Christ will not be fully revealed until Christ comes again and separates from the true from the false.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Identify three dimensions of the kingdom of God.
2. How do the prepositions “*within...through...over*” relate to the three dimensions of the kingdom of God?
3. What dimension of the kingdom of God is the battleground between heaven and hell?
4. What dimension of the Kingdom of God does the *ekklesia* of God exist in?
5. Did the Donatists believe they were fairly represented in Augustine’s written account of their debate?
6. How did Augustine interpret the term “*field*” in Matthew 13:39?
7. At what point in history did the concept of a universal visible STATE church occur?
8. How was the term “catholic” originally understood prior to Augustine?
9. How did the Presbyterian divines who authored the Westminster Confession understand the original import of “catholic”?
10. What was Augustine and the Reformers attempting to avoid by their interpretation of the “*field* as the church in Matthew 13:39?
11. What did Christ say the “*field*” represented?
12. What did Augustus Neander unwittingly admit was not embraced by Ante-Nicene church fathers?

REQUIRED READING:

Some Non-Prophet Organizations by Mark W. Fenison—pp. 69-87 <http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/Some Non- Prophetbook.pdf>

WEEK 5 LESSON 3

The Kingdom, the Family and the Church of God—Part 3

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to clarify the basics of salvation with regard to the fall of man in relationship to the kingdom of God and, (2) to demonstrate that the church has nothing to do with these basics other than the visible public manifestation of such basics and, (3) to show that the doctrine of the universal invisible church is based upon repudiating and distorting these very basics of salvation.

INTRODUCTION: The theory of the universal invisible church is inseparably woven into the Biblical nature of salvation. According to this theory, to be saved is to be within this universal invisible church and to be lost is to be outside this universal invisible church. According to this theory the prepositional phrase “in Christ” refers to spiritual union with Christ and means to be a member within this invisible church, and therefore to be outside this invisible church is to be spiritually outside of Christ. Dr. John MacArthur, one of the chief advocates of this theory says: “*how can you be saved but not be part of the body of Christ*” (John MacArthur, *The baptism in the Spirit*). Certainly, if this theory is true, MacArthur is right.

I. THE CHURCH AND SALVATION

Salvation originates in Genesis (Gen. 3:15) but the “*foundation*” of the church is not even laid until the gospels (Eph. 2:20). The very first gift men placed in the church does not occur until the apostles (1 Cor. 12:28). Both Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 12:28 come from the hand of Paul. In both cases, apostles precede prophets demonstrating these are New Testament

prophets rather than Old Testament prophets.⁵⁸ Indeed, in 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul places them in numerical order “*first apostles, secondarily prophets.*” The “*foundation*” has Christ as the “*chief cornerstone*” with apostles and prophets. This is a very precise metaphorical description of New Testament revelation. In these last days God has spoken through his Son (Heb. 1:1). The function of a “*cornerstone*” in a foundation was to provide proper alignment. Once the “*cornerstone*” had been placed, then the other stones used in the foundation were aligned with its right angles. The New Testament apostles and prophets were the mouth pieces of Christ who represented and spoke in his behalf (Jn. 14-17). All New Testament scripture is in perfect alignment with the person, work and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is this “*foundation*” that makes the church “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15).

The church is a New Testament “*revelation*” but salvation was an Old Testament revelation (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53). Hence, it is impossible for the church to be part of salvation without inventing “*another gospel*” than preached between Genesis and Matthew. Peter claims the same gospel preached by “*all the prophets*” is the gospel preached by all the apostles (Acts 10:43). Paul claims it is the same gospel preached prior to the cross that is preached after the cross (Heb. 4:2). The only distinction is that the Old Testament gospel was progressive in revelation which anticipated the coming of the Messiah, while the New Testament gospel is based on fulfilled prophecy and anticipates the second coming of the Messiah.

In Hebrews, Paul does not claim he is preaching a different gospel than what was preached previously by the Old Testament prophets (Heb. 4:2) but that there is a new covenant administration that better manifests that gospel in its fulfillment through the New Testament public “*house of God*” and its ministry and ordinances (Heb. 10:25; 13:7-17).

Therefore, one serious problem with this church salvation theory for non-dispensationalism is that the church originates in the New Testament period, while the problem of the fall originates in Genesis. Hence, the church cannot be part of the solution for the Genesis problem as the church is 4000

⁵⁸ *The repeated use of “apostles and prophets” by Paul in Ephesians 3:5 and Ephesians 4:11 prove these are New Testament prophets. In Ephesians 3:5 the mystery is revealed to those in the apostolic age but was not revealed to Old Testament prophets (Eph. 3:5a “which in other ages was not made known”). Likewise, Ephesians 4:11 speaks of apostles and then of prophets as gifts in the New Testament congregation.*

years too late. Just as problematic is the fact that the mechanism they use for placing persons into their church union with Christ does not occur until Pentecost which again, is 4000 years too late to be part of the solution of the fall in Genesis.

In other words, there is a tremendous gap between the origin of the church and the origin of the problem for which salvation is designed to resolve. If salvation is inseparable from membership in such a church than there is no salvation possible between Genesis and Malachi as the church does not exist within this gap nor does the mechanism exist that supposedly places one into this church (baptism in the Spirit).

II. THE DEEPER FUNDAMENTAL SOTERIOLOGICAL PROBLEM

However, there is a much deeper and more significant problem than the “gap” problem. The very fundamental essence of the fall and salvation is repudiated by this theory. The very fundamental essence of the fall is spiritual separation, while the very fundamental essence of salvation is the solution to that problem which is spiritual union. Sin spiritually separated Adam from God at the moment he sinned (Gen. 2:17) and the very fundamental essence of death is first, and foremost, spiritual separation from God. God “is” life, light, holiness and love and to exist in a spiritual state of separation from God is to exist in an opposite state to life (death), light (darkness), holiness (depravity) and love (enmity).

Paul describes the fallen state of mankind in keeping with this precise state when he says:

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 to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. - Eph. 4:18-19

1. Separated from light - “*the understanding darkened*”
2. Separated from life - “*alienated from the life of God*”
3. Separated from love - “*being past feeling*”
4. Separated from holiness - “*given...to lasciviousness, to...all uncleanness*”

However, this is not a Post-Pentecost condition of man, but the condition of every human being since the fall in Genesis. Nearly all the New Testament teaching on the fallen condition of man is taken directly from the Old Testament prophets. So, the fallen condition of man is an Old Testament revelation. It is this condition that makes fallen man incapable of “*pleasing God*” (Rom. 8:7-8) not merely since Pentecost but since Genesis.

Fallen man cannot “*please God*” precisely because it is impossible to please God without the capacity of life, light, holiness and love which are only obtained by spiritual union with God. This very condition of fallen man separates him from the very fundamentals needed to serve and please God. Paul speaks as a born-again man in Romans 7:14-25 and yet admits that he is wholly unable to please God apart from the indwelling presence and power of God’s Spirit (Rom. 7:18) and yet many suppose that Old Testament saints can accomplish this without the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit.⁵⁹

Spiritual union (new birth/quickenings) is essential to “*please*” God, but if that is defined or understood to be without the indwelling Spirit it is not sufficient to please God as Paul demonstrates in Romans 7. The man who is in spiritual union with God must also have the indwelling Spirit in order to please God (Rom. 8:8-13).

Paul asserts there are only two possible conditions of mankind (1) in the flesh, or; (2) in the Spirit. Significantly, to be “*in the Spirit*” is to be indwelt by the Spirit of God and all who are not “*are none of his*” (Rom. 8:8-9). It is impossible to be in spiritual union with God and not at one and the same time to be indwelt by the Spirit of God. Why? It is impossible because the human spirit exists within the human body and for union between the human spirit and the Spirit of God to exist, it must occur within the human body and that equals indwelling. If the indwelling Spirit vacates the body, the human spirit returns to a state of spiritual separation = spiritual death. Therefore, the only possible remedy for spiritual separation is spiritual union/

⁵⁹ *They imagine that the words describing the Spirit coming upon certain individuals is what enabled them to please God or walk by faith. However, the very same words are used of the Spirit in the New Testament and refers only to special enabling or gifting by the Spirit (Acts 8:14). However, walking “by faith” is the fruit of the indwelling Spirit by new birth. The new birth is revealed as something that all of God’s people should be acquainted with prior to the cross (Jn. 3:3-9; Ezek. 44:4-5). Prior to the gospels it is described in metaphorical terms other than “birth” but as a “circumcision of the heart.”*

indwelling, which is the reversal of spiritual separation, and thus brings the person into a spiritual relationship with God. Union with God is union with life, light, love and holiness. This act of union is an act of creation by God (Eph. 2:10) and is called being “*quicken*ed” (made alive) or the new birth.

However, the dispensational universal invisible church theory denies such spiritual union is possible prior to Pentecost precisely because they claim the baptism in the Spirit is the mechanism to obtain spiritual union with God through Christ.

Many deny that spiritual union/new birth, and other aspects of salvation were made available to fallen mankind between Genesis and Christ because Christ had not made the provision of salvation on the cross. But this is an inconsistent argument because many of the same theologians claim that their concept of the new birth (Jn. 3:3-8), justification by faith (Rom. 4), and progressive sanctification all occurred prior to the cross. The Scriptures are clear that all of these salvation provisions were applied prior to the cross (Ezek. 44:4-7; Jn. 3:3-9; Rom. 4; Heb. 11; etc.). However, if the cross makes the provision of salvation applicable, then that must hold equally true for all aspects of salvation, rather than just some aspects, as all aspects of salvation have their provisional basis in the cross. Others who are more consistent with this argument claim prior to the cross all were saved by law keeping.⁶⁰ However, that idea is repeatedly repudiated by Paul (Rom. 4; Gal. 3; etc.).

On the other hand, if the actual provision of salvation is based upon the “*everlasting covenant*” of redemption applied through faith in the progressive revelation of the provision of the coming Messiah (Rom. 3:24-26) then Abraham could have been regenerated (spiritual union), justified and sanctified and brought to heaven at death based upon faith looking forward to the cross just as we look back to the cross by faith.

Moreover, if the baptism in the Spirit has nothing to do with **individual** indwelling (1 Cor. 6:19), as will be argued in the next three chapters, but rather has to do with the visible new covenant administrations through

⁶⁰ *Some believe the apostles prior to the cross were unregenerate unbelievers because they did not understand and accept that Christ would be killed in Jerusalem. Although the cross had not been previously revealed in the progressive revelation of the gospel, Christ confirmed the apostles were believers in the Messiah (Jn. 6:64; Mt. 16:16-17) and had believed in him for eternal life (Jn. 6:68-69) and for remission of sins as this was part and parcel of the gospel preached by John the Baptist (Jn. 3:36; Mt.3:6-8) which they had accepted prior to being called by Christ to follow him.*

institutional indwelling (1 Cor. 3:16), then the baptism in the Spirit has nothing to do with obtaining spiritual union with Christ at all, but rather the new birth is what obtains such spiritual union. Hence, the congregation has nothing to do with obtaining salvation at all, but only has to do with the public manifestation of that salvation through public worship and service.

III. THE CONGREGATION IS THE VISIBLE COVENANT ADMINISTRATOR WITHIN THE MANIFEST KINGDOM

As previously suggested, the kingdom/rule of God has three different dimensions. (1) There is the invisible internal rule of God within the hearts of the elect. This aspect has been on earth since the redemption of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15). (2) There is the visible manifest expression of God's rule in the lives of men. This is the visible rule by profession manifest in words and actions. (3) There is the future visible rule in the Person of the king over all the earth. This future aspect is expressed in the words of the model prayer "*thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"

It is the middle kingdom or the visible expression of the kingdom in the lives of men wherein God has ordained and established an authorized visible kingdom administration to provide instruction for the acceptable expression of God's rule in the lives of His people. That visible administration is the "*house of God*" as a public place of worship with its ordinances and ministry.

Prior to Moses, this public expression of the kingdom/rule of God is found in the person and position of the firstborn of the family unit. The genealogy in Genesis 5 provides a list of firstborn sons which led the family assembly in public worship. Throughout the book of Genesis, the public altar is identified with the firstborn (Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and etc.). The firstborn was given a double portion above all other heirs in the family and a special covenant blessing as the position of priest in the public visible worship of God which was conducted around the family altar.

At the time of Moses, that firstborn position as priest was removed from the family assembly and given to the tribe of Levi. Moreover, public worship was greatly expanded under Moses. The "*old*" covenant is a more expanded public visible administration of God's rule among his professing people. The "*old*" covenant public administration consisted of:

1. A chosen builder - Moses
2. A visible house of God according to a divine pattern - tabernacle/ temple
3. A qualified public ministry - the Levites
4. Qualified chosen ordinances - ceremonial laws
5. A onetime public divine accreditation - immersion in the Shekinah glory
6. A new body of Scriptures - Moses, Psalms and prophets (Old Testament)
7. A Commission to evangelize the world - Mt. 23:15; Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2

This public covenant administration continued after the cross of Christ. Hebrews was written about 66 A.D. just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the writer using the present tense claims the “old” covenant administration was “*passing away*” thus still existent. Hence, the “old” covenant was not about a different gospel or a different salvation than found under the “new” covenant (Heb. 4:2). The “old” covenant administration anticipated the first coming of Christ in its ceremonial ordinances and conveyed the truths of the “*everlasting covenant*” in both its moral, civil and ceremonial laws. It was never designed by God to be a means to obtain spiritual life, but rather to reveal the knowledge of sin and the truth of the gospel in its ceremonial types.

Both the “old” and “new” covenants have to do with God’s public administration manifested in and through the house of God within the public professing visible kingdom of God on earth. In direct contrast the “*everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:10) has to do with the individual and personal application of salvation by God to His elect in all ages. Both the “old” and “new” public administrative covenants are designed by God to publicly reflect truths found in the “*everlasting covenant.*” The “old” covenant administration was designed to manifest in its moral and civil laws the standard of God’s holiness and reveal the nature of sin while at the same time manifest in its ceremonial laws God’s provision for both in anticipation of the cross. The “new” covenant administration was designed to manifest the completed work of redemption on the cross and anticipate the Second Coming of Christ to bring in everlasting righteousness.

The “*everlasting covenant*” is the unconditional redemptive work of the Triune God according to the eternal council of God. Prior to the cross, it is manifested more fully in the cases of Abraham (Rom.4; Gal. 3) and David (2 Sam.23:5) and Isaiah (Isa. 53, 55:7) but is the message of all the prophets (Acts 10:43) with regard to personal salvation (Heb. 4:2). After the cross it is expounded more fully by Paul (Eph. 1:3-14; Rom. 4-5; 8:28- 31; 2 Thes. 2:13-14; 2 Tim.1:7; Heb.13:20).

In contrast, the new covenant administration rests upon the completed fulfillment of what the old covenant anticipated. The new covenant administration provides better ordinances, a better ministry, a more complete expression of the gospel because it is based upon the finished work of Christ in anticipation to the Second Coming of Christ. The “*old*” covenant elect Israel was a visible type of the true elect in all ages under the “*blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20) which is more clearly manifested under the “*new*” covenant administration.

The “*new*” covenant administration has the same seven parallel characteristics of the “*old*” covenant administration with regard to structure:

1. A chosen builder - Christ (Deut. 18:18; Mt. 16:18).
2. A visible house of God built according to a divine pattern - the church - 1 Tim. 3:15
3. A qualified public ministry - 1 Tim. 3:1-13
4. Qualified chosen ordinances - Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 5; 11:17-32)
5. A one-time public divine accreditation - immersion in the Shekinah glory - Acts 2:1-3
6. A new body of Scriptures (apostles and prophets - New Testament)
7. A Commission to evangelize the world - Mt. 28:18-20

This comparison is noted by the author of the book of Hebrews in the following words:

*Then truly the first covenant had **also** ordinances of divine service, **and** a worldly sanctuary. - Heb. 9:1*

In other words, the “*new*” covenant “*also*” has divine ordinances in connection with a “*sanctuary*” existing in this world (congregations). Some of these Hebrew Christians had already forsaken these sanctuaries (“*not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is...*” - Heb.

10:25). They also had a qualified ministry that served in these sanctuaries (Heb. 13:7-17).

The “*old*” covenant administration included gentile proselytes but only regarded them as second-class citizens within the professing kingdom of God and in public worship. However, the “*new*” covenant administration removed all racial distinctions within the public visible administration of this covenant and its visible public worship (Eph. 2:14-3:5).

The fundamental distinction between the “*old*” and “*new*” visible public kingdom administrations was the terms of the covenant that each represented. The “*old*” covenant was a conditional covenant and yet at the same time revealed through its ceremonial sacrificial ordinances the unconditional terms of the “*everlasting covenant.*” The “*new*” covenant administration declares and demonstrates through its house of God, ordinances and ministry the **unconditional** terms of the “*everlasting covenant.*” Both administrative covenants are declarative in nature and neither administer personal salvation to anyone. Personal salvation has always been administered directly by God to the individual elect under the “*everlasting covenant.*”

From Genesis to Revelation the only covenant that directly obtained personal salvation is the “*everlasting covenant.*” This covenant salvation was and is directly applied to each elect personally by the Triune God (Eph. 1:5-14; Rom. 8:28-37). Its unconditional terms have been the “good news” or the gospel preached by “*all the prophets*” (Acts 10:43) since Genesis 3:15.

Since Genesis 3:15 it has contained the essential “*seed*” thought of the everlasting covenant which became fuller with progressive revelation until it was fulfilled in the life and death of Christ. Those prior to the cross embraced what was the current gospel revelation and anticipated its fuller revelation by faith, while those after the cross embrace its completed revelation by faith. But in all generations since Genesis 3:15 it declares the unconditional terms of the everlasting covenant and the one word that characterizes those terms is “*grace.*”

IV. POPULAR CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGIES

There are several popular mythologies that are due to hyper-dispensationalism and dispensational theology which are the direct results of the universal invisible church theories.

A. NO PERSONAL REDEMPTION PRIOR TO THE CROSS AS IT IS AFTER THE CROSS

Many if not all of dispensational theology conjectures that those living prior to the cross were second class saints and at death could not enter heaven until at the resurrection of Christ. This view varies in its extremes. Some deny the new birth or spiritual union could not take place prior to the cross. Some deny that individual saints were not indwelt by the Spirit of God prior to Pentecost.

However, dispensationalist cannot have their cake and eat too! If personal redemption could not be attained prior to the cross then no part of it could be attained. On the other hand, if any could be attained, then all of it could be attained.

Scriptures clearly repudiate the idea that saints were not indwelt by the Spirit prior to Pentecost. Peter states that all the prophets were indwelt by the Spirit of Christ:

*Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come to you: Searching what, or what manner of time **the Spirit of Christ** **which was in them** did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. - 1 Pet. 10-11*

He is referring to the progressive revelation of the gospel prior to the coming of Christ and precisely when and how Christ would come and be raised to glory. Universal invisible church dispensationalist will admit that the Spirit of Christ indwelt prophets, priests and kings prior to the cross at times but not the normal saint. However, they cannot have their cake and eat it too! If personal redemption was not possible prior to the cross, it was not possible for anyone prior to the cross to be justified, sanctified or indwelt at any time as all of these things were legally provided by the cross. To say the Spirit of Christ merely came “upon” them at times and did not permanently indwell them is admission they are wrong. Indeed, the Spirit still comes “upon” people after the cross (Acts 8:14) and that has nothing to do with indwelling but with special empowering or equipping with spiritual gifts.

However, more than prophets, priests and kings were indwelt by the Spirit as both Joshua and Caleb were none of these but yet they had the Spirit of God abiding in them.

Paul claims there are only two possible types of human beings existing and that is those who are “*in the flesh*” and those “*in the Spirit*” and one cannot be “*in the Spirit*” without being indwelt by the Spirit and all who are not indwelt by the Spirit are none of his:

*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But you 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.8:7-9*

The theory that denies indwelling prior to Pentecost ignores the fact that the fallen nature prevents even post-cross saints from serving Christ apart from the indwelling Spirit of Christ (Rom. 7:18). Personal progressive sanctification is impossible apart from the indwelling Spirit as it is not possible to “*please God*” (Rom.8:8) apart from indwelling by the Spirit. All the saints prior to the cross were able to please God (Heb. 11:6-39) but just like us they are still waiting for final glorification (Heb. 11:39-40). They still have not received the promises of entering that city (Heb. 11:10, 13-16) but they were indwelt by the Spirit of God and walked by faith.

Abraham is set forth not merely as our example of justification by faith in Christ but is explicitly called “*the father of all who believe*” (Rom.4:11, 16; Gal. 3:6-8). Justification is defined by Paul to include remission of sins (Rom. 4:7-8) in addition to imputed righteousness (Rom. 4:5-6) yet all prior to the cross.

Prior to the cross, individual salvation was applied according to “*the everlasting covenant*” just as it is now, without any exception for any of the elect no matter when they lived (2 Sam. 23:5; Isa. 55:4-5; Acts 13:34; Eph. 1:4-14; Rom. 8:28-32). None were ever saved by keeping the Old Covenant law (Rom. 3:9-20) but the law instructed them in the nature of sin (Rom. 3:21) and the ceremonial law revealed the gospel of Christ in the sacrifices and led them to personally and individually to trust in Christ:

*Why then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that **the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came**, we were kept under the law, shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Why the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. **But after that faith is come**, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. - Gal. 3:19-25*

Notice that Paul did not say “But before Christ came” but rather “*before faith came.*” He did not say “but after that Christ is come” but rather “*after that faith is come.*” Hence, their immediate salvation did not depend upon coming of Christ but upon the coming to Christ by faith. All the prophets preached remission of sins was presently obtained by faith in the coming Christ (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2). The law served them as it does us today - it demonstrates we are sinners and need to repent and trust in the gospel. All saints prior to the cross were justified by faith in Christ (Gal. 3:17 “*in Christ*”) and were indwelt by the Spirit and were born again (Ezek. 44:7- 9; Jn. 3:3-9).

Hebrews 9:17 is often used by those who deny salvation benefits could be applied prior to the cross:

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives. - Heb. 9:16-17

However, this text must be placed back into its Biblical and historical context. Some Hebrews were rejecting the idea of a suffering Messiah and returning to Judaism’s hope of a ruling Messiah which would deliver them from Rome’s increasingly harsher rule. Paul is trying to prove the necessity of

a suffering Messiah through the symbolism of the Temple rituals and from the analogy of a will. His point is there can be no possible salvation without the death of the Messiah rather than there can be no application of salvation benefits before his death. The will necessitates death because the will is worthless while the testator still lives. The whole sacrificial rituals necessitate the death of the Messiah. While the veil remains in temple worship the Messianic hope of redemption is still only prophetic rather than a fulfillment. Paul is not denying redemptive benefits had been applied before the cross, but he is arguing for the necessity of a dying Messiah or there is no salvation possible for anyone. Regeneration, indwelling, justification and progressive sanctification had all been applied prior to the cross and if this analogy is made to walk on all fours then none of that could have been possible.

B. THE PROTESTANT DISPENSATIONAL PURGATORY

Many believe that pre-cross saints could not enter heaven. The reason they give is that the work of salvation had not yet been obtained by Christ. However, the cross is connected to all aspects of salvation. Therefore, if this argument is true, then no aspect of salvation could be applied prior to the cross and yet the scriptures clearly teach that many aspects of salvation were applied prior to the cross (Rom. 3:24-4:25). Justification before the cross included not only imputed righteousness, but remission of sins (Acts 10:43; Rom. 3:25; 4:6-8).

Moreover, there are unquestionable cases where Old Testament saints are taken directly into heaven (Enoch, Elijah). David explicitly claims that he would be “*continually*” with the Lord and mentions only two possible places (earth and heaven) where this continuation occurs:

Nevertheless, I am continually with you: you have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none on earth that I desire beside you. -Psa. 73:23-25

He did not believe in any intervening unconscious or conscious condition that would occur between life on earth and entrance into heaven. Rather, he said “*I am continually with you*” both “*on earth*” and “*in heaven.*”

He believed that when his life on earth was “*cut off*” that he would “*fly away*.”

The days of our years are three score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. - Psa. 90:10

This is an expression of an upward removal from earth to heaven which could only refer to his spirit separated from a body that remained on earth in the grave. There was no after death downward hope by saints to enter into a divided *Sheol* within the center of the earth. David’s son (Solomon) explicitly states that the spirit of man at death returns to God whereas the body returns to dust (Eccl.12:7). The same upward travel is expressed in the New Testament with regard to Lazarus of whom Jesus said at death was “*carried by the angels*” and this cannot refer to his body. Moreover, Jesus places Lazarus “*up*” above the rich man who is in *Hades*. Again, this indicates upward removal from earth rather than descent into a parallel existence within the middle of the earth just as in the case of David and all of these cases occur prior to the cross.

1. **Sheol/Hades**

The Hebrew term *Sheol* in Greek is translated *Hades*. The Old Testament writers generally spoke about death from the human perspective “*under the sun*.” In this world (the seen world) the human body was the vehicle of expression for the human spirit (soul/spirit) but when the body died it ceased as the medium to express soul characteristics (fear, love, hate, thoughts, memory, etc.–Eccles. 9:5). From the human perspective, the body in the grave ceased to be a vehicle to express praise to God “*under the sun*.”

Many suggest that *Sheol/Hades* is merely the “unseen world.” It is certainly unseen from those living “*under the sun*.” However, there is a relationship between death and *Hades* that must be properly understood in order to understand the true nature of *Sheol/Hades*. Death initiates the separation between man’s spirit and body and removes a person from the seen world into *Sheol/Hades*. The victory by Jesus is described metaphorically as having the keys “*of death and hades*.” After the Great White Seat Judgment, it is “*death and hades*” that is cast into the lake of fire. This means that “*death and Hades*” have no existence outside of *Gebenna* within the new heaven

and earth simply because there is no death or state of separation in the new heaven and earth outside of *Gebenna*. Hence, *Hades* is inseparably connected with death and must be defined in the context of death.

The position taken in this book is that “death” refers to the state of separation while *Sheol/Hades* is descriptive of the realm/world of the separated which is unseen by those now living “*under the sun*.” Within this present seen world there are a variety of conditions and places, so also, there are a variety of conditions and places within *Sheol/Hades*.

Within *Sheol/Hades* there are three **conditions** and three **places** of the departed. First, it involves the unseen condition and place of the dead body. The *condition* of the dead body is *corruption* which is concealed from the eyes of men in the *place* called “*the grave*.” Out of the 62 occurrences of *Sheol* in the Old Testament the KJV translates it “*grave*” 31 times. Why? Because in the context of each of these occurrences it is the unseen state of the dead body which is being described.

Thy pomp is brought down to the grave (Sheol), and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee—Isa.14:11

*The strong among the mighty shall speak to him **out of the midst of hell** (Sheol) with them that help him: they are gone down, **they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.**—Eze. 32:21*

The grave is **the place** where the body resides out of the sight of men and, in that place, it exists in **the condition** of corruption (worms cover thee). It lies in either a circumcised or “*uncircumcised*” condition. It is something that can be “*slain by the sword*.”

The grave is often described as the “*mouth*” (Psa. 141:7) or the “*gates*” of *Sheol* (Isa.38:10) because death of the body signals the *entrance* of the spirit into the unseen world of the departed. Both “*gates*” and the “*mouth*” are metaphorical entrance points. A city gate is entrance into a city. The “*mouth*” is entrance into the body or cave. Both the “*gate*” and “*mouth*” are inseparably part of that object just as your “*mouth*” is part of your body and a “*gate*” is part of a wall. So, the grave is part of *Sheol/Hades*.

For the grave (Sheol) cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit (bowr) cannot hope for thy truth.—Isa. 38:18

Isaiah is using Hebrew parallelism in the above text as all three phrases refer to the very same thing—inability to make expressions (of praise, celebration and hope). The Hebrew term *bowr* is commonly used for the grave where the dead body is placed. If *Sheol/Hades* was a parallel compartmented place in the middle of the earth containing spirits of saints then it could be a place to praise him as the story of Lazarus and the rich man prove verbalization is present in Hades and in Abraham's bosom and both of these examples occur prior to the cross. However, *Sheol* as described in Isaiah 38:18, is a place of silence (no praise, no remembrance, no joy, etc., Eccl. 9:5) which describes perfectly the place of the dead body of both saved and lost.

Even in the New Testament the term *Hades* is used to describe the place where the body is located and from which it will be freed from its condition of corruption and state of death (1 Cor. 15:55). Paul is clearly stating that the act of immortalizing the physical body by putting on incorruption and freeing it from the grave is described as victory over Hades.

So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave (Hades), where is thy victory?—1 Cor. 15:54-55

Again, notice the close relationship that *Hades* has with “*death*” and how death is connected with the place and condition of the body in the grave.

So, the grave is the **place** where the body resides in an unseen **condition** of corruption from the perspective of those living “*under the sun*.” That unseen **condition** of corruption is included within the realm (gates, mouth) of *Sheol/Hades*.

Second, the **place** of the departed spirit is also concealed from the eyes of those living “*under the sun*.” The **condition** of unquicken spirits in that unseen world is that of anguish and misery. This **place** of misery and anguish is called “*lowest Sheol*.” As a **place** it is often described in terms of smoke, fire and destruction. Both saved and lost equally enter *Sheol/Hades* with regard to their body with reference to the grave, however, the spirits of lost and saved do not equally enter *Sheol/Hades*. For example, the saved rejoice that their spirits do not enter or reside in the “*lowest Sheol*” (Deut. 32:22) but have been redeemed from that **place**.

*For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered me from **the lowest hell** (Sheol)—Psa.86:13*

***The wicked shall be turned into hell** (Sheol), and all the nations that forget God.—Psa. 9:17*

As a **place** of torment, it is usually just translated “hell.” As a **condition** of the spirit it is described in terms of misery and torment.

***The sorrows of hell** compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.—Psa. 18:5*

*The sorrows of death compassed me, and **the pains of hell** gat hold upon me: **I found trouble and sorrow**.—Psa. 116:3*

Third, the **condition** and **place** of the regenerated spirit is also hidden from the eyes of those living “*under the sun*.” The **condition** of the regenerated spirit is one of bliss and comfort. That **condition** of comfort and bliss is characterized as “*Abraham’s bosom*” which is a metaphor that conveys acceptance, comfort and bliss. However, the **place** of the regenerated spirit is called “*heaven*” and in particular the “*third heaven*” (2 Cor. 12:2). The term “*paradise*” seems to be used as a metaphor to convey both the **condition** and the **place** of the saints as it is used interchangeably with “*the third heaven*” as a **place** of bliss.

*I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the **third heaven**. . . How that he was caught up **into paradise**, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. - 2 Cor. 12:2,4*

The “*third heaven*” is the location or **place** where Paul was caught up to, whereas the **condition** of that place is described as “*Abraham’s bosom*” or a condition of comfort and bliss.

In Grecian mythology and thought, Hades is divided by a great river where separated spirits exist on both sides in a parallel state of existence *across* from each other. However, in scriptures when contrasted to the **place** where the unregenerate spirits reside within *Hades*, the **place** of regenerated spirits is always in the direction of “*up*” and never “*across*” as with the pagan concept of Hades.

David knew of only two **places** of conscious existence. These two **places** are where the conscious immaterial aspect of man could reside in the unseen world and they were located at extreme opposite places from each other. He uses the word “*above*” to contrast heaven from the lowest hell beneath it as polar opposites within the unseen world (Psa. 139:8).

*The way of life is above to the wise that he may depart from
hell beneath*—Prov. 15:24

*It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than
hell; what canst thou know?*—Job 11:8

*If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed
in hell, behold, thou art there.*—Psa. 139:8

This is also true in the case of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man went down to hell and lifted “*up*” his eyes to see where Lazarus was abiding (Lk. 16:23). However, Lazarus was carried by the angels (Lk. 16:22) into Abraham’s bosom or into the **condition** of comfort (Lk. 16:25), whereas the rich man was in a **place** where torment was his **condition**.

In the new world to come, both death and *Hades* are cast into *Gehenna* (Rev. 20:14) as *Gehenna* will be the only **place** where death as a separated condition of torment/anguish will exist. In *Gehenna* death exists as a **place** of separation from God in a **condition** of eternal agony. However, in the new world, heaven will descend upon earth and death will be no more (Rev. 21:1-4). Therefore, as a **place**, the new heaven and earth will no longer be a **place** where the **state/condition** of death exists and no longer be a **place** where disembodied human spirits exists due to physical death. Where there is no physical death, heaven ceases to be a **place** of departed spirits. Hence, *Hades* is cast, thus confined to *Gehenna* as the only **place** where the **condition** of death continues to exist.

So, in summary, death is the state of separation while Sheol/Hades is the unseen world of separation which includes both the conditions and places of the body and spirit. The unseen place of the dead body is the grave and its unseen condition is corruption. The unseen place of the departed unregenerate spirit is lowest Hades and the unseen condition is misery and anguish. The unseen place of the departed regenerate spirit is paradise/3rd heaven and the unseen condition is bliss and comfort.

2. The Death of Christ

When Christ died, his body was buried and thus, the body was in a **place** hidden from the eyes of those living “*under the sun.*” Within the grave his body was preserved in an uncorrupted **condition**. His spirit entered into a state of bliss as he told the thief “*today*” they would be together in “*paradise*” as a **place** where both he and the thief would be in a **condition** of comfort and bliss in direct contrast to their experience of torment upon the cross (2 Cor.12:3; Rev. 22:3).

The Protestant Purgatory theory heavily relies upon an interpretation of Ephesians 4:8-11 that views the Old Testament saints as being in “*captivity*” within a divided compartment down in the center of the earth:

Why he said, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?⁶¹ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; - Eph. 4:8-11

However, this text has another Biblical and cultural application that fits with the view being expressed in this lesson. Paul was a Roman citizen and was quite familiar with the Roman concept of the returning conqueror to Rome, as well as the use of this Biblical metaphor with regard to the Old Testament conquest of Barak and its later use in the book of Psalms. According to the Roman usage, the Roman General who returned after conquering a foe would lead these enemies of Rome through the streets of Rome and then he would have his servants bestow gifts upon the people of Rome in celebration of his victory.

Barak in the book of Judges conquered Israel foes and did the very same thing. He led “*captive*” those who formerly held Israel into captivity declaring the freedom of Israel from these foes while bestowing some of the fruits of victory upon the people of Israel:

⁶¹ *The phrase “lower parts of the earth” need not refer to Hades but may refer to the grave. The same phrase is used by the KJV translators in Psalm 139:15 to refer to the womb of David’s mother where he was formed. Paul describes the tomb from which Christ arose as a birth out of a womb (Col. 1:18) “firstborn from the dead.”*

*Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise,
Barak, and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.*
- Judg. 5:12

It is also later used by David in Psalm 68:18 where it is prefaced by the chariots and angels of God's fighting force (Psa. 68:17) who conquered the foes of God's people.

Hence, the proper understanding of this text is that by his death and resurrection Christ conquered the foes that held his people in captivity (Satan, sin, death, grave and hell) and therefore now stands holding "*the keys of death and hell.*" However, saints after the cross still continue to die and still continue to enter into an unseen world of death. So, his resurrection did not free saints prior to the cross or after the cross from either death or the unseen world of death and will not do so until the yet future day of resurrection. This day of resurrection is the hope that Paul claims is yet still future for both pre-cross and post-cross saints (Heb. 11:39-40). Saints continue to die, continue to have their bodies buried and continue to exist in a separated state from their bodies.

So, what did Christ accomplish by his death and resurrection? He conquered death and Hades with regard to his own body and spirit as the second Adam or representative man for his elect. He secured the legal basis to apply this victory to his people (both pre-cross and post-cross saints) at His Second Advent. However, in the meantime, none of his people living before or after the cross have yet been fully glorified or fully conquered death in their bodies. As the victorious second Adam he celebrated his victory over death and Hades by giving gifts to his institutional congregation (1 Cor. 12:28). *Hades*, or the unseen world of separation will be ultimately cast into Gehenna as death and the **conditions** of death will no longer exist anywhere else within the new heaven and earth. Heaven itself will cease to be a **place** for separated spirits.

The cross and resurrection was the personal victory of Christ over both death and *Hades* as the representative man or second Adam in behalf of his elect people. It satisfied the legal demands for final and ultimate victory over death and *Hades*. However, with regard to actual application it did not procure current victory over death and *Hades* for either pre-cross or post-cross saints. Post-cross saints, just as pre-cross saints, still die and their bodies still go to the grave. Likewise, the spirits of the saints have always gone and

still go to heaven at death just as the spirits of the wicked have always gone and still go to the lowest *Hades* both prior to and after the cross. Nothing has changed with regard to personal application of death and *Hades*. The only thing that changed was that prior to the cross the gospel proclaimed personal victory over death and *Hades* as a promise to be secured by the coming of Christ, whereas, after the cross the gospel proclaimed that Christ had come and legally secured this promise, but still only as a yet future application for all of His people at His Second Advent. This promise is still yet unfulfilled and is still the united hope of pre-cross as well as post-cross saints:

*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they **without us** should not be made perfect.—Heb. 11:39-40*

Moreover, nothing changed with regard to personal application of salvation before or after the cross (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2; Rom. 4). Salvation with regard to new birth (Jn. 3:3-9; Ezek. 44:7,9), justification (Rom. 4), progressive sanctification (Heb. 11) and future hope of absolute victory over death and *Hades* at the return of Christ (Heb. 11:39-40) has been and still is being applied to His people from Genesis to His second Advent. The basis for the pre-cross application of salvation is the “*everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20) based entirely upon God’s promise revealed through the gospel. The everlasting covenant necessitated that Christ would come at the appointed time and actually provide the legal basis for the promised atonement. However, personal application of the atonement was not conditioned upon His coming in time but upon the absolute guarantee of His coming by divine covenant promise.

For example, Abraham was “*justified*” by faith (Rom. 4; Gal. 3) without works prior to the cross. Justification is the *legal* standing of righteousness before the tribunal of God’s Law in accompaniment with remission of sins through faith in a legal substitutionary representative (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2). The book of Job is most likely the oldest scripture now in our possession and in it Job declares “*I know that my redeemer liveth and that he shall stand **at the latter day** upon the earth*” (Job 19:25) and “*though he slay me yet shall I trust him*” (Job. 13:15) and,

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me - Job 19:26-27

Job embraced a future hope of victory over death and *Hades*, but not at Christ's first coming, but at the "*latter day*" second coming of Christ when resurrection of his body actually occurs. Job based this hope entirely upon faith in a promised redeemer. Pre-cross saints have the very same sin problem we do and the very same salvation solution to that problem as we do. Both equally have new birth, justification by faith, progressive sanctification and hope of a future absolute victory over death and *Hades*. However, neither have yet to personally overcome death and *Hades* and the realization of that hope will be experienced together (*Heb. 11:39-40*).

C. PLAN A VERSUS PLAN B FOR CHRIST FIRST COMING

Dispensational universal invisible church advocates believe that Christ initially came to earth to set up his millennial kingdom but when Israel rejected him, he delayed his plan. Many make the analogy of plan A versus plan B to explain this change or delay. This is another false dispensational mythology.

Even before his birth the angels announced his purpose for coming and it was not to set up a visible kingdom but to "*save his people from their sins*" (Mt. 1:20).

At the very outset of his ministry and throughout his ministry he claimed that he had come down from heaven for one purpose and that was to die and rise again (Mt. 16:21) as predicted by Old Testament prophets (Jonah, Isaiah, etc.).

Indeed, all through his ministry he ordered those he healed to tell no man he was the Christ (Mt. 16:20) because he knew Israel was not looking for a suffering Messiah but for a King to reestablish a visible David kingdom on earth and free them from Rome. Many false professors received him as the coming king to overthrow Rome but not as their Savior from sin (Jn. 6:60,61,64,66; Lk. 16:16).

The law and the prophets were until John the Baptist, meaning, what formerly had been predicted by former prophets was now present - the king

had come. However, the Old Testament prophets presented two different comings and two different types of conquest. There was the coming of the king as a suffering servant (Isa. 53) whose victory would be over sin, death and hell, but there was also the coming of a victorious king who would put down all kings and kingdoms of this world. Christ had not come as the latter but as the former. He told Pilate that he was indeed the King of Israel but that his present kingdom was not of this world:

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

So there never was plan A to set up a visible kingdom at his first coming and then changed to plan B. The first coming by design from beginning to end was the cross while the second coming by design from beginning to end would be the visible earthly kingdom.

D. THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

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 your face, which shall prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. - Mk. 1:1-3

Mark is announcing “*the beginning of the gospel*” in the sense of the actual fulfillment with the life of Christ. Hence, the gospel with regard to its fulfillment did not begin with Pentecost but with the actual first coming of Christ. Previous to the first coming of Christ the gospel had been preached anticipating his coming, while after the first coming of Christ it is preached anticipating the Second Coming of Christ. The former gospel had been progressive in revelation (Acts 10:43) whereas the latter gospel declares it as the fulfilled revelation.

Notice that Mark 1:1-3 is about the person of the king rather than announcing the arrival of His kingdom. Remember both the Hebrew and Greek terms translated “*kingdom*” may be understood to mean the person of

the king or his rule, realm and authority. John is quoting Isaiah concerning the arrival of the person of the king - the king has come!

Fallen mankind is in rebellion against the King and his authority and that is why both Jesus and John came preaching “*repentance*.” That is why his baptism is, and all Christian baptism is the “*baptism of repentance*” because repentance is required before baptism (Mt. 3:6-8).

Throughout the book of Acts the gospel of the kingdom continues to be preached by those at Jerusalem and by the apostle to the Gentiles. For example, Luke describes the ministry of Philip to non-Jews when he says:

*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*

For example, Paul says to the elders of the gentile congregation at Ephesus:

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

Paul preached the kingdom of God to both Jews and Gentiles when they came to visit him in prison at Rome:

*And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and **testified the kingdom of God**, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. - Acts 28:23*

***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*

Not only so, but repentance would be preached to all nations:

*And said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: **And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in***

his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. - Lk. 24:46-47

*When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then has God also **to the Gentiles granted repentance to life.*** - Acts 11:18

*Testifying both **to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God,** and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* - Acts 20:21

*But showed first to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then **to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.*** - Acts 26:20

Now take this last reference and compare it to what John the Baptist preached:

*Bring forth therefore **fruits meet for repentance:*** - Mt. 3:8

CONCLUSION

There has only been one kingdom of God and it is a three-dimensional kingdom (1) God's rule within by spiritual union; (2) God's manifest rule without through words and actions, and (3) God's rule over the kings and kingdoms of this world which is yet to come.

There has never been but one Savior, one gospel, one way of salvation, one kind of salvation from Genesis to Revelation.

The myths of a different gospel, different salvation, no entrance into heaven prior to the cross are all founded upon the myth of a universal invisible church theory.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Where does the fall of man occur? Old or New Testament?
2. Where does the foundation of the church occur? Old or New Testament?
3. Where does the baptism in the Spirit occur? Old or New Testament?

4. How can we know that the “prophets” in Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 12:28 are post-first coming prophets?
5. Is there any kind of salvation outside of Christ for anyone at any time?
6. What is the essential problem caused in the fall of man that any salvation solution must remedy? Take a look at Ephesians 4:18-19.
7. Define death in terms of separation.
8. According to Paul in Romans 8:7-9 what are the only two types of human beings existing on earth at any given time?
9. Where does your human spirit abide? In or outside of your body?
10. Is it possible to be in spiritual union with God and not be indwelt by the Spirit of God? What is spiritual separation?
11. What is the sevenfold paradigm of the Old and New Covenant Administration?



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 6

LESSON 1–The Baptism in the Spirit–Part 1

LESSON 2–The Baptism in the Spirit–Part 2

LESSON 3–The Baptism in the Spirit–Part 3

PAGE TURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 6 LESSON 1

The Baptism in the Spirit—Part 1

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are for the student (1) to understand the various theories concerning the baptism in the Spirit and, (2) to understand why the historical view is the superior and true Biblical position.

INTRODUCTION: The baptism in the Spirit is the crux of theological confusion with regard to both Biblical soteriology (doctrine of salvation) and ecclesiology (doctrine of the church). The proper understanding of this doctrine is vital for a proper understanding of soteriology before and after Pentecost and for understanding the proper nature of the church.

I. THE VARIOUS THEORIES

This study begins with providing the various theories of the baptism in the Spirit which are embraced by various aspects of Christendom.

There are four major views concerning the baptism in the Spirit; (1) The Evangelical Protestant view; (2) The Pentecostal view; (3) The Roman Catholic view; (4) The Historical view.

(A) THE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT VIEW: This view makes the baptism in the Spirit inseparable from initial salvation at the point of regeneration or new birth. This theory claims that the baptism in the Spirit is actually the Spirit baptizing believers into Christ or placing them into spiritual union with Christ, which they interpret as inseparable from being placed into the universal invisible mystical body of Christ. Therefore, instead of Christ being the administrator as promised by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:11) and the Spirit being the element into which one is immersed, they reverse

this order and have the Holy Spirit as the administrator and Christ as the element into which one is immersed.

This act by the Holy Spirit, according to this position, is bringing the believer into actual spiritual union with Christ, by which all aspects of salvation are obtained. Hence, to be outside this union/body is to be lost and to be inside is to be saved.

Earlier advocates of this view did not distinguish regeneration from this baptism in the Spirit. However, most present-day advocates claim that the baptism in the Spirit is distinct but inseparable from regeneration. There are two different camps within this view. There are the non-dispensationalists who believe all the elect from Genesis to Revelation are baptized into spiritual union/mystical body of Christ, and there are the dispensationalists, who believe the same thing but starting with Pentecost and concluding with the Rapture prior to the tribulation.

They contend that this is what the prepositional phrase “in Christ” has reference to. Some representatives of this view are as follows:

- **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, and glorification are actual and possible because of the believer’s position in Christ.”—John Walvoord, **The Holy Spirit**. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 1974) 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**

It can be seen that MacArthur attempts to make both Christ and the Holy Spirit the administrator, as he says the Holy Spirit acts as Christ’s “agency” to administer this baptism, but the element into which the person is baptized is not the Spirit, but the mystical body of Christ. However, one thing they make very clear which is the inseparable nature of this baptism with initial salvation.

Also, it can be seen that both the dispensational and non-dispensational universal invisible church advocates maintain the same view in regard to the universal invisible body of Christ.

A. THE PENTECOSTAL VIEW: The Pentecostal/Charismatic view is that the baptism in the Spirit is a second work of grace separate from initial salvation. According to this view, it is evidenced by speaking in tongues. What is its purpose according to this view? Some believe it is “power” to live the Christian life, while others believe it is power to live above sin.

Dr. J. Rodman Williams, the author of *Renewal Theology* says:

At the time of salvation, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within. For example, the risen Christ breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). At Pentecost, there came about a later experience of the disciples being baptized in the Holy Spirit, primarily for ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5-8 and 2:4). Two separate experiences:

one for enlivening by the Holy Spirit for salvation; the other for empowering by the Holy Spirit. We need both!—J. Rodman Williams, *Theology Q&A*—<http://www.cbn.com/spirituallife/BibleStudyAndTheology/DrWilliams/QA10Spirit.aspx> 06/25/2014

We have now to consider the significance of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Primarily it is a matter of being immersed in the presence and power of God. Even as baptism in water means immersion in water— the whole person being submerged in and surrounded by water— so does baptism in the Holy Spirit mean immersion in the reality of God’s dynamic presence? The language of the Spirit’s being “poured out,” “falling upon,” “coming upon” are various descriptions of the Spirit’s external coming; “filled” points to the internal dimension— a being filled within; “baptism in the Holy Spirit” highlights the central fact of being enveloped by, surrounded with, immersed in the presence and power of God. The immediate consequence of this spiritual baptism in several biblical instances was speaking in tongues.—J. Rodman Williams, **Renewal Theology**, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992)⁶²

B. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW: The Roman Catholic Catechism identifies the baptism in the Spirit to be accomplished in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The Roman Catholic Catechism states:

1302 It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

1303 From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- it roots us more deeply in the divine filiations which makes us cry “Abba Father!”
- it unites us more firmly to Christ;

⁶² <http://renewaltheology.net/ATheologicalPilgrimage/tp05.htm0> 6/25/2014

- it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
- it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;

- *it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross;* - **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, 2nd Ed. p. 330

The Charismatic Roman Catholics provide much of the same answer consistent with the Catholic Catechism quoted above:

Baptism in the Spirit and the Sacrament of Baptism *The Baptism in the Spirit is not a sacrament, but it is related to a sacrament, to several sacraments in fact -- to the sacraments of Christian initiation. The Baptism in the Spirit makes real and, in a way, renews Christian initiation. The primary relationship is with the Sacrament of Baptism. In fact, this experience is called the Baptism in the Spirit by English-speaking people. We believe that the Baptism in the Spirit makes real and revitalizes our baptism. To understand how a sacrament which was received so many years ago, usually immediately after our birth, could suddenly come back to life and emanate so much energy, as often happens through the Baptism in the Spirit, it is important to look at our understanding of sacramental theology. Catholic theology recognizes the concept of a valid but "tied" sacrament. A sacrament is called tied if the fruit that should accompany it remains bound because of certain blocks that prevent its effectiveness.* - **Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Archdiocese of Miami**⁶³

D. THE HISTORICAL VIEW: This view is called "historical" because it asserts this baptism was completed as an historical *institutional* church event in the first century rather than an ongoing repetitive *individual* event during this age. This view asserts that the baptism in the Spirit is not an *individual*

⁶³ ⁶⁴ <http://www.miamiccr.com/baptism-in-the-holy-spirit.html> 06/25/2014

immersion, but an *institutional* immersion of the public house of God. It is synonymous with the Old Testament immersion of Tabernacle and Temple in the Shekinah glory that took place once upon their completion or the day of dedication.

1. The immersion of the Tabernacle institution—Exodus 40:35-37
2. The immersion of the Temple institution—2 Chronicles. 7:1-3
3. The immersion of the Congregational institution—Acts 2:1-3

The purpose of this immersion was to provide public confirmation that such a house was built and operates according to the divine pattern revealed by God. As such, it is the authorized and designated place for public worship and administration of the ordinances (Deut. 12:5-14). Therefore, this public immersion signified:

1. It had been built by a designated builder
2. It had been built according to a specific pattern
3. Its public ordinances and ministry conform to that pattern.
4. It is the visible administrator of “*the keys of the kingdom.*”

This immersion in the Shekinah glory was the manifest approval that it conformed to the divine pattern and as a consequence it was occupied by God’s special presence, thus making it “*the house of God and pillar and ground of the truth.*”

This one time immersion of each new institutional house of God was accompanied by temporal manifest miraculous signs (fire from heaven, etc.). However, the continuing Divine presence is manifested by its conformation to the divine pattern for which the immersion in Shekinah glory was first designed to signify.

Among those who believe the baptism in the Spirit was an historical event fulfilled upon the institutional house of God are:

1. **Dr. T.P. Simmons:**

“There is absolutely nothing to justify the belief that Pentecost is to be repeated in the experience of each believer. It came in fulfillment of definite and particular prophecy and promise.” T.P. Simmons, **A Systemic Study of Bible Doctrine**, Memorial Edition, p. 95)

“3. He came on the Day of Pentecost in Special Capacity.

This explains the meaning of Christ’s promise to send the Spirit. This special capacity was:

(1) Perhaps as the antitype of the Shekinah.

*Num. 9:15–22, 2 Chron. 7:1–3. The Shekinah, in the case of the tabernacle, was for leadership, and in the case of the temple it was a symbol of ownership and possession. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost meant both of these to the church.”—T.P. Simons, **Ibid.** p. 93*

2. Dr. J.E. Cobb:

“2. Baptized in the Spirit.

*(Read Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; the promise fulfilled, Acts, chapter 2; Acts 10:44, 45.) This work of the Spirit has been fulfilled, and we do not have Holy Spirit baptism now. The church composed of Jews was baptized in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and at the house of Cornelius when the Gentiles were admitted into the church they were baptized in the Holy Spirit to manifest that the Gentiles were accepted into covenant relationship with Christ.”—J.E. Cobb, **Brief Studies in Christian Doctrine**, p. 128*

3. Davis W. Huckabee

Pentecost was God’s attestation to the church that now and henceforth to the end of the age it was to be His chosen house of witness. It was simply the repetition of God’s action when the tabernacle was raised, Ex. 40:33–35, and when the temple was completed, II Chr. 5:13–14. Twice before this the Jews had seen and recorded God’s attestation and certification of a new house of worship. Without the events of Pentecost, most Jews would not have accepted the church as God’s house of witness, or had they done so, they would have considered it vastly inferior in glory to the tabernacle and the temple. This could never be. But who could doubt that a new economy had come in when the Lord

repeated His certification.—Davis W. Huckabee, **Studies on Church Truth**, [Old Paths Tract Society, Inc., Shoals IN, 2002], Vol. 1, p. 26

4. **Richard Clearwaters**

A. *Like the Tabernacle and Temple of the Old Testament, the church of the New Testament was established before it was accredited, credentialed, or filled by the Cloud of God's approving glory...*

The church, therefore, was established in the days of Jesus sojourn in the flesh and the work of its construction was begun with the material prepared by John the Baptist, later the twelve apostle of our Lord; and at the close of his earthly ministry we find this little band in Jerusalem began to transact business by the election of a successor to Judas. Also, they were assembled together to receive collectively the Holy Spirit, and then to them were added daily such as were being saved.

1. **Three Old Testament types:**

a. *The Tabernacle* was built before the Glory cloud filled it—Exodus 40:34-38

b. *Solomon's Temple* was built before the Glory cloud filled it—1 Kings 8:10-11.

c. *Ezekiel's Ideal Temple* (after Solomon's Temple was destroyed) was built before the Glory cloud filled it—Ezekiel 43:1-6; Daniel 9:24; Joel 2:28-32.

B. *The church was promised the abiding glory of the Holy Spirit—*Matt. 3:11-12; Mark 16:17-18; John 1:33; 7:37-39; Acts 1:8

C. *The church received the promise of the Holy Spirit—*Genesis 11:1-9 cf. Joel 2:28-32.”—Richard Clearwaters, **The Local Church of the New Testament** [quoted by Davis W. Huckabee, *Studies on Church Truth*, Old Paths Tract Society, Inc., Shoals, IN 2002, pp. 26-27] pp. 25-26

II. THE HISTORICAL VIEW

The *historical* view has its background in the Old Testament, and its completion in the book of Acts, so that it is neither an ongoing or repeatable action.

The Old Testament provides the *historical* background to properly understand it. With the initial initiation of each new “*house of God*” built in the Old Testament, there is a onetime immersion (Ex. 40:35; 2 Chron. 7:1-3; Ezek. 43:2-5) in the Shekinah glory immediately upon the completion of each house certifying that it has been built according to a revealed divine pattern and therefore acceptable to God.

Each house not only had to be built according to a specific pattern, but its ministry and ordinances also had to conform to a specific pattern under the supervision of a divinely appointed representative.

In the Old Testament Scriptures there are three instances where God chose a builder and gave that builder a divine pattern to build “*the house of God.*” (1) Moses and the Tabernacle; (2) David (built by Solomon) and the Temple; (3) Ezekiel (built by Christ) and the Millennial Temple;⁶⁴

A. MOSES AND THE PATTERN FOR THE TABERNACLE:

*Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou **make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee** in the mount.—Heb. 8:5*

*According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and **the pattern** of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.—Ex.25:9*

And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.—Ex. 25:40

And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto

⁶⁴ *In the book of Nehemiah, the temple was simply rebuilt by Zerubbabel. There was no Shekinah glory at its inauguration simply because there was no new pattern given. It was simply rebuilt after the pattern given to David. This is applicable to our dispensation. There is no need for baptizing in the Spirit every new congregation. The institution was authenticated and every new congregation is simply built after the pattern already provided.*

*the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: **according unto the pattern** which the LORD had shewed Moses, so he made the candlestick.—Numb. 8:4*

*Therefore, said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, **Behold the pattern** of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you.—Josh. 22:28*

Once this house of God was completed by its chosen builder it was immersed in the Shekinah glory of God, which was the divine authentication that the pattern had been followed and the house was an acceptable dwelling place for God:

*So, Moses finished the work. Then a cloud **covered** the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD **filled** the tabernacle.—Ex. 40:33, 34*

B. SOLOMON AND THE PATTERN OF THE TEMPLE

*Then David gave to Solomon his son **the pattern** of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And **the pattern of all that he had by the spirit**, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things:..... And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for **the pattern** of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even **all the works of this pattern**.—1 Chron. 28:11-12, 18-19*

Once this house of God was completed it was immersed in the Shekinah glory of God as the divine authentication that the pattern had been followed:

*Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD **upon the house**, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.—2 Chron. 7:1-3*

C. EZEKIEL AND THE PATTERN FOR THE MILLENNIAL HOUSE OF GOD

*Thou son of man, **shew the house to the house of Israel**, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and **let them measure the pattern**.—Ezek. 43:10*

Ezekiel is the builder in the sense that he is given the pattern in a vision and told to measure every aspect of it according to the pattern given (although Christ will be the actual builder). After every aspect is “*measured*” and the whole is completed then we read:

And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So, the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.—Ezek. 43:4-5

The first house of God was made of skins. The second house of God was made of stones. The third house does not state what kind of material was used to build it. The New Testament house of God is made of people in their own skins (1 Cor. 12:27) assembled together as metaphorical “*lively stones*” (1 Pet. 2:5).

In each case the manifest glory of God came first upon the new house and then filled it. This is the historical backdrop behind the baptism in the Spirit from a Biblical perspective.

This is precisely what happened to the New Testament “*house of God*” in Acts 2:1-3. The room in which they were all sitting was filled with the glory of the Lord, thus immersing them in the Shekinah glory and then each were filled with the Spirit.

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it **filled all the house where they were sitting**. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were **all filled with the Holy Ghost**....—Acts 2:1-4a*

III. THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE HISTORICAL VIEW

The various theories have been provided in the first chapter. In the second chapter, the historical backdrop of the baptism in the Spirit as divine authentication that a new house of God was built according to a divine pattern was established. In this chapter, the specifics of the baptism in the Spirit will be examined to see which of the views listed in the first chapter harmonize with the Biblical criterion for the baptism in the Spirit.

There are six basic truths that characterize the baptism in the Spirit in the New Testament. These six truths are the baptism in the Spirit (1) was still future during the ministry of Christ on earth, and (2) that it has a consistent due administrative order, and (3) that it is administered to specific qualified subjects, and (4) that it has a restricted time and location for its fulfillment and (5) that it has distinctive audible and visible characteristics, (6) that it occurs only after the house has been completely finished. The remaining part of this lesson will examine the first two of these six characteristics.

A. THE GOSPEL ANTICIPATION:

The four gospels and Acts are the historical books of the New Testament. All instances found in the gospel accounts still anticipate the baptism in the

Spirit as a future fulfillment. In every case the future tense “*shall*” baptize is employed.

*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*

*I indeed have baptized you with water: but he **shall** baptize you with the Holy Ghost.-Mk. 1:8*

*John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he **shall** baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: - Lk. 3:16*

Even in the book of Acts prior to Acts 2 the anticipation is still yet future:

*For John truly baptized with water; but ye **shall be** baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.-Acts 1:5*

Therefore, from the gospels to Acts 1:5, the baptism in the Spirit is still anticipated as a future event “*not many days hence*”⁶⁵ (Acts 1:5) after the ascension of Christ (Jn. 7:39; 14-17) fulfilled only on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-3). Although the English text uses the preposition “*with*” the Greek text actually use the preposition *en* or “*in*” demonstrating all these were immersions “*in*” the Spirit.

Why is this future anticipation of the four gospels *prior* to Pentecost significant? **It is significant because this one fact repudiates all other views of the baptism in the Spirit except the historical view.**

⁶⁵ Acts 1:4 He arose on the 17th of Nissan, the day they offered first fruits unto God. The resurrection day was the first day after the first regular Sabbath. Pentecost was counted from the 16th of Nisan (regular Sabbath) numbering of 50 days until Pentecost. Therefore, forty days would be counted from the 16th of Nisan, and make his ascension occur on Saturday, just ten days before the day of Pentecost. The first business meeting (Acts 1:15-26) would have occurred on that Sunday with the day of Pentecost arriving on the following Sunday, which would make it the day following the seventh regular Sabbath.

1. The Dispensational/Non-Dispensational Theory:

For example, both the dispensational and non-dispensational Protestant views claim that the baptism in the Spirit is the spiritual action that places the believer in a position of salvation blessings or spiritual union with Christ (Eph. 1:3-4). Thus, according to their view, spiritual union with God “*in Christ*” is the direct and immediate consequence of the baptism in the Spirit, as they claim the baptism in the Spirit is the placement of believers into this mystical union or invisible body of Christ. The ultimate consequence of this interpretation is that without spiritual union or placement into the mystical body of Christ there can be no possible salvation, as the Scriptures clearly state that all the blessings of salvation as well as all of the promises of God are “*in him*” (Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Cor. 1:20). Outside of this spiritual union with Christ, they assert there can be no salvation possible, as there is no such thing as salvation outside of Christ. Therefore, according to this interpretation, all truly saved persons must be baptized in the Spirit or they are spiritually outside of Christ and thus lost.

However, it is this very interpretation that exposes it as error. Since there was no baptism in the Spirit prior to Pentecost in regard to individual believers, then according to this view there was no possible mechanism to place anyone into this spiritual union with Christ prior to Pentecost. Moreover, since, all the blessings of salvation are “*in him*” then either this Protestant theory is wrong or there could be no possible salvation for anyone prior to Pentecost, because there was no mechanism (baptism in the Spirit) to bring them into spiritual union with Christ.

So, this theory forces them into the following dilemma. Either all humans living prior to Pentecost are **outside** of Christ and lost, or their interpretation of the baptism in the Spirit is false.

Some attempt to avoid this dilemma by supposing there was some other way of salvation prior to Pentecost without Christ. They claim pre-Pentecost saints were justified by the works of the Law. However, not only do the New Testament writers claim that “*no flesh*” whether Jew or Gentile was ever justified under the Law (Rom. 3:19-20; Jn. 7:19; Acts 13:39), but the very model for justification by faith in the gospel is the pre-Law person of Abraham (Rom. 4:11-12, 16; Gal. 1:6-8). Moreover, the writer of Hebrews claims the same gospel preached unto us was preached unto them (Heb. 4:2).

In addition to all the above reasons, Jesus says **before** Pentecost that “no man” is able to come to the Father but “by me” (Jn. 14:6). Peter says that “all the prophets” gave witness to the same truth (Acts 10:43). Therefore, a salvation relationship with Christ before Pentecost was not conditioned or related to the baptism in the Spirit.⁶⁶

However, there is a more serious objection to this Protestant view of the baptism in the Spirit. What about the spiritual condition of people living before Pentecost? Is it possible that any fallen son of Adam could be recognized by God as one of His own people and yet remain from the time of their birth unto their death without any spiritual transformation or spiritual union with God?

Paul plainly teaches that man exists only in two possible spiritual conditions. They are either “in the flesh” or “in the Spirit.”

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. 8:8-9

He explicitly states that all who are “in the flesh” are “none of his.” He also explicitly states that all who are “in the flesh cannot please God.” Why is that so? It is so, because he is speaking of their spiritual condition as described in Romans 8:7:

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.—Rom. 8:7

This is not a condition or problem related to Pentecost, but a spiritual condition and problem related to the fall of man in Adam. To be “in the flesh” is descriptive of the fallen spiritual condition of man when he enters this world through natural birth. That condition is further described by Paul in

⁶⁶ *When this fact is presented to them, they respond that this union with Christ occurred before the foundation of the world. However, all things were purposed before the foundation of the world, but God distinguishes between what is purposed in eternity in contrast to its fulfillment in time (Isa. 46:10- 11). Moreover, if it actually occurred prior to creation then Pentecost is both redundant and unnecessary as saints on Pentecost and forward are double baptized (in purpose and in time), while pre-Pentecost saints were never baptized in time/reality.*

Romans 3:9-17. No man in that condition can “*please God*” or can have a *spiritual* relationship with God as “*God is a spirit.*”

Moreover, worship is essential for any relationship with God and worship is only possible “*in spirit*” (Jn. 4:24) but fallen man is *spiritually dead* whether they live before or after Pentecost. Being outside of spiritual union with God through Christ they are without life, light, love and holiness, and continue in love with darkness, hating the light. Moreover, if they died spiritually separated from God, then their spirits depart as spiritually dead, dark, and unloving spirits.

In addition to these problems, it is Abraham that is set forth to be the pattern or father “*of all who are of faith*” in regard to justification by faith (Rom. 4:11, 16, 22-25) and gospel faith (Gal. 3:6-8). Yet, Paul says that God’s covenant of salvation with Abraham was “*in Christ*” 430 years prior to the existence of the Old Covenant about 2000 years before Pentecost:

*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*

This means that the Protestant theory is wrong! There is no salvation of any kind for any person at any time outside of Christ. There can be no salvation if it does not reverse the spiritual condition of fallen man, regardless of when that man lives.

This single fact completely repudiates the whole Protestant system of ecclesiology. Furthermore, the Protestant definition actually confuses regeneration with the baptism in the Spirit. It is regeneration that brings the elect into actual spiritual union with God through Christ and unlike the baptism in the Spirit the new birth occurs prior to Pentecost (Jn. 3:6; Ezek. 44:7-9). Moreover, if the Old Testament saints could please God apart from the indwelling Spirit of God, without spiritual union with God, then they are superior to us as we can “*do nothing*” without the power of the indwelling Spirit working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Jn. 15:5; Rom. 7:18; 8:9-9; Philip. 2:13). Therefore, the Protestant view must be wrong.

2. The Pentecostal View:

The Pentecostal view does not fare any better. The Pentecostal view is that the baptism in the Spirit is a second work of grace necessary to lift you up to a higher “*spiritual*” state, and necessary for the ability to pray “*in the Spirit*.” They argue that those without the baptism in the Spirit are not capable of obeying the Biblical command to pray “*in the Spirit*” (Eph. 6:18) which they demand is a more spiritual and mature form of prayer.

However, since the baptism in the Spirit did not occur until Pentecost, then according to the Pentecostal theory, none prior to Pentecost could be “*spiritual*” or pray in a more “*spiritual*” manner.

The problems with this view are many. First, Jesus lived before Pentecost and yet never prayed in tongues, nor did he teach his disciples to pray in tongues. Second, Paul told the Corinthians that they came behind in no spiritual gifts, but yet they were not “*spiritual*”, but “*carnal*” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Hence, neither the baptism in the Spirit or spiritual gifts define or determine spirituality, but spiritually is determined by the “*fruit*” of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25) and being “*filled*” with the Spirit. Pre- Pentecost saints were “*filled*” with the Spirit, and the “*fruit*” of the Spirit is manifested in their lives. For example, Elizabeth and Zacharias were both “*filled*” with the Spirit prior to Pentecost (Lk. 1:41, 67). The Psalms show David manifested all the fruit of the Spirit. Therefore, the baptism in the Spirit cannot be the filling of the Spirit, nor does it produce the “*fruit*” of the Spirit as both of these things predate Pentecost, but the baptism in the Spirit does not predate Pentecost.

Third, Paul told the Corinthian congregation that God does not give all His people the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:29-30). However, all His people have the Spirit (Rom. 8:8-9). Therefore, tongues cannot possibly be evidence of salvation, as many Pentecostals claim. Since Paul explicitly denies that God gives tongues to all of His people (1 Cor. 12:29-30), therefore, tongues cannot be necessary to pray “*in the Spirit*” as this is a command to all saints in all ages. Indeed, the only other alternative to praying “*in the Spirit*” is praying “*in the flesh*” which God does not accept. Therefore, tongues cannot be evidence of a greater spiritual state due to personal baptism in the Spirit, because all saints are to “*walk in the Spirit*” and be “*filled*” with the Spirit, as the only other alternative is to “*walk after the flesh*” and be filled with self.

Fourth, such an interpretation demands that Christ was spiritually inferior to them, because there is no record that he prayed in tongues or taught his disciples to do so.

Hence, the Pentecostal theory is more akin to Gnosticism than it is to New Testament Christianity. Gnosticism divided men into three classes (1) carnal or fleshly; (2) soulish; (3) spiritual.⁶⁷

3. The Roman Catholic View:

The Roman Catholic view demands that the baptism in the Spirit is connected with their sacraments of baptism and confirmation, which they affirm are essential to salvation. Rome clearly teaches sacramental salvation and claims the baptism in the Spirit simply makes that sacramental salvation more meaningful and real. Therefore, the validity of their view rests wholly upon the validity of their sacramental salvation. If their sacramental salvation is false, so is their view of the baptism in the Spirit.

Since, neither baptism in water nor the baptism in the Spirit preceded the incarnation of Christ, therefore, at minimum, Rome is demanding “*another gospel*” prior to Pentecost than after Pentecost. The Bible flatly denies this (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12) and provides pre-Pentecost Abraham as the pattern for all believers (Rom. 4:1-5:2) regardless of when they lived.

Significantly, although the disciples and apostles living prior to Pentecost, were already born again (Jn. 3:3-11) water baptized believers (Lk. 7:29-30) with whom the Holy Spirit dwelt (“*he who now dwells with you*”—Jn. 14:17) and who already possessed eternal life (Jn. 3:36; 5:25) and whose names were already written in heaven ((Lk. 10:20; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 13:8), yet none had been baptized in the Spirit. This proves that the baptism in the Spirit has nothing to do with *individual* spirituality or personal salvation.

The very fact that the promise of the baptism in the Spirit was unfulfilled until Pentecost completely repudiates all views (except the historical view) which make it inseparable from salvation. Why? Their position demands “*another gospel*” or another way of salvation which is **outside of any spiritual**

⁶⁷ ⁶⁸ Moreover, God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33) and the entire Pentecostal movement is characterized by utter confusion.

union with God through Christ before Pentecost. The Bible clearly denies that is the case (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2) and that any other gospel is “*accursed*” (Gal. 1:8-9). Therefore, such theories must be wrong as the very doctrine of salvation is at stake and contradicted by such theories.

B. THE PROPER ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

With the exception of **the historical view**, all other views confuse the administrative order of the baptism in the Spirit with that of baptism in water. In the administrative order in water baptism, the Holy Spirit can be the administrator and the congregational “*body of Christ*” can be the element (see later commentary on 1 Cor. 3:5-16 and 12:13). However, in regard to the baptism in the Spirit, it is Christ who is the administrator and the Holy Spirit who is the element.

In every single prophetic passage about the baptism in the Spirit, the administrator, the subject and the element or sphere of immersion are consistently and clearly stated to be the same:

- The Administrator—“*he shall baptize*” = Christ
- The Subject—“*I indeed shall baptize you in water...* but *he* shall baptize *you in the Spirit*” He uses the plural pronoun “you” and he is addressing those baptized in water.
- The element—“*with* (Gr. *en* = in) *Spirit*”

However, the Protestant and Pentecostal views depart from this Biblical order.

- Their Administrator is the Spirit rather than Christ.
- Their Subject is the individual with or without water baptism, instead of plural water baptized persons.
- Their element—“*in Christ*” = union with Christ = mystical body of Christ rather than in the Spirit.

Their departure from the Biblical order demonstrates their view is not the predicted baptism in the Spirit, but they have confused the administration of baptism in water with the administration of baptism in the Spirit.

Baptism in water is attributed to the Holy Spirit as its administrator into the membership of the local visible body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 1-3. A later part of this book will deal with that in more detail. For the present,

water baptism had been attributed to Jesus as the administrator in John 4:1 even though the actual administration had been by his disciples under his supervision or authority.

With regard to the baptism in the Spirit, Jesus predicted that the Holy Spirit would take his place as “another comforter” in the church. As such, water baptism administered by the ordained leadership was attributed to the Holy Spirit as the administrator just as it had been attributed to Jesus. How so, the human administrators acted under the leadership of the Spirit in their administration of water baptism and therefore acted as “one” with God the Spirit in its administration:

*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.—1 Cor. 3:8-9*

CONCLUSION: The historical view conforms better with the Biblical data. It retains the correct Biblical administrator, subject and element. It is consistent with the purpose for the previous houses of God in the Old Testament.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What is the Protestant dispensational view of the baptism in the Spirit?
2. What is the Protestant non-dispensational view of the baptism in the Spirit?
3. What is the Pentecostal view of the baptism in the Spirit?
4. What is the Roman and Eastern Orthodox view of the baptism in the Spirit?
5. What is the Historical view of the baptism in the Spirit?
6. Name two Biblical Characteristics of the Baptism in the Spirit.

REQUIRED READING:

The Baptism in the Spirit by Mark W. Fenison, pp. 74-87

WEEK 6 LESSON 2

The Baptism in the Spirit—Part 2

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson is for the student (1) to properly understand the six Biblical characteristics of the baptism in the Spirit and, (2) to provide a contextual based interpretation of 1 Cor. 12:13, and; (3) to provide a contextual based interpretation of Romans 6:4-5.

INTRODUCTION: One would think that the Bible would simply be filled with passages that clearly state that the baptism in the Spirit is being brought into spiritual union with Christ and all the blessings of salvation, if that were the truth. However, only one passage can be produced by its advocates to support such an idea (1 Cor. 12:13) and even that text is not without problems. However, the Pentecostal view fairs even less, as there is no Biblical text exhorting any believer to seek the baptism in the Spirit. Our lesson picks up where it left off in the previous lesson. The previous lesson introduced the first two Biblical characteristics of the baptism in the Spirit (The Gospel anticipation and the proper administrative order). The remaining part of the administrative order is picked up below. This lesson deals with the last four Biblical characteristics of the baptism in the Spirit (The Proper subjects or candidates, The Restricted Time and Location, and Audible and Visible characteristics, and pattern).

1 Corinthians 12:13

We dealt with this passage in a previous lesson (see pp.207-211). Consider this a review. Long after Pentecost, the Corinthian congregation became divided over the human administrators of water baptism (1 Cor. 1:12-16). Paul resolves this issue by teaching that all human administrators work as “*one*” under the direction or 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.—1 Cor. 3:8-9*

Carefully note the language used by Paul above to describe how this congregation was formed at Corinth. All the ministers who labored there, including Paul, worked “*together with God*” as “*one*” in preaching the gospel and administering baptism and building this congregation.

Therefore, it is the Holy Spirit that is to receive the ultimate credit, not merely for their salvation (1 Cor. 1:17-2:14); but also, for their **water** baptism (1 Cor. 3:5-7) and the constitution of that congregation rather than the individual ministers:

*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, 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.**—1 Cor. 3:5-7*

This is specifically applied to the particular congregational body of water baptized believers (1 Cor. 3:10-16). Paul claims that the Holy Spirit used him as the “*master builder*” to lay the foundation of the congregational body. However, Paul denied it was his congregation or the congregation of any other individual minister, but this congregational body of baptized believers was “*God's husbandry, ye are God's building. . . . ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit. . . . ye are the body of Christ and members in particular*” (1 Cor. 3:9, 16; 12:27).

Therefore, just as Christ was credited with administering water baptism through his disciples in John 4:1, so also, the Holy Spirit is to be credited with administering water baptism through His ministers, as well as building the congregations of Christ.

Moreover, since the Holy Spirit is to receive the credit for their salvation, their baptism, the constitution and continuing growth of their congregation, then this resolved all division over the individual instruments used by God.

Now, the very same problem of division existed in regard to spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14). This same problem of division over gifts had been formerly addressed also at the beginning (1 Cor. 4:6-7). They elevated some members over other members due to the significance they attached to the gifts of some, while despising others who did not have such showy gifts.

How did Paul deal with this division? He dealt with it by the very same way, using the very same principle that he applied to their division over administrators of baptism (1 Cor. 4:6-7).

He first introduces the physical human body in 1 Corinthians 12:12 as the basis for his analogy. Just as they all shared the same human body, in regard to one in kind; all members of all New Testament congregations shared the same kind of congregational body—a local visible kind. Remember, the contextual “*we*” of all Pauline epistles is addressed to congregations of like faith and order, rather than to some post-apostolic period where Christians are found outside and inside of conflicting denominations. Thus, his entire readership (including himself “*we*”) share certain things in common, such as water baptism and membership in a congregation of like faith and order.

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

Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit⁶⁸ they had all been baptized in water into the membership of one body in number (the one where their membership resides) and one in kind (the same kind found at Ephesus, at Jerusalem etc., v. 27; Acts 2:40).

In forming the New Testament congregational body, the Holy Spirit was not a respecter of persons but added members the very same way regardless if they were “*Jews or Gentiles... bond or free.*” Hence, there were no grounds for division concerning race or class.

Furthermore, all were equally made to “*drink*” into the same Spirit that inhabited the corporate congregational body. Partaking of the Spirit in this

⁶⁸ “**By one Spirit**”—some choose to interpret this “*in one spirit*” or the spirit of unity that existed at the initial point of salvation when they were added to this congregational body by water baptism (1 Cor. 1:10-11). However, the initial contrast is leadership under the previous demonic spirits (v. 2 “*ye were led*”) versus leadership under the Holy Spirit (v. 3). Thus, the Greek preposition *en* is introduced and defined at the beginning of the chapter to mean “*by direction*” or “*under the leadership.*”

context has to do with the administration of the spiritual gifts through each member for the unity and edification of the whole congregational body. The term “*drink*” is a metaphor which means to “partake” of something. Paul is not referring to individual indwelling by the Spirit, but rather the institutional indwelling of the Spirit with all of its blessings. Members received into that body through water baptism were made partakers of the manifestations of the Spirit within that same body. Such manifestations included ministering and being ministered unto through various spiritual gifts. It included the unifying influence of the Spirit through the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. It included the mutual care for one another through the leadership of the Spirit. It included the blessings in the administration of the ordinances. The entire nurturing, maturing, teaching ministry in the congregation is attributed to the Holy Spirit. Membership into the local visible *ekklesia* makes the member a partaker of all the spiritual blessings found in the *ekklesia*.

God had placed every member in the body (v. 18) to mutually benefit other members (this included the lost members, like Judas—1 Cor. 11:19), so the body could be complete. So, every member was important to every other member. However, the very differences that were designed by the Spirit to edify and unite the body were the very things that were now dividing the local visible body at Corinth.

The solution to this division over spiritual gifts was resolved by acknowledging that all the members were placed in the body by the Holy Spirit (even unbelievers have a divine design in the congregational body—1 Cor. 11:19), and therefore all the members were equally necessary for the benefit of the whole (vv. 25-27) and all the gifts were to be treated with equal respect. This is clearly reflected in the following verses:

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

This is impossible for a universal invisible congregation scattered all over the world within conflicting denominations. It is utterly impossible for such a monstrosity of a church to even remotely attain the command of verses 25-26 so that “*all*” the members rejoice or sorrow with “*one*” member who suffers or is honored, as that kind of church cannot even possibly know each of its members or even know the vast majority of its members in this way.

However, that is the very function of a local congregational body of Christ. Therefore, the baptism in verse 13 cannot possibly refer to Spirit baptism in a universal invisible body of Christ characterized by great distances and doctrinal division.

Verses 12-26 is abstract instruction that is applicable to the institutional body of Christ (v. 28) in its concrete form (v. 27) and that is precisely how it is applied by Paul in verse 27 to “*ye*” (not “*we*”).

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

This kind of congregational body of Christ has members within it that act as the metaphorical “*head*” (“*the head*”—v. 21) or are in the position of authority over the congregation, yet under Jesus Christ.

Therefore, water baptism brings such members into this kind of body under a positional “*head*” (Pastor and elders) other than Jesus Christ as a visible congregational body of Christ (Acts 20:28-29).

Therefore, the administrative order in the baptism in the Spirit should not be confused with the administrative order in water baptism.

In the administrative order in water baptism, the Holy Spirit can be the administrator and the congregational “*body of Christ*” can be the element. Not so with the baptism in the Spirit. Christ is the administrator of the baptism in the Spirit. Therefore, 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to water baptism in relationship to the institutional body of Christ (“*we*”) as found in its concreted localized form (“*ye*” v. 27).

A. THE PROPER SUBJECTS OR CANDIDATES

Who are the subjects for this baptism in the Spirit? All other positions except the historical position declares the subject is the individual believer. However, every single predictive passage demands it is a plural number of water baptized disciples that are the recipients of the baptism in the Spirit – “*I baptize you with [Gr. en “in”] water unto repentance, but he shall baptize you with [Gr. en “in”] the Holy Ghost*” (Mt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5).

There are three distinct characteristics that identify the proper subject of the baptism in the Spirit—(1) Plural pronoun - a plural “*you*”; (2) Water baptized “*you*”—“*I baptize you in water*” and (3) Repentant believers “*you*”—“*unto repentance.*”

1. Plural “You”

Every reference prior to Pentecost describes the subjects for this baptism in the Spirit to be a specific **plural** “*you*” united as a people by common repentance and water baptism. These common people fits with God’s design for John’s ministry which is to “*make ready a people, prepared for the Lord*” (Lk. 1:17). It was from this prepared people made ready for Christ, that Christ selectively chose the materials to fitly frame an organized institutional congregation around him with officers (Mk. 3:12-15; 1 Cor. 12:28), ordinances (Jn. 4:1-2; Lk. 7:29-30; Mt. 26:12- 30) and a congregational form of government (Mt. 18:15-20) under His immediate leadership. It is this specific plural “*you*” prepared by John that Jesus habitually assembled with from the time of John until His ascension:

*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.—Acts 1:21-22

It is this specific body of baptized believers that is instructed to “wait” in Jerusalem, which during that waiting period, first convened in a formal business meeting with a membership role to select and install another apostle (Acts 1:15-27). It is this very same baptized body of believers that assembled in one place in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:1) that 3000 new converts were “added unto them” by a profession of faith and water baptism (Acts 2:41-42) that is explicitly identified as the “church” (Acts 2:47).

This baptism in the Spirit was never promised to *individuals* as such, nor was it ever promised to mere unbaptized believers in Christ. It was only promised by Christ to the congregational body of water baptized believers who habitually assembled together with Him.

Why is this significant? It is significant for several reasons. First, the materials used to build the new institutional house of God are distinctly different from the materials used for the previous institutional houses of God. The former ones were made up of inanimate materials. The New Covenant “house of God” is made up of animated water baptized believers. Nobody denies this is the kind of congregation that fits this description at least 97 out of 115 times the word “church” is found in the New Testament. The remaining 18 times is found in the generic/institutional abstract sense and refers to the institutional “house of God.” Here it is directly applied in the concrete sense to the church located at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27)..

Even on Pentecost, the promise is directed only to water baptized repentant believers in Christ (Acts 2:38). Acts 10 is the necessary exception to this rule simply because the Jews refused to even enter the house of an *uncircumcised* Gentile (Acts 10:28) much less administer water baptism unto them without some kind of clear divine confirmation (Acts 10:47-48). The Jews continued to enforce the “middle wall of partition” in the congregation of God in Jerusalem, refusing to go to the *uncircumcised* Gentiles, or receive them as equal members in the same congregational body by water baptism. Therefore, the baptism in the Spirit as a divine authentication method was used to confirm the acceptability of *uncircumcised* Gentile believers as acceptable for water baptism and membership in the new house of God.

2. Repentant Gospel believers

These are the only kind of “you” John would baptize. John the Baptist refused to baptize those who were without “*fruits of repentance*” (Mt. 3:8) and therefore his baptism was called the “*baptism of repentance*” as he required repentance **prior to** baptism. However, his demand to repent prior to baptism was also joined with the demand to believe in Christ for eternal life:

*Then said Paul, John verily baptized with **the baptism of repentance**, saying unto the people, that **they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.**—
Acts 19:5*

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

This is not only the very same gospel preached by Christ (Jn. 3:15-18), but is the very same gospel commissioned by Christ unto all nations:

*And that **repentance** and remission of sins **should be preached** in his name **among all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem—Lk. 24:49*

What Jesus commanded His congregation to preach to all nations is the same “*gospel of the kingdom*” preached by John and Jesus (Mk. 1:15). This same “*gospel of the kingdom*” was preached throughout the history of the early congregations in the book of Acts:

- (a) The gospel preached to Samaritans:

*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*

- (b) The gospel preached to Gentiles:

*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*

Therefore, the plural “you” baptized in the Spirit were water baptized repentant believing church members. Only the historic view harmonizes with such a baptism of this kind of “you” gathered together in one place in Jerusalem.

B. THE ELEMENT—IMMERSION IN THE SPIRIT

Only the historic view agrees with the specifics of these texts. The subjects of this baptism are water baptized believers. The administrator is Christ and the element into which they are immersed is the Spirit. All other views reverse the administrator and element. They make the administrator to be the Spirit rather than Christ, and they make the element to be Christ rather than the Spirit. They make unbaptized individuals the subject rather than a plural water baptized “you.”

No one can reasonably deny that the institution found throughout the New Testament manifested in plural “congregations” is a new institution with new ordinances, new officers and a new commission identified explicitly as “the house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15). This kind of institutional “house of God” cannot be found previous to the earthly ministry of Christ. Neither can anyone reasonably deny that this institutional “house of God” was completely finished by Christ prior to his ascension, needing only the historic immersion in the Shekinah glory, as its divine authentication.

Indeed, this same assembly had existed from John 1:35-52 where Christ first assembled around him water baptized believers. He had given this congregation its first officers (Mk. 3:12-15; Acts 1:15-21) and the ordinances (baptism—Jn. 4:1-2; the Lord’s Supper—Mt. 26:26-30); congregational discipline (Mt. 18:15-18), and a worldwide commission until the end of the age (Mt. 28:19-20) all prior to His ascension into heaven. Therefore, before he ascended into heaven, he had finished the new house of God, according to an established pattern. These baptized believers were an organized assembly prior to Pentecost with officers and ordinances and had been assembling as such since the baptism of John, as this is made clear when they selected Matthias to fill the vacated church office of Judas Iscariot:

*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.**—Acts 1:21-22*

This new institution was completed and only needed to be divinely authenticated as “*the house of God*” by the historic immersion in the Shekinah glory. This is the established authenticating method for all former houses of God:

1. *The Tabernacle institution immersed—Exodus 40:33b-35*

*So, Moses finished the work. Then a cloud **covered** the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD **filled** the tabernacle.*—Exodus 40:33-34

*And there **came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar** the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.*—Lev. 9:24

2. *The Temple institution immersed—2 Chron. 7:1-3*

*Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the **fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled** the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD **upon** the house....*—2 Chron. 7:1-3

3. *The Congregational institution immersed—Acts 2:1-3*

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it **filled all the house where they were sitting.** And there appeared unto them cloven tongues **like as of fire**, and it sat upon each of them.*

Therefore, the baptism in the Spirit on Pentecost was in keeping with God's regular manner of authentication for all previous houses of God. All

previous houses of God were immersed in the visible manifestation of God's Spirit. Likewise, the new congregation was actually assembled together in "one place" (Acts 2:1) where they were immersed in the Spirit, as the whole room in which they assembled was filled with the Spirit with audible and visible signs of that baptism:

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, **they were all with one accord in one place.** And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.—Acts 2:1*

C. THE RESTRICTED TIME AND LOCATION

*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.****—Acts 1:4-5*

Although, "more than five hundred **brethren**" at once saw the Lord at his ascension into heaven (1 Cor. 15:6), and although there must have been hundreds more existing in and outside of Jerusalem⁶⁹ on the day of Pentecost that had been baptized by John and the disciples of Christ (see Acts 9:31), however, this promised baptism was restricted geographically in "one place" (Acts 2:1) in the city of "Jerusalem" and upon a certain day ("wait....not many days hence") upon the specific assembly of water baptized believers that had been habitually assembling with Christ (Acts 1:21-22) and which actually assembled together in "one place" on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Acts 1:21-22 explicitly states there had been a regular assembling of baptized believers with Christ from the baptism of John (Jn. 1:35-55) until his ascension into heaven. This is the same assembly mentioned in Acts 2:1 that had formerly assembled in Acts 1. Acts 1:21-22 proves that more disciples

⁶⁹ *These other brethren were later formed into separate congregations in Judea and Galilee (compare Gal. 1:22 with Acts 9:31)*

were present in the gospel accounts than merely the twelve apostles, although only the twelve are explicitly mentioned at times. The 120 mentioned in Acts 1:15 were the actual members of this traveling assembly. This baptism was confined to a restricted place and a restricted time but the Protestant view is that it is the spiritual union of all believers regardless of time or location.

Therefore, the baptism in the Spirit was not universal in application to all believers existing just anywhere inside or outside Jerusalem on Pentecost. It was restricted to only those water baptized believers that composed the first congregation Christ built, who met in “*one place*” and in “*Jerusalem*” on Pentecost. This fact, completely repudiates the Protestant view that it is contemporary with salvation or that it is the individual indwelling of all believers universally on Pentecost and from Pentecost onward.

Moreover, the restriction to Jerusalem harmonizes completely with the fact that the immediate former “*house of God*” is located in Jerusalem and was immersed in the Shekinah glory in Jerusalem. Furthermore, this provided an obvious contrast with the former “*house of God*” and indisputable authentication of the congregation as the new “*house of God*” in the very presence of the former “*house of God*.”

All other views do not harmonize with these time and place restrictions, except for the historical view. As with all previous houses of God in the past, the baptism was a historically fulfilled event that occurred once at the beginning of each institution. The only known repetition was for the necessary authentication of gentile believers to be received within this new institution as equal members, thus removing “*the middle wall of partition*” (Eph. 2:14) that had been erected in the previous house of God to separate Gentiles from Jews in public worship and service within the house of God. Once the congregation was authenticated as an institution, there was no need to repeat it each time with the constitution of each individual congregation.

D. THE AUDIBLE AND VISIBLE CHARACTERISTICS

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.—Acts 2:1-3

Notice the distinct audible and visible characteristics of the true Pentecostal baptism in the Spirit. First, the baptism in the Spirit came with a distinct audible sound—the sound of “*a rushing mighty wind.*” The house in which they were sitting was filled with this sound so all in that room heard it. Second, there was a distinct visible manifestation that characterized this baptism—“*cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*”⁷⁰

Pentecostalism denies these precise audible and visible characteristics are essential for their view of the baptism in the Spirit. Instead they try to demand that speaking in tongues is the only necessary manifestation of this baptism. However, that is simply not true. The text says that speaking in tongues was the consequence of being “*filled*” by the Spirit rather than being baptized in the Spirit:

*And they were all **filled** with the Holy Ghost, **and began**
to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.—
Acts 2:4*

Moreover, filling with the Spirit occurred before Pentecost and so filling cannot be a synonym for *baptism* in the Spirit. Moreover, think how these audible and visible manifestations affect the Protestant and Catholic view of the baptism in the Spirit. They do not require these visible manifestations for every time they claim a baptism of the Spirit occurs, i.e., a regeneration of a person. Think of what that would mean: every time a person is regenerated, the sound of a mighty wind will be heard and he/she will have tongues of fire above them. If that occurred, there would be no doubt they had been regenerated and truly saved, wouldn't it? The same goes for the Catholic interpretation of the baptism in the Spirit—no audible or visible signs. That is why the baptism in the Spirit is a unique historical act that will never be repeated after Gentiles were confirmed as acceptable members.

Only the historic view of the baptism in the Spirit harmonizes with these Biblical characteristics. All other views repudiate the distinct audible and visible characteristics of this baptism, while picking and choosing what they want to characterize their own application of it.

⁷⁰ ⁷¹ The second occurrence in Acts 10 is described as the same event that took place in Acts 2 (Acts 11:15). However, Peter just summarizes it by the words “the Holy Ghost fell on them, **as on us** at the beginning” instead of spelling out the details.

E. AN ALREADY “FINISHED” HOUSE OF GOD WAS IMMERSERD ACCORDING TO THE OLD TESTAMENT PATTERN

Finally, the immersion of the “house of God” according to the Old Testament pattern always followed rather than preceded its constitution:

1. *The Old Testament Tabernacle:*

*So, Moses finished the Tabernacle. ¶ **Then** a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.—Ex.40:33, 34*

2. *The Old Testament Temple:*

*Thus, all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished: ¶ Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD **upon** the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.—2 Chron. 5:1; 7:1-3*

3. *The New Testament “house of God”:*

*I have glorified thee on the earth: **I have finished the work** which thou gavest me to do. . . . And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it **filled all the house where they were sitting**.—Jn. 17:4; Acts 2:1-2*

IV. ARGUMENTS FOR A POST-PENTECOST BAPTISM

The most popular proof text for the post-Pentecost continuation of the baptism in the Spirit is 1 Corinthians 12:13. This text has been dealt with

previously (see pages 207-211). However, two other prominent texts are also used to support that position.

The House of Cornelius Occurrence

As previously shown, every Scripture reference prior to Pentecost asserts it is yet future. Thus, whatever the baptism in the Spirit achieves, it could not achieve until Pentecost.

The only other reference, and last direct reference found in the book of Acts occurs in Acts 11:15-16:

*And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost **fell on them, as on us at the beginning**. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.—Acts 11:15-16*

Peter is speaking, and addressing the congregation at Jerusalem, especially the Jewish members (“*they that were of the circumcision*”—Acts 11:1-3) regarding the admission of *uncircumcised* Gentile believers into congregational membership by water baptism (Acts 10). Even though there was not a physical “*wall of partition*” (Eph. 2:14) in the new house of God, there was still a mental wall that refused to receive *uncircumcised* Gentile believers as equals in the new house of worship.

In recounting the events at the house of Cornelius to the congregation at Jerusalem, the nearest reference point Peter could provide to explain what occurred at the house of Cornelius was when the Holy Ghost fell “*on us at the beginning*.”

This statement is very significant for at least three reasons. **First**, although there were literally thousands saved and added to the congregation between Acts 2 and Acts 10, Peter could not identify any nearer reference point than Pentecost for the baptism in the Spirit, demonstrating this was not a repetitive individual experience, but had only occurred once before. **Second**, he says “*on us*” or what constituted a *Jewish* assembly. Although individually many of these Jews had been added between Pentecost and the house of Cornelius (Acts 3-9), yet the baptism in the Spirit “*on us*” or the Jews occurred only “*at the beginning*” rather than being individually repeated. **Third**, what happened at the house of Cornelius was an exception rather than the rule or else he would have said *since* rather than “*at the beginning*.” He did not say *since* the beginning but “*at*” the beginning proving it was not a repetitive individual baptism.

Why did God repeat on Gentiles what happened “*at the beginning*” to a Jewish congregation on Pentecost? No other view can provide a reasonable answer except the historical view. The historical view defines the baptism in the Spirit as a public divine *authentication* that the institutional “*house of God*” was built and designed according to a divine pattern. Part of that divine pattern was to include gentile believers from “*all nations*” (Mt. 28:19; Acts 1:8), but the Jewish congregation had refused to do this between Acts 2-9. Indeed, Peter refused until after the third time God repeated the same vision unto him. The vision signified that God now accepts as “*clean*” both the foods and the gentiles that such foods typified as “*unclean*”

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

..... 28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

God made it clear that Gentiles are now acceptable as equal members in the new institutional “*house of God*.” Peter took Jewish believers with him as witnesses (Acts 10:23, 45) and only after God publicly provided divine authentication they were acceptable for membership in God’s house do we read:

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,⁷¹

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

⁷¹ Not only did the exact same characteristics occur as occurred in Acts 2:1-3, but in addition the “*gift*” of the Spirit (subjective genitive—*gift produced by the Spirit*) or speaking in tongues was also given them, thus reproducing the whole event that occurred “*at the beginning*” on the Jewish members of the Jerusalem church.

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

The members in the congregation at Jerusalem were complaining because baptizing them brought them into the congregation as equal members, when they viewed them exactly as Peter had in Acts 10:28:

*And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew **to keep company**, or come unto one of another nation;*

The former public house of God had a physical “*middle wall of partition*” (Eph. 2:14) that separated Gentile believers from Jewish believers in public worship. However, the new house of God had no such wall, because it was by nature composed of living stones assembling together as equal priests offering up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5). This equality in public worship was not something this all Jewish congregation at Jerusalem was willing to acknowledge without some kind of direct recognizable authentication by God. The baptism in the Spirit was the Old Testament recognizable authentication by God that signified the “house” had conformed to God’s pattern for public worship.

Baptizing them brought them into the membership forcing the congregation to address this former law (“*unlawful thing*”) which they had been practicing and which kept them from carrying out the Great Commission to “*all nations.*” Hence, Acts 10-11 demonstrate the baptism in the Spirit had been historically fulfilled at Pentecost on the Jewish congregation, and this repetition was an exception to the rule for the sake of confirming Gentiles as equal members in the new “*house of God.*”

Romans 6:3-5

*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that **like** as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together **in the likeness** of his death, we shall be also **in the likeness** of his resurrection: - Rom. 6:3-5*

Romans 6:3-5 is considered as a proof text for those who advocate the baptism in the Spirit at regeneration.

Paul had just stated in the previous chapter “*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*” (Rom. 5:20) and now in chapter six he is answering the objection that if this is so, would not that encourage a life of sin so that grace would much more abound?

His quick response is “*God forbid*” (Rom. 6:2). His extended response involves all of Romans 6-8. In Romans 6-8 Paul demands that our legal position in Christ (justification) is not one and the same with our spiritual condition (regeneration) in Christ but they are inseparable truths which water baptism gives visible public identification with both. His death provides the legal basis for victory over sin while his resurrection provides the power for victory over sin. Hence, a justified person would not continue to live in sin because justified people are also born-again people who no longer love sin. Water baptism gives public identification to both his death and resurrection. His death removes the legal penalty of sin but his resurrection provides the power over sin. Water baptism identifies in visible “likeness” with both and is a testimony against the idea that justification by grace promotes living in sin.

Nothing illustrates the inseparability of the death and resurrected life of Christ with the believer more than water baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). One cannot be baptized in a scriptural manner without identifying with Christ “*in the likeness*” of both. Water baptism is a visible profession that I have died to sin judicially and have been resurrected with Christ to live a holy life. His death provided the legal basis for their justification which positionally “*freed*” them from **the penalty** of sin (Rom. 6:7).⁷² However, his resurrection demonstrated the **power** of the Spirit over sin and death.

However, neither justification or regeneration free the believer from the power of sin as demonstrated in Romans 7:14-25 but that is obtained by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God (Rom. 8:8-9).

Here is precisely where the interpretation that attempts to make Romans 6:3-4 apply to Spirit baptism breaks down. Advocates of Spirit baptism argue that this text teaches that when a person is baptized into spiritual union with Christ their own person is actually freed from the **power** of sin because when he died to sin they died to sin and when he was raised to life they were raised to life. However, regeneration does not actually free the believer from the **power** of sin as Romans 7:14-25 demonstrates.

⁷² In Romans 6:7 the word “*freed*” is the very same word consistently translated “*justified*” in chapters 4-5. Hence, Paul is still speaking of their legal position in Christ rather than their spiritual union with Christ.

Their interpretation of Romans 6:3-4 is wrong for several reasons:

1. It is not water or Spirit baptism that provides freedom from the power of indwelling sin. It is the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit **after** regeneration that frees them from the power of sin (Rom. 8:9-13).
2. The believer is not comprehensively and absolutely “*dead to sin*” in his own person because our whole person has not been regenerated or glorified. Thus, after providing the illustration of baptism, Paul exhorts true believers to “*reckon*” themselves as dead to sin and “*let not*” sin reign in their bodies and neither should they “*yield*” to sin:

*Likewise **reckon** ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Let not** sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither **yield** ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield yourselves** unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.—Rom. 6:11-13*

These exhortations would be unnecessary if either water or spirit baptism actually freed their own person from the dominion or power of sin.

3. This theory confuses baptism in the Spirit with regeneration. Regeneration is what actually and literally brings the believer into spiritual union with God through Christ.

Hence, advocates of baptismal regeneration and Spirit baptism are both wrong in their interpretation of this text, as no kind of baptism obtains literal and actual freedom from sin. So, that was not Paul’s point in introducing baptism. His point was to illustrate that justification and regeneration are inseparable truths and nothing better illustrates their inseparability than water baptism. Water baptism identifies the believer with both truths and therefore is a public denial that the believer would continue in sin.

Baptism is not for unbelievers. The only candidate for water baptism is a person who has already professed faith in Christ and, is therefore already justified by regenerative faith. Justification and regeneration are distinct and separate acts of God but inseparable acts of God. Nothing illustrates the inseparability of these two distinct acts of God better than the act of water baptism.

Unlike the lost man (Rom. 8:7-8) the true believer has a righteous position “*in Christ*” due to justification, as well as a righteous disposition “*in Christ*” due to regeneration (Rom. 7:15-21, 25). Water baptism identifies the believer with both truths in an external “likeness.” However, freedom from the power of indwelling sin does not originate from our position or disposition “*in Christ*” but the actual indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us (Rom. 8:9-13). Therefore, the desire to do “*good*” without dependency upon the indwelling power of the Spirit will result in the lack of power to do “*good*” (Rom. 7:14-25). The baptism in Romans 6:3-4 does not literally obtain freedom from the power of indwelling sin, as that is obtained progressively by dependence upon the indwelling power of the Spirit. Justification is not a license to sin, because all who are justified are regenerated and therefore they cannot continue in sin because they no longer are in love with sin. If he were speaking of the Baptism in the Spirit he would not use the word “likeness” because if the baptism in the Spirit obtained literal spiritual union with Christ it would not be in the form of a “likeness” but in reality.

CONCLUSION: When the baptism in the Spirit is defined by all six Biblical characteristics, then all other views except the historical view are eliminated.

1. The Gospel Anticipation
2. The proper Administrative order
3. The Proper Subjects or Candidates
4. The element–immersion in the Spirit
5. The Restricted time and location
6. The visible and audible characteristics

When 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 6:4-6 are properly interpreted in their immediate and overall context there are no proof texts for the Protestant view.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Was water baptism by the disciples of Jesus attributed to Jesus in John 4:1?

2. Are the ministries of evangelizing and baptizing and forming the congregation at Corinth attributed to the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. 3:5-10?
3. Name the four Biblical characteristics of the baptism in the Spirit listed in this lesson along with the two Biblical characteristics listed in the previous lesson.
4. How does water baptism publicly identify the believer with both the doctrine of justification by faith and the doctrine of regeneration by the Spirit?
5. How does water baptism publicly demonstrate we are dead to sin and alive to God?

REQUIRED READING:

The Baptism in the Spirit by Mark W. Fenison, pp. 88-95



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 6 LESSON 3

The Baptism in the Spirit—Part 3

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to demonstrate that personal indwelling by the Spirit is a pre-Pentecost reality which is inseparable from essential salvation and, (2) to demonstrate that the baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was public accreditation that a new “house of God” that had not only been completed but completed in keeping with the divine pattern and, (3) To demonstrate that the baptism in the Spirit was an integral part of the establishing a new covenant public administration that included a qualified builder, a new qualified public house of God, a qualified public ministry, qualified public ordinances, a new qualified gospel mission and a new body of Scripture.

INTRODUCTION: Confusion occurs when individual indwelling is confused with institutional indwelling. The baptism in the Spirit previous to Pentecost was always an institutional indwelling and never an individual indwelling. Individual indwelling is an integral and essential aspect of salvation at its most basic level since the fall of man. Indeed, there is no such thing as salvation apart from spiritual union with God, and there is no such thing as spiritual union with God apart from individual indwelling because spiritual union exists between the human spirit with the Spirit of God inside of man.

I. INDWELLING BEFORE PENTECOST

In order for anyone to be in spiritual union with God their human spirit must be **united** to the Spirit of God, as that is the meaning of **union**. Since your human spirit exists only **within** you, therefore, spiritual **union** between

your spirit and the Spirit of God must take place and exist **within** you or else there is no **union** at all. That internal **union** between your spirit and the Spirit of God is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). If this internal **union** does not exist within a person, they are spiritually separated from God and thus spiritually dead.

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. 8:8-9

The Apostle Paul divides all mankind in all ages into two camps. They are either “*in the flesh*” (lost) or “*in the Spirit*” (saved). He clearly says that to be “*in the Spirit*” means “*that the Spirit of God dwell in you*” thus what theologians call the indwelling Spirit of God in believers. Notice that all who are “*in the flesh cannot please God*” simply because that is one and the same thing as being spiritually separated from God or being spiritually dead.

What about those listed in Hebrews 11 or the saints prior to Pentecost? Were they without the indwelling Spirit of God, thus spiritually separated from God, thus spiritually dead?? Remember, Paul said those “*in the flesh*” without the indwelling Spirit of God or those who are not “*in the Spirit*” cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). However, the writer of Hebrews shows that all the saints between Genesis and Malachi were able to please God (Heb. 11:6-41). Hence, they had to be “*in the Spirit*” and if they are “*in the Spirit*” it requires that they are indwelt by the Spirit or else they are “*none of his*” but are “*in the flesh.*” Were those listed in Hebrews 11 “*none of his*”???⁷³

Paul makes it clear that this has always been the only two possible conditions of mankind when he 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*

⁷³ Hebrews 11:39-40 is often quoted to show that the Old Testament saints had an inferior or different kind of salvation or an incomplete one. However, the “promise” has to do with being “made perfect” or glorification of the body and entrance into the new Jerusalem upon the new earth (vv. 13-16). We too are “strangers” and “pilgrims” on earth and are still waiting with them for this promise to be realized.

Indeed, the Old Testament clearly teaches that the saints were indwelt by the Spirit of God (Gen. 41:38; Ex. 31:3; Numb. 27:18; Dan. 5:11; Lk. 24:49; 1 Pet. 1:11). Not merely kings, priests and prophets, but common persons like Caleb:

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.—Numb. 14:24

His ability to please God is attributed to the “*spirit*” that was with Him. Although Joshua was a leader in Israel, he was neither a prophet, priest nor king but yet was indwelt by the Spirit of God.

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a **man in whom is the spirit**, and lay thine hand upon him; - Numb. 28:18*

Some argue that the Holy Spirit only came “*upon*” men, indwelling them for a season and then leaving them. However, after Pentecost the Spirit is also said to have come “*upon*” men (Acts 8:14; 19:6) but it has nothing to do with indwelling them. Instead it had to do with equipping them with gifts or empowering them to perform tasks.

Furthermore, the baptism in the Spirit is not being “*filled*” with the Spirit, as many were “*filled*” with the Spirit prior to Pentecost (Ex. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Lk. 2:40).

Certain passages are quoted to prove saints prior to Pentecost did not have the Spirit indwelling them:

A. JOHN 14:17

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world **cannot receive**, because it seeth him not, **neither knoweth** him: but ye *know* him; for he **dwelleth** with you, and shall be in you.—Jn. 14:17*

Jesus said the world cannot “*receive*” the Spirit because they are unable to see or know him. However, in direct contrast Jesus said that his disciples “*knoweth him*” proving they were enabled to see and **receive** the Spirit. Moreover, note that the Spirit is not said merely to be “*with*

you”, but “*dwelleth*” with you. The present tense demands continual linear action. **Individually**, they were indwelt born again believers, but *corporately* as the new institutional house of God composed of “*lively stones built up together*” (1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:5) they were not indwelt until Pentecost. Only upon Pentecost will the Holy Spirit be “*in you*” as the new public house of God. Moreover, they were already in spiritual union with the Spirit, as they already had spiritual life. Both Christ and John the Baptist said that whoever believeth in the Son “*hath*” everlasting life (Jn. 3:36; 5:25). Jesus said that their names were already written in heaven or in the lamb’s book of life (Lk. 10:20; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 13:8). The spiritually dead are not in the Lamb’s book “*of life.*”

Paul makes a clear distinction between the congregation as a corporate “*temple of the Spirit*” (1 Cor. 3:16), and the individual, whose body is an individual “*temple of the Spirit*” (1 Cor. 6:19). In 1 Corinthians 3:16 he uses the plural pronoun “*ye*” to describe the congregation at Corinth (“*ye*” **not** “*we*”). However, in 1 Corinthians 6:19 he addresses the individual believer and describes their body as “*the temple of the Holy Spirit.*”

Therefore, the Holy Spirit was “*with*” individuals in the sense of **individual indwelling** prior to Pentecost, as their individual physical bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit. However, on Pentecost the Holy Spirit took up residence within an institutional body composed of plural water baptized believers.

Those who deny individual indwelling prior to Pentecost fail to distinguish between individual (1 Cor. 6:19) and institutional indwelling (1 Cor. 3:16) by the Spirit of God. Both are true, but **institutional indwelling** did not exist in the sense of congregational indwelling until Pentecost, because the former institutional houses of God were not an assembly of human beings (1 Pet. 2:5; 1 Cor. 12:27) but an assembly of inanimate materials.

B. JOHN 7:37-39

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he

of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)—Jn. 7:37-39

This is one of the proof texts used by those who advocate that pre-Pentecost saints were without the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. Let us examine it more closely. The immediate context is the Feast of tabernacles (vv. 2, 8, 10, 37). This was the feast of the Jews when they dwelt in tents. At the close of the first day they would go down to the court of the women and light great candlesticks that lit up the whole city. What a fitting type of the Lord's congregations (Rev. 1:20). On the last day of this feast, a long line of people led by priests would carry candles and water, as they marched up to the temple. Once they had arrived, the priests would carry the water into the temple and pour it out in the "house of God" as an offering unto the Lord. Here is another fitting symbolic gesture that finds its fulfillment in Pentecost, when the Spirit came to indwell the new "house of God." It is clear from this context that "water" represents the Holy Spirit. However, there are two different kinds of people being addressed within this text. In verse 37, Christ addresses those who have never believed in him nor partaken of, nor drank into the Holy Spirit in regard to new birth and personal indwelling. Hence, verse 37 deals with initial reception of the Spirit **within** them.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.—Jn. 7:37

When you drink water, does it go inside or outside of you? This initial drinking brings the indwelling Spirit inside of you just as drinking water brings water inside of you. This is personal individual indwelling perhaps typified by the individual tents in which they dwelt.

However, verses 38-39 deals with those who are already believers—"he that believeth on me." Moreover, these verses do not deal with the **inflow**, but the **outflow** of the already indwelling Spirit "out of his belly shall flow..." In other words, the Spirit they received, and that indwells them by new birth, would flow out of them unto others in regard to power for witnessing the gospel (Acts 1:8).

Just as those who were marching up to the “*house of God*” would pour out this water on the last day of feast of tabernacles so on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon water baptized believing members of the new “*house of God*” to empower their witness (Acts 1:8). Again, notice this promise is for those already saved, born again believers, who are already in spiritual union with God. Moreover, all of whom this promise was directed toward were already baptized in water (Lk. 7:29-30). Again, this is a promise to the first congregation at Jerusalem as the new institutional public “*house of God*” with regard to **power** in carrying out its commission (Mt. 28:20) as the indwelt **institutional** “*house of God*” thus making it the “*pillar and ground of the truth.*”

C. LUKE 16:16

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.—Lk. 16:16

Many suppose this verse proves that a different salvation was preached under the Law by the prophets other than what John the Baptist preached (Mark 1:1).

However, the law and former prophets had been predicting the coming of the king, while John announced He is here. John announced the king had come and was present among them. The same gospel had always been preached before and after John (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2). The only difference prior to John was that it was a progressive revelation with each generation of prophets that anticipated the coming of Christ. With John the progressive revelation was now being completed in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

However, the multitudes mistook His coming as indicating that the promised visible earthly kingdom had also arrived, and so, they eagerly flocked to John willing to do whatever he said in order to take part in what they perceived to be the imminent overthrow of Rome and establishment of the world-wide Messianic kingdom. Many of these professed disciples either left Christ later (Jn. 6:60-66) or cried out for his crucifixion after what they anticipated did not occur.

Israel needed to be reborn into the spiritual kingdom of God before they could participate in the earthly kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3-5). The regenerating

indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit was a Pre-Pentecost reality. Jesus rebuked Nicodemus for being a “*master*” of Israel and yet ignorant of the Old Testament teaching of the new birth (Jn. 3:3-11).

God rebuked Israel through Ezekiel for allowing the “*uncircumcised in heart*” into the house of God (Ezek. 44:7).

*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...–Ezek. 44:7*

Yet, Ezekiel did not respond like Nicodemus “*how can these things be?*” Right from the beginning God sorrowed over the uncircumcised heart condition of Israel (Deut. 5:29; 29:4). As a nation, Israel never properly responded to the gospel (Heb. 4:2) and won’t respond to the gospel until Christ returns (Rom. 11:26-28).

Therefore, Luke 16:16 does not deny the gospel preached before John (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2) is the same gospel preached by John (Jn. 3:36) which is also the same gospel preached after Pentecost (Lk. 24:47). Luke 16:16 only teaches that what was formerly anticipated by the prophets is now realized by John, and the populace under the ruthless power of Rome mistook this coming of Christ as the time to establish the visible kingdom of God upon earth. Hence, much of the professions were false (Jn. 6:64) because the motive for professing Christ was selfish (as in the case of Judas). Therefore, thinking this was the time for kingdom power to overthrow Rome, they eagerly received John and Jesus, only later to turn against them when their anticipations were not realized.

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I to you, that no man can come to me, except it were given to him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.–Jn. 6:64-66

II. THE NEW DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.—Lk. 24:49

The “*promise of my Father*” refers to the special dispensation of the Spirit that would be ushered in on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5).

However, the Holy Spirit had already been upon earth from the time He moved upon the face of the deep in Genesis 1:2. The Holy Spirit had been regenerating, indwelling, sanctifying, filling, sealing (His indwelling presence is this seal) and saving individuals from sin since the fall of man in the garden.

However, the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and by the Son on Pentecost to accomplish three new things upon earth:

1. The New Salvation Mission—Acts 1:8
2. The New Covenant Administrative House of God—Heb. 9:1
3. The New Prophetic Mission—Jn. 14:16

A. THE NEW SALVATION MISSION

The coming of the Holy Spirit in regard to a new salvation mission was not about **how** the Holy Spirit would save anyone, but rather about **who** the Holy Spirit would now begin to save.

Prior to the day of Pentecost, the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit had *primarily* been restricted within the boundaries of Judaism. Even the ministry of Christ had been restricted within the boundaries of Judaism:

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: — Mt. 10:5

However, the Old Testament Prophets had prophesied of a special dispensation of salvation that would occur among the Gentiles:

Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles..... And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.—Mt. 12:18, 21

For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.—Acts 13:47

Although previously predicted, this was now something new to the Jewish people that God was actually bringing to pass among the Gentile nations:

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.—Acts 11:1, 18

The very thought of the Holy Spirit working primarily among the Gentiles, rather than the Jewish people was so repugnant to the Jewish mind that it took divine intervention for the Jewish congregation at Jerusalem to even preach the gospel to gentiles (Acts 8-11). God had to move Peter to go to preach to the gentile house of Cornelius by repeating a vision three times (Acts 10:1-7). When Peter arrived at the house of the gentiles among his first words were these:

And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.—Acts 10:28

However, even the thrice repeated vision was still insufficient for the Jewish believers to receive these Gentiles into equal membership into the church at Jerusalem, as God had to repeat the baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost upon the Gentiles thereby divinely accrediting them to be equal to Jewish believers:

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify

God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?—Acts 10:44-47

When Peter returned to the congregation at Jerusalem, he was called to give an account for receiving them into the membership of the congregation through baptism:

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.—Acts 11:1-3

Peter started from the beginning with the vision he received from God at Joppa and the baptism in the Spirit performed upon the Gentiles:

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?—Acts 11:15-17

This new dispensation of the Spirit among the Gentiles was in lieu of the fact that Israel had rejected their Messiah, and now God was going to temporarily turn His redemptive program from the nation of Israel unto the Gentile nations (which Jesus called “*the world*”—Jn. 16:8, as did Paul “*the world*”—Rom. 11:11-12) to call out a people unto himself, and then to save Israel at His return (Rom. 11:25-32; Rev. 1:7).

Hence, the Holy Spirit did not come to save anyone differently than before, but rather to save a different kind of people than before. Prior to Pentecost, salvation was limited *primarily* to one ethnic group of people—the Jews. After Pentecost, salvation was commissioned to all nations, classes and genders or to the whole world. When the Jewish New Testament writers spoke

of “*all men*” and “*the whole world*”,⁷⁴ they were referring to all mankind without distinction of race, class or gender, rather than all mankind without exception.

B. THE NEW COVENANT ADMINISTRATIVE HOUSE OF GOD

*Then verily the first covenant had **also** ordinances of divine service, **and** a worldly⁷⁵ sanctuary.*—Heb. 9:1

Take note of the words “*also...and*” found in Hebrews 9:1. Paul’s point is that the New Covenant administration “*also*” has ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper) “*and*” a “*worldly sanctuary*” or a designated “*house of God*” existing in this world (1 Tim. 3:15). In both covenants this institutional house of God was characterized by three specific attributes:

1. Qualified Ministry—1 Tim. 3:1-13
2. Qualified ordinances—(Mt. 26:12-30; 28:19)
3. Qualified building pattern as the House of God—(Mt. 16:16-18; 18:15-20; 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42).

Moreover, with each new house of God (Tabernacle, Temple, Congregation) there was a designated builder, a divine pattern for building and a day of divine accreditation or baptism in the Shekinah glory (Ex. 40:35; 2 Chron. 7:3; Acts 2:1-3) where the Holy Spirit took up residence within this *institutional* house of God.

There was also a progressive change in the nature of each new house of God from the previous house. The first (tabernacle) was made of *skins*. The second (temple) was made of *stone*. The third (congregation) was made of baptized believers in their own *skin* but assembled together as metaphorical living spiritual *stones* as a “*building*” or “*house*” of God (1 Pet .2:5; 1 Tim. 3:15) which offered up “*acceptable*” sacrifices.

Once this institutional “*house of God*” had been fully authenticated to include both Jew and Gentile membership (Acts 2; 10) there was no

⁷⁴ “**World**”—In John 15 the Spirit would be sent to convict the “world” of sin—the gentile world (Rom. 11:12) as he had been convicting Israel of sin.

⁷⁵ “**Worldly**” in the sense it existed on earth in contrast to its antitype in heaven after which it was patterned.

more repetition of that divine authentication. The institutional pattern was designed to reproduce after its own kind until Christ comes again (Mt. 28:19-20).

There has never been anything like this new house of God since creation. Its nature is new—a metaphorical body of water baptized believers. Its ordinances are new—water baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Its officers are new—Apostles, prophets, elders and deacons. Its commission is new—inclusive of all nations until the end of the world.

C. THE NEW PROPHETIC MISSION

*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into **all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you **things to come**. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.—Jn. 16:13-14*

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me **through their word**; - Jn. 17:20*

The New Testament Scriptures were written under the supervision of the Apostles who were also prophets. The vast majority of the New Testament Scriptures were written by apostles. The few remaining books were written by those under the ministry of an apostle. For example, Luke wrote under the ministry of Paul, while Mark wrote under the ministries of Peter and Paul.⁷⁶

The completing of the Biblical canon was predicted by Isaiah to be completed under the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ:

*Bind up the testimony, seal the law **among my disciples**. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me **are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts**, which dwelleth in mount Zion.—Isa. 8:16-18*

⁷⁶ Many letters of Paul were co-authored (“Paul and Timothy” - Philip. 1:1). Paul used other men to actually write the letters. He no doubt formulated many of his letters around the campfire with the input of his ministerial companions.

The apostolic office was established by Christ to be his authorized witness of his resurrection, but also, they were given special sign gifts (2 Cor. 12:12) to impart revelatory and sign gifts to the congregations by the laying on of their hands until they completed the Biblical Canon in writing the New Testament Scriptures. This is another aspect of the promise of the Father distinct from the baptism in the Spirit.

1. *Miracles, Signs and Wonders*—2 Cor. 12:12

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. - 2 Cor. 12:12

Something about “*signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*” is unique to the apostolic office, otherwise, Paul could not appeal to such things as “*the signs of an apostle*” if they were not in some sense unique to the apostolic office. The baptism in the Spirit was accompanied not merely by evangelistic power (Acts 1:8), but also miraculous power in visible signs and wonders that could be seen and heard:

*Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this, which **you now see and hear**.—Acts 2:33*

Significantly, the first six chapters of Acts restrict the power of miracles, signs and wonders to the hands of the apostles alone.

Acts 2:7 And *they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not **all these which speak Galileans?***⁷⁷

Acts 2:43 And *fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and **signs were done by the apostles.***

⁷⁷ *The apostles were all Galileans, but that cannot be said of the other 108 disciples which had been assembling with them in Acts 1. Jesus evangelized in Judea as well as in Galilee. The term “all” in Acts 2:1 refers to the 120 identified in Acts 1:15. It is the Galilean apostles which were speaking in tongues.*

*Ac 5:12 And by **the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought** among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.*

If all the congregational members were doing “signs and wonders” there would be no point in mentioning just the apostles. It is these same apostolic hands that performed miracles, signs and wonders in Acts 1-6 and whose hands were laid upon seven men in Acts 6:5 resulting in those seven being able to do miracles, signs and wonders.

*Ac 6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, **they laid their hands on them**. . . . And Stephen, full of faith and power, **did great wonders and miracles** among the people.*

It is only after the apostles laid hands on these seven men do we read for the first time in the book of Acts that anyone other than the apostles performed miracles, signs and wonders.

In Acts 8:14 when two apostles came to the baptized believers in Samaria, it was noted that the Holy Spirit had not yet come “upon” them. Notice they did not say **within** them but “upon” them. Only after the apostles laid their hands upon them did Simon the Sorcerer hear and see things that made him believe that such power came through the laying on of the apostolic hands, and thus he attempted to purchase that power.

*Ac 8:17 Then **laid they their hands on them**, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

*Ac 8:18 And when Simon **saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given**, he offered them money,*

What Simon saw was the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in miracles, signs and wonders received through apostolic laying on of hands. He coveted that *power* to bestow such gifts upon others, simply because it would make him a fortune to control such power.

In Acts 19:6 only after the apostle Paul laid his hands upon twelve newly rebaptized disciples do we find them able to speak in tongues and prophesying.

Acts 19:6 And *when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*

Again, Luke does not say the Spirit came **within** them but “*on*” them. In Romans 1:11 Paul writes the congregations at Rome telling them that he wishes to come to them in order to “*impart*” spiritual gifts to them.

Rom. 1:11 For *I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;*

In 2 Timothy 1:6 Paul writes Timothy to urge him to stir up the spiritual gift he received through the apostolic laying on of hands.

2 Tim. 1:6 *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.*

The uniqueness of “*miracles signs and wonders*” to the apostolic office (2 Cor. 12:12) was due to the fact that the apostles were also chosen to oversee and communicate the writing of a new body of Scriptures—the New Testament as predicted by Isaiah (Isa. 8:16-20; Heb. 2:4,12). Christ also confirmed this prophetic promise would be accomplished through and under the oversight of the apostles (Jn. 14:36; 15:26; 16:13-14; 17:17-20). The apostles realized they were providing a new body of Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:15-17; 1 Thes. 2:13; 1 Jn. 4:6; Rev. 1:2; 22:18-20).

The early congregations had no written final authority for New Testament congregational doctrine and practice during this period of production of the New Testament body of Scriptures. Until this new body of Scriptures was finished, it was through the laying on of hands by the apostles that the Holy Spirit imparted spiritual gifts to the early congregations in order to provide revelatory gifts for guidance, which were confirmed by miracles signs and wonders to demonstrate their revelation was from God.

The apostolic age (“*now*”—1 Cor. 13:12-13) was the prophetic period in which God would complete the Biblical canon of Scripture (Isa. 8:16-18), as the final authority for faith and practice (Isa. 8:20). Revelatory gifts were temporary (1 Cor. 13:8) and provided partial revelation (“*in part*”—v. 9) for the congregations until the New Testament canon was completed (v. 10).

⁷⁸Therefore, these apostolic signs and wonders were temporary, incomplete and therefore immature methods of revelation until the more mature revelation arrived in the completion of the New Testament Scriptures (v. 11). “*Then*” the New Testament canon would be completed, and these immature, partial revelations would cease. In the meantime (“*now*”) these “in part” gifts provided an immature means of revelation unto the congregations. Such imperfect revelatory gifts were characterized as looking into a glass (brass mirror) “*darkly*.” It is characterized as “*darkly*” for several reasons. First, it was “*darkly*” because not all Christians were privileged to possess revelatory gifts (1 Cor. 12:29-30) and so were dependent upon others who had such gifts. Second, such revelation methods are characterized as “*darkly*” because of the indirect method of revelation and problems of confirming the source of the revelations (1 Jn. 4:1). However, (“*then*”) when the Biblical canon is completed, each Christian would have the same confirmed source of authority (completed Scriptures) and so the Scriptures would be profitable for all equally. So, the analogy used by Paul to describe this finished completed better written revelation is the words “*face to face*” (1 Cor. 12:13). Paul has in mind the Lord’s Words to Israel:

And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?—Numb. 12:6-8

The methods of revelation (“*vision...dream*”) that characterized how God conveyed His will to prophets is described as “*dark speeches*” (thus

⁷⁸ “*Perfect*”—v. 10—This is a neuter gender and therefore cannot refer to Christ. The Greek term “*telios*” can be translated “*complete*” or “*mature*.” It is to be interpreted to refer to precisely what the former part of the text says is “*in part*.” Neither Christ nor the new coming world is “*in part*.” What is “*in part*” is described in verse 9 “*prophesy in part... know in part*” or the means of revelation. It is these incomplete methods or immature means of revelation (v. 11) that are stopped (v. 8) when the Biblical canon of Scripture is completed or matured.

“darkly” 1 Cor. 12:12) in contrast to the method of revelation used between God and Moses. The better method of revelation used between God and Moses is characterized as “mouth to mouth.” The phrase “mouth to mouth” is equivalent to the words “face to face” as the mouth is located on the front of the face. However, these words are not to be understood literally as God did not permit Moses to look directly “face to face” with God. Moses did see the “hinder parts” and thus the “similitude of the Lord” but he did not see God “face to face” as he was told that he would die if he attempted to look directly into God’s face. This phrase “mouth to mouth” is simply a metaphor to mean a more direct, apparent or clearer (“even apparently”) means of revelation. Moses provided the first written revelation to Israel from God (The Pentateuch). For example, the Ten Commandments were written out by the hand of God directly. Therefore, the phrases, “mouth to mouth” and “face to face” refer to the more direct and apparent written revelation of God.

The completion of the New Testament canon is a more direct and apparent revelation of the will of God to each and every believer than the former revelatory means (visions, dreams, revelatory gifts) which are characterized as “darkly.” The written Word replaces the oral prophecies and is superior in that it makes God’s revealed will available to all equally. The prophetic written word is characterized as the “perfect” or more complete divine revelation from God because it reveals God’s will more clearly for all.

*For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into **the perfect** law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. - James 2: 23-25*

People don’t like God’s word because when you look into it, it is like a glass where you behold your face exactly as it looks, “face to face” or more direct revelation. Written revelation is a more direct personal revelation that shows you exactly how God and others really see you. It reveals all your faults and all the dirt on your face. Indeed, nothing is hiding from it:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. - Heb. 4:12

At the very end of his ministry (67 A.D.), Paul anticipated the completion of the Biblical canon as the final authoritative revelation for faith and practice:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.-2 Tim. 3:16-17

Significantly, as the Biblical canon of Scriptures progressed toward their completion, the apostolic signs and wonders began to decrease. At what point the Scriptures were completed (1 Cor. 13:12-13),⁷⁹ at that same point such revelatory gifts with confirming signs and wonders ceased. For example, Paul had to leave Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). By the time Paul wrote the Second Epistle of Timothy all the New Testament Scriptures had been written with the exception the writings of the last living apostle (John).

While all such gifts could be found among all the congregations due to the laying on of apostolic hands by Paul and other apostles, the congregations at Rome had no such “*sign*” gifts listed in Romans 12. This interesting fact confirms several things:

- (a) Believers did not receive these apostolic gifts directly from the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit directly imparted apostolic signs, miracles and wonders, then Paul would not have to “*impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that ye may be established*” (Rom. 1:2) as such language proved they lacked those gifts that characterized the apostolic office.
- (b) They are imparted through the laying on of apostolic hands.
- (c) The congregations at Rome had **not** been constituted by any apostle. Peter had not been there because Paul claims that these gentile congregations

⁷⁹ *Love is inclusive of hope and faith (v. 7) right “now” (v. 13) and love never ceases (v. 8). Therefore, even “then” after the completion of the Biblical canon, love, faith and hope will continue.*

are under his apostolic authority—Rom. 15:15-20, and he never mentions Peter in his letter.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

Therefore, a proper understanding of the purpose, power and mission of the apostolic office, as the foundational office set in the new house of God is important in understanding the promise of the Spirit's coming on Pentecost. That promise consisted of more than the baptism of the new house of God, but also included the wider work of the Holy Spirit in producing a new body of Scriptures and authenticating its production through apostolic signs, miracles and wonders. Moreover, it included the empowerment of the gospel to a new type of people (Gentiles), as well as, a new covenant administration of the keys of the kingdom.

2. *Realization of their Prophetic Mission:*

Did the Apostles realize they were furnishing and completing the Scriptures? Did they understand that the Holy Spirit was using them to

write inspired Scriptures with the ultimate aim of binding it up and sealing it among themselves?

Peter certainly viewed the writings of Paul as inspired Scriptures as he explicitly compared Paul's writings to "other Scriptures."

*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also **other Scriptures** unto their own destruction - 2 Pet. 3:15-16*

Paul certainly understood he was writing inspired Scriptures as he told the congregation at Thessalonica:

*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye **received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.***
- 1 Thes. 2:13

In the conference at the Jerusalem church in which all the apostles participated, James said,

*For it seemed good **to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things** - Acts 15:28*

The Apostle John when speaking of all of the apostles who personally saw Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 1:1-3) said:

We are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. - 1 Jn. 4; 6

John as the last living apostle fully realized their predicted responsibility of finalizing a written testimony of Jesus Christ and sealing it:

Who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. - Rev. 1:2

He then finished the last book of the Scriptures and sealed it (Rev. 22:18-19) as predicted by Isaiah (Isa. 8:16).

Twenty two of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were written by apostles. Three of the five not written by apostles were written by those directly under the direction of apostles (Mark, Luke, and Acts). The remaining two were written by the Lord's brothers (James, Jude) one of which may be a replacement of a vacated apostolic office. All were written by "my disciples" (Isa. 8:16) or those alive during the Lord's own earthly ministry.

The whole New Testament canon was completed by the "apostles and prophets" and their finished work is the "foundation" (Eph. 2:20) upon which the institutional congregation is built and one more reason why it is "the pillar and the ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

When the apostles died, so did the ability to convey these special revelatory sign gifts and when the last baptized believers died upon whom apostolic hands were laid to convey such sign gifts, then such gifts ceased.⁸⁰

D. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

The redemptive work and person of Christ provided the legal provision for the salvation of all the elect in all ages. There are three periods prior to the Second Advent of Christ wherein all the elect live: (1) first two-thousand-year period = Creation to Abraham; (2) Second two-thousand-year period—Abraham to Christ; (3) Third two-thousand-year period—First Coming of Christ to our present day.

In the first two-thousand-year period there were no Jews, and so, all were Gentiles. In this first period, God's focus of salvation was primarily restricted to the lineage of Adam's son, Seth, and then after the flood through Noah's son, Shem. In the second-two-thousand period God's salvation focus was primarily restricted to the physical children of Abraham through Isaac.

⁸⁰ *Modern Pentecostalism fails the qualifications set forth for both apostles and prophets (Acts 1:21-22; Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22). They perform "lying" wonders or miracles that confirm false doctrines and practices (Mt. 24:24-25; 2 Thes. 2:9) and a gospel of justification by works (Gal. 1:8-9). See my book **Counterfeit Revival** for a more detailed exposure of the modern Pentecostal movement.*

In the final two-thousand-year period God focus of salvation is primarily restricted to the Gentile nations.

The redemptive person and work of Christ provided the legal basis for the salvation of God's elect in all three periods. The progressive gospel prior to the cross anticipated a coming redeemer as their object of faith while the fulfilled gospel now presents the same redeemer as the object of faith. They looked forward by faith as we look backward by faith.

The "old Covenant" was simply the most progressive revelation of the gospel in ceremonial form since Genesis 3:15. The "old covenant" revealed the holiness of God in its moral law and revealed the gospel in its Levitical ceremonial types. However, the "*old covenant*" was never designed by God to be the means to obtain eternal life by personal obedience to it. However, by personal obedience to it, it revealed how far short their obedience came from its real demands and thus revealed to them the knowledge of sin. In revealing them the knowledge of sin, it acted as a "*schoolmaster*" to lead them to faith in Christ during the "old covenant" period (Heb. 4:2; Gal. 3:21-26). This turning from sin to faith in Christ was the intent of the "*old covenant*" and therefore, it was a major development in an earthly declaration of the "*everlasting covenant*." However, with the coming of Christ and the completion of his redemptive work, all the ceremonial types under the Old Covenant as well as its moral demands were fulfilled in the life and death of Christ. God established the "new covenant" based upon the finished work of Christ with new ceremonial ordinances, a new house of God, a new ministry, and a new body of scriptures that provided the most complete declaration of the "*everlasting covenant*" until that covenant is fulfilled in a new heaven and new earth.

As with the "*old*" covenant public administration, the "*new*" covenant administration was established around seven aspects:

1. A chosen and qualified prophet—Moses/Christ (Deut. 18:18)
2. A chosen and qualified public ministry—Levitical priesthood/ apostles, prophets, etc.
3. Chosen and qualified symbolic ordinances
4. A qualified public house of God
5. A public immersion in the Shekinah glory—Ex. 40:35-37/Acts 2
6. A new body of scriptures—Old versus New Testament scriptures
7. A new public commission—Jewish versus the world

As with the Old Covenant, the New Covenant was established according to a divine pattern. Its' house, ordinances, ministry and mission are qualified by specific divine patterns.

In all three periods, personal individual salvation is administered directly under the “*everlasting covenant*” by God to His elect (Heb. 13:20). The “*old*” covenant expanded the altar sacrifice established in Genesis (Gen. 3-4) during the first two-thousand-year period and expanded the moral law under a Jewish civil government. Israel as a theocratic government provides a type of the divine government in the millennium. The design of this expansion of moral and ceremonial law under the civil government of Israel was to provide greater instructive revelation into the first coming of Christ and his fulfillment of these ceremonial types. When Christ came and fulfilled the “*old*” covenant types, the “*old*” covenant became obsolete as its types had been fulfilled. Not only so, but Israel as a nation rejected Jesus Christ, and thus, another public covenant administration was established with a new people (gentiles/world) with a new set of symbolic ordinances grounded in the First Coming but looking forward to be fulfilled by the Second Coming of Christ.

Again, the “*new*”⁸¹ covenant was not a new salvation or a new gospel, but a new earthly visible kingdom administration for a new covenant people—Gentiles.

Under this new covenant administration there is no longer an ethnic restriction to Israel but in keeping with the “apostles creed” this administration is “catholic” or universal with regard to ethnicity (neither Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female). It is also “catholic” with regard to its geographical locations as the former house of God was restricted to the city of Jerusalem, but the new house of God is found in its concrete forms in all cities and nations of the world. It is not “catholic” with regard to its constitutional nature as it is a local visible public house of worship.

All three two-thousand-year periods have but one gospel, one way, and one Savior under the direct divine administration of the “*everlasting covenant*.” This everlasting covenant is spelled out clearly in such passages as Ephesians 1:4-13 and Romans 8:27-39.

⁸¹ “**New**” in direct reference to the “*old*” or *first covenant* (Heb. 8:11-15). However, neither covenant proclaimed a “*new*” gospel (Heb. 4:2). The same gospel from Genesis 3:15 manifested in a progressive revelation until the coming of Jesus Christ, but it was the same gospel that was fulfilled in the birth, life and death of Christ in the gospels.

Both Old and New Covenant saints will ultimately be made “*perfect*” under the everlasting covenant in the new heaven and earth (Heb. 11:13-16, 39-40) at the yet future coming of Christ in the resurrection. So, the New Covenant does not preach any other Gospel than what was preached since the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8) or what was preached under the Old Covenant (Acts 10:43; 26:22-23; Heb. 4:2). The current public and earthly administration of the “*everlasting covenant*” is the “*new covenant*” but, as with all the former covenants, it too, is not the completion of the “*everlasting covenant*.” The everlasting covenant only finds completion in the direct earthly administration by the Triune God in a new sinless heaven and earth.

The “*everlasting covenant*” is the direct heavenly administration by God for the salvation of all of God’s elect in all generations. This heavenly “*everlasting covenant*” is between the Persons of the Triune Godhead. This heavenly covenant between these persons of the trinity is symbolized by the Old Testament fathers of Israel (Deut. 7:7-8) or the persons of Abraham (the Father) Isaac (the Son) and Jacob (The Spirit). Therefore, God often presented himself as “*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob*” (Ex. 3:16; 4:5; 1 Kgs. 18:36; 1 Chron. 29:18; 2 Chron. 30:6; Mt. 22:32; etc.) The thrice repetition of “God” in connection with a person that characterized one of the Three Persons of the Godhead. The Old Covenant with Israel was established on the basis of the covenant made with these fathers of Israel (Deut. 9:5) which symbolized the everlasting covenant between the Triune Persons of the Godhead. Thus, the Old Covenant was a visible earthly extension of the everlasting covenant with regard to its moral principles and gospel types incorporated in the Levitical ceremonial administrations.

CONCLUSION

The proper understanding of the baptism in the Spirit will not confuse individual with institutional indwelling, nor will it confuse soteriology with ecclesiology. The proper understanding of the old and new covenant will reveal that both are public administrations of the everlasting covenant and neither contradicts each other but the latter is the prophetic fulfillment of the former. The institution of the New Covenant administration is patterned after the institution of the Old Covenant administration (Heb.

9:1). It involves a specified builder of a new house of God (Moses, versus Christ). It is centered on the public “*house*” of worship built according to a divine pattern (Ex. 22-40 versus Mt. 16:18; 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42). It involves a qualified public ministry (Leviticus versus 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13). It involves qualified ordinances (ceremonial versus baptism and the Lord’s Supper). It involves a qualified mission (Mt. 23:15 versus Acts 1:8). It involves a public accreditation that all the previous elements have been accomplished according to the divine pattern (Ex. 40:33-34; 2 Chron. 7:1-3 versus Acts 2:1-3).

Also, it involves the provision of a new body of Scriptures (Old Testament Scripture versus New Testament Scripture). Finally, if the baptism in the Spirit is not seen and/or interpreted in this overall context of the institution of a new public covenant administration then it will not be properly understood. When it is properly understood in that context, then the New Testament congregation as “*the house of God*” takes on a much significant meaning as the “*pillar and ground of truth.*”

Finally, every natural born human being is either “in Adam” or “in Christ” as there is no third option. They are either “in the flesh” or “in the Spirit” as there is no third option. They are either lost or saved as there is no third option. They are either children of Satan or children of God as there is no third option. They are either in the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of His dear Son, as there is no third option. They are either “born of the flesh” or “born of the Spirit” as there is no third option. They are either spiritually separated from God or they are in spiritual union with God, as there is no third option. The state of spiritual separation from God is a state of separation from the life, light, love and holiness of God which is a state of spiritual death, darkness, enmity and depravity. Whereas, spiritual union with God is a spiritual state of life, light, love and holiness. Spiritual union with God is by definition being indwelt by the Spirit of God as this union occurs INSIDE your body between the human spirit and God’s Spirit. This union by the Spirit is the “seal” of the Spirit. The Pentecost view of individual indwelling demands that all true people of God between Genesis and Acts 2 are a third kind of humanity that are neither “in Adam” nor “in Christ”; neither “in the flesh” nor “in the Spirit”; neither “born of the flesh” nor “born of the Spirit; neither children of Satan nor children of God; neither in the kingdom and family of Satan nor the kingdom and family of God; neither lost nor saved.

Where there is no indwelling by the Spirit no other aspect of salvation is possible, because where there is no indwelling there is no union with God and where there is no union with God there is only death, darkness, depravity and enmity against God.⁸²

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Does the Old Testament distinguish indwelling of the institutional “*house of God*” from individuals?
2. Were individuals “filled” with the Spirit prior to Pentecost? If the human spirit resides in the physical body, how is it possible to be in “spiritual” union with God apart from the Holy Spirit indwelling the individual?
3. Is Romans 8:7-9 founded upon a Pentecost forward context or a context dealing with essential nature of man due to the fall?
4. Was the immersion in the Shekinah glory in the Old Testament an integral aspect of the overall institution of public covenant administration that included a qualified pattern inclusive of a builder, house of God, public ministry, public ordinances, public mission, body of Scripture?
5. If the baptism in the Spirit is inseparable from salvation then how is it possible for anyone to be saved prior to Pentecost without denying the most basic level of salvation—spiritual separation from God = spiritual death?
6. Who is the author of the Old and New Covenants? Is God the author of Confusion?
7. Why is it difficult to understand that individual salvation is the direct and effectual administration of the “*everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20) to the individuals in all ages (2 Sam. 23:5; Isa. 55:3; etc.), while the “*old*” and “*new*” covenants are public human administrations that simply declarative of the everlasting covenant?

⁸² *God is not the author of confusion, and yet the whole Pentecostal movement is characterized by nothing but confusion and open disobedience to apostolic commands in 1 Corinthians 14:26-38. Moreover, the Pentecostal movement fails to pass the Biblical tests for prophets. This whole movement was begun by and is permeated by proven false prophets.*

REQUIRED READING:

The Baptism in the Spirit by Mark W. Fenison, pp. 134-141



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 7

LESSON 1 - The Origin of the Church–Theories

LESSON 2–The Great Commission–Part 1

LESSON 3–The Great Commission–Part 2

PAGE TURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 7 LESSON 1

The Origin of the Congregation—Theories

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to expose the student to the various theories of the origin of the congregation and, (2) to demonstrate why the congregation was fully constituted prior to Pentecost in conformity with the Old Testament model where the constitution of the “*house of God*” always preceded the public authentication by immersing it in the Shekinah glory and, (3) to expose the student to the various theories among *local church only* advocates concerning the precise point of origin of the congregation and, (4) to examine and test these theories according to the Biblical data.

INTRODUCTION: There are several theories with regard to the precise origin of the congregation of Christ. All these theories can be divided into two major groups. The first group deals with theories concerning a universal invisible church. The second group deals with theories within the Landmark Baptist view of the congregation. The Universal invisible church theories are divided into two major divisions. There are those who believe the congregation is contemporary with all the elect from Genesis to the Second Coming of Christ or the Covenant view. There are those who believe the congregation is contemporary with all the elect from Pentecost or even as late as Acts 10 until the Pre-trib rapture coming of Christ or the Dispensational view. Among Landmark Baptists there are four different views. There are those those who believe the congregation began in John 1:35-55. There are those who believe the congregation began with the calling of the apostles in Mark 3. There are those who believe the congregation began in Matthew 28:19-20 with the giving of the Great Commission. There are those who believe it was a progressive beginning period from Mark 3 to the apostle Paul.

I. THE UNIVERSAL INVISIBLE CHURCH THEORIES

As previously mentioned there are two primary views of the origin of the congregation with regard to those who embrace the universal invisible church theory.

A. THE GENESIS ORIGIN VIEW:

The first theory is the non-dispensational church theory. This theory places the origin of the congregation parallel with the origin of salvation in the Bible—the book of Genesis. To the credit of this theory it recognizes salvation must be the same before as after Pentecost, because the condition of man, the problem of sin and death are no different before Pentecost than after Pentecost, and therefore salvation, which is the solution, must be the same before and after Pentecost.

Most Reformed theologians take this position (Charles Hodge, William G. T. Shedd, Louis Berkhof, etc.). The Presbyterian theologian Robert L. Dabney provides a classic example of this position:

Let us remember then, that the true Church of Christ is invisible, and consists of the whole body of the effectually called; that the same name is given, by accommodation, in the Scriptures, to a visible body, consisting of all those throughout the world, who make a credible profession of the true religion, together with their children. . . . That this visible Church is traced back at least to the family of Abraham, where it was organized by God's own authority on a gospel and ecclesiastical covenant: That this visible Church is substantially the same under both dispensations, retaining the same membership and nature, though with a suitable change of circumstances, which it had under the Old Dispensation. - Robert L. Dabney, **Lectures in Systematic Theology**. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980]—pp. 726-727

This view has several problems. First, like all universal church theories it confuses salvation with the congregation. Second, the congregations found in Matthew through Revelation are unique to the New Testament. Dabney

declares “*this visible Church is substantially the same under both dispensations.*” The relationship of the child of God to divine service is substantially the same under both dispensations and salvation always precedes service. Justification preceded circumcision (Rom. 4:9-11), just as salvation precedes congregational membership (Acts 2:41). However, these facts repudiate the idea that the “visible” congregation is nothing more than the manifestation of the “universal” church concept. For example, the “universal” concept denies salvation can be found outside of membership in it, while the congregation of the New Testament requires salvation **before** membership can be obtained in it. This is an irreconcilable contradiction found in the very nature of the “universal” concept of “one body” as their concept of the church is opposed to the very nature of New Testament congregations. Grant it, that under Moses there is a basic pattern found in the “*house of God*” that is repeated with the New Testament “*house of God*” (1 Tim. 3:15). Both have a designated builder (Moses, Christ). Both are built after a divine pattern consisting of qualified materials. Both have a qualified ministry. Both have qualified ordinances. Both have a qualified purpose or mission. Both have been publicly confirmed by immersion in the Shekinah glory. Both are established in relationship to a public administration of a covenant. However, with regard to the actual nature of the “*house of God*” under Moses versus under Christ there is substantial difference rather than sameness. The Old Testament “*house of God*” was made of an assembly of inanimate materials, whereas the New Testament “*house of God*” is made up of “*lively stones*” (1 Pet. 3:21). In addition, the government (majority rule), officers (apostles, bishops, and deacons), ordinances (baptism and Lord’s Supper) and mission of the New Testament congregation cannot be found outside of the New Testament Scriptures.

Third, Jesus Christ claims to be the builder of the congregation rather than God the Father or the Holy Spirit (Mt. 16:18).

Fourth, the very passages used by advocates of the universal invisible church theory in order to support their concept of the church deny that such a congregation existed prior to the visible ministry of Christ upon earth.

Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 12:28 are used by the big church advocates as proof texts for a universal invisible church. However, these texts deny the origin of the congregation prior to the apostles and New Testament prophets.

*And God hath set some in the church, **first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers**, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.—1 Cor. 12:28*

*And are built upon **the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; - Eph. 2:20*

Both are taken from Paul's epistles. 1 Corinthians 12:28 proves that the "*prophets*" in Ephesians 2:20 are not Old Testament prophets but New Testament prophets as proven in Ephesians 3:5

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; - Eph. 3:5

or else "*prophets*" would precede the mention of "*apostles*." However, the significant fact is that it is apostles who are "*set... in the church, first*" and the "*foundation*" of this church are composed of New Testament rather than Old Testament materials. No builder of a "*house*" or "*temple*" (both of which are metaphors to describe the congregation—1 Cor. 3:9) begins construction with the roof or the structural framework of the edifice. The origin of an edifice is always the "*foundation*." A building has no existence prior to its "*foundation*." Certainly, Paul is using "*foundation*" as a metaphor; however, the rules that govern the proper use of metaphors demand that the literal sense of "*foundation*" must be retained as the basis for making the representative comparison. The non-dispensational view of the origin of the congregation would have required "*saints*" or "*the elect*" as those "*set in... the church first*" rather than *apostles*, or at least "*prophets*" would have been set in first if gifted men are in view. If the metaphorical "*foundation*" of the church are those gifted men who provided the Scriptures as final authority, then the order in Ephesians 2:20 should have been "*prophets*" followed by "*apostles*."

Finally, the congregation is the metaphorical "*bride*" of Christ (Eph. 5:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:2) but there are "*guests*" in addition to the "*bride*" that are invited to the metaphorical marriage feast (Rev. 19:8-9) and there are "*saved*" that live on the outside of the metaphorical "*city*" bride or New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24). In addition, there are those God identifies as "*my people*" who

are in the Great Whore and her harlots (Rev. 18:4) rather than in the bride. The point is that the “*church of Christ*” does not contain all the elect in all ages.

The church of Christ has its origin with Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry and its “*foundation*” is composed of New Testament materials. At minimum, the apostles are the first *Gifted men* set in the congregation.

B. THE PENTECOST ORIGIN VIEW

The second view of the universal invisible church theory with regard to origin is the Pentecost origin view. Like the former view it not only confuses salvation with the congregation, but additionally, distorts the Biblical doctrine of salvation by demanding another kind of salvation prior to Pentecost than after Pentecost. This view demands that the baptism in the Spirit is an inseparable aspect of both salvation and membership in the body of Christ, as well as the characteristic origin of the congregation. This view limits the congregation between Pentecost and the Pre-trib rapture concept.

Some theologians that hold this Pentecost view are Lewis Sperry Chafer, John L. Walvoord, Dwight Pentecost, John MacArthur, Charles Ryrie, Wayne Grudem, etc. John L. Walvoord provides a classic example of this view:

*“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...An understanding of the basic doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is necessary, then, to comprehend not only **the origin of the church**, but also its working and sovereign arrangement.... 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, and glorification are actual and possible

because of the believer's position in Christ... By the act of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the present age began at Pentecost. By an act of the Holy Spirit, some future day the church will receive its last addition, and Christ will come to receive her to Himself."—John Walvoord, **The Holy Spirit**. (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI. 1974) pp. 139,141

However, there is no text anywhere in Scripture, especially in Acts 2 that claims the church originated on that day. Second, Christ claims He is the builder rather than the Holy Spirit (Mt. 16:18). Third, those saved on Pentecost are explicitly said to have been "*added unto them*" (Acts 2:41) and "*them*" is identified as "*the church*" (Acts 2:46). Fourth, this theory confuses *institutional* indwelling of the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) with *individual* indwelling of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). The New Testament makes a distinct difference between *institutional* indwelling versus *individual* indwelling by the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 1-4 Paul deals with the division in the membership of congregation at Corinth concerning the individuals that God used in founding and building up the congregation located at Corinth. Paul claimed to be the "*master builder*" (1 Cor. 3:10) or the one who actually constituted the congregation or laid the "*foundation*" (1 Cor. 3:11) for the congregation at Corinth. Other ministers followed Paul at Corinth (Apollonius—1 Cor. 3:3; 4:7) and added to the membership and growth of this congregation. As a corporate body, Paul describes the congregation at Corinth as "*God's husbandry... God's building... the temple of God*" (1 Cor. 3:9,16). He uses the plural pronoun "*ye*" with the singular nouns demonstrating that they were all members of the same institution rather than saying "*we*" were all members of some kind of mystical universal invisible body.

As a matter of direct contrast, in 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 Paul is speaking about the physical human body of each believer at Corinth. One of their members had committed fornication (1 Cor. 5:1-3) with his physical body and it was openly and publicly known. Paul says the actual physical human body of the believer is a "member of Christ" and of "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 3:15, 19). The only possible kind of membership where the actual physical body of the believer is made a "member of Christ" is the local visible physical congregational membership as that is an assembly of physical bodies in one location (Acts 2:10) as the metaphorical "body of Christ" (1 Cor.

12:27). Therefore, the corporate institutional “*body of Christ*” is “*the temple of the Holy Spirit*” and the physical body of each “individual member thereof” (1 Cor. 12:27) is the “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor. 6:19). However, the *individual* became the “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” at regeneration, but the individual’s physical body did not become a member of the congregational body at Corinth until **after** water baptism (1 Cor. 1:14-16; Acts 2:41). Hence, Paul distinguishes between the **individual physical body** as “*the temple of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor. 6:13-19) from the **institutional physical body** of Christ as “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 3:5-16). 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 not only properly defines the nature of “*the body of Christ*” as a physical assembly of human bodies, but totally repudiates both “universal” church theories.

Additionally, the Pentecost origin theory primarily rests upon two false assumptions. The first false assumption is that Christ had to provide the legal basis for atonement before God could apply the atonement to his elect. The second false assumption is that the congregation and salvation are coextensive and neither could exist until the baptism in the Spirit on Pentecost.

However, salvation, with all the fruits and power of the indwelling Spirit existed prior to Pentecost (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:1-2; 11; Rom. 8:8-9) under the “*blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20).

Indeed, the whole non-dispensational universal invisible church view repudiates the idea the cross must occur first in time before its benefits can be applied. If the occurrence of the cross was necessary before God could apply salvation, then the occurrence of the cross would be necessary before God could apply any redemptive aspect of salvation. However, we know that is not true. Abraham is clearly set forth as the “*father of all them that believe*” (Rom. 4:11, 16; Gal. 3:6-8) and was justified by faith, and “*in Christ*” (Gal. 3:17) long before the cross, as were all the elect prior to Pentecost (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:28-32). The disciples had their names already written in heaven long before the cross.

*Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names **are written in heaven.**—Lk. 10:20*

Eternal life was declared to be a present possession at the point of faith in the gospel long before the cross (Jn. 3:16; 3:36; 5:24). The new birth by

the Spirit was demanded long before the cross (Jn. 3:3-9). The fruit of the Spirit was manifested in all saints between Genesis and Malachi long before the cross (Gal. 5:19-21 with Heb. 11). All Old Testament saints were indwelt by the Spirit of Christ:

*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. 8:9*

*Searching what, or what manner of time **the Spirit of Christ which was in them** did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 1 Pet. 1:11*

*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*

*And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, **a man in whom the Spirit of God is?**—Gen. 41:38*

*But my servant Caleb, because he had **another spirit with him,** and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.—Numb. 14:24*

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, **a man in whom is the spirit,** and lay thine hand upon him; - Numb. 27:18*

*There is a man in thy kingdom, **in whom is the spirit of the holy gods.** . . . that **the spirit of the gods is in thee** - Dan. 5:11, 14
*Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by **thy spirit in thy prophets:** yet would they not give ear: therefore, gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.—Neh. 9:30**

Joshua and Caleb are proof that the Spirit of God did not merely indwell prophets in the Old Testament, but the common believer. The Holy Spirit indwelt Joshua prior to being called for special service. The Spirit came “upon” persons in both the Old and New Testaments to equip them for service:

*(For as yet he was fallen **upon** [Gr. *epi*] none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)—Acts 8:16 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came **on** [Gr. *epi*] them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.—Acts 19:6*

The application of **individual** redemption to the elect was not based upon the timing of the cross, but upon personal faith in the promise that Christ would come whether the saint lived before or after the timing of the cross (Rom. 3:24-26). Salvation was always administered **directly** by God to the **individual** according to “*the blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20). Salvation was never directly applied to **individuals** by human administrations of either the “*old*” or “*new*” covenants. Rather, the human administrations (the “*old*” and “*new*” covenants) were **institutional** covenants (Heb. 9:1) which were only **declarative** and never direct administrations of the “*blood of the everlasting covenant.*” Personal individual salvation is always by direct application to the elect by the Spirit of God.

*Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made **with me an everlasting covenant**, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.—2 Sam. 23:5*

*Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and **I will make an everlasting covenant with you**, even the sure mercies of David.—Isa. 55:3*

*And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will **give you the sure mercies of David.**—Acts 13:34*

*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, **through the blood of the everlasting covenant.**—Heb. 13:20*

Personal individual salvation has always been based upon and directly applied by God according to “*the blood of the everlasting covenant.*”

The institutional covenants were designed to declare or make known God’s direct application of salvation to the individual. The first covenant

administration made it known through ceremonial types. Israel was a type of the elect. Circumcision was a type of the new birth which was administered to an eight-day old infant as a type of a new born child of God. The ceremonial laws were types of the gospel (Heb. 10:1-4) yet unfulfilled. The moral law was applied to the civil affairs of Israel to declare the holiness of God. The “*house of God*” was central in declaring the salvational truths of “*the blood of the everlasting covenant.*”

The New Covenant administration declares “*the blood of the everlasting covenant*” more directly than the old covenant administration. The “*house of God*” under the New Covenant administration declares all the former types of the Old Covenant now fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The ceremonial ordinances under the New Covenant administration declare a finished work by Christ and the future expectation of the completed work of redemption in a glorified body and new heaven and earth.

The timing of the cross makes no difference with regard to the origin of the congregation as salvation precedes congregational membership (Matthew - Revelation). In a former chapter we dealt with the baptism in the Spirit and demonstrated it has nothing to do with **individual** salvation or **individual** indwelling of the Spirit. Furthermore, the promise of the Spirit had nothing to do with a new kind of salvation or salvation process, but with a new field of salvation—the Gentiles/world.

Indeed, the baptism in the Spirit is the public manifestation that an entire “new” covenant administration through human instrumentality has been established by God in keeping with a divine pattern.

The new covenant human administration has similarities with the old covenant human administration:

*Then verily the first covenant had **also** ordinances of divine service, **and** a worldly sanctuary.*—Heb. 9:1 (or “a sanctuary located in the world”).

The establishing of the new covenant administration can only be properly understood when contrasted with the founding of the old covenant administration:

1. Mount Sinai versus Mount Calvary
2. Qualified House of God
 - a. Qualified public builder vs. N.T. qualified public builder

- b. Qualified public Levitical ministry vs. N.T. qualified public ministry—1 Tim. 3
 - c. Qualified public Levitical ordinances vs. N.T. qualified public ordinances
 - d. Qualified public house of worship vs. N.T. qualified public house of worship
 - e. Qualified public commission (make Jews) vs. N.T. qualified public commission
 - f. Qualified public Scriptures vs. N.T. qualified public Scriptures
 - (1) God’s revelation through Moses and the Prophets
 - (2) Christ’s revelation through the apostles and prophets—Heb. 1:1
3. Keys or authorized administrative areas of administration (Mt. 23:1-2 with Mt. 18:17-18; 28:18-20).

This new public covenant administration simply replaces the former public covenant administration (Heb. 9:1), but it never replaces or changes personal individual salvation according to “*blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20).

However, the “new” is better than the “old” in two significant ways:

1. Literal better than type

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.—Heb. 10:1-4

2. Fulfillment better than predictive

Therefore, the new replaces the old as antitype replaces the type and fulfillment replaces the predictive:

*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and **took it out of the way**, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities*

and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.—Col. 2:14-17

So, once again, Pentecost has nothing to do with the origin of the congregation and neither does the timing of the cross. Neither human administrations of the “old” and “new” covenant have anything to do with the direct personal application of “*the blood of the everlasting covenant.*”

II. THE PROGRESSIVE ORIGIN THEORY

Buell Kazee wrote a very fine book on “**The Church and its Ordinances**” in which he advanced the theory that the congregation had a progressive origin. He theorized that the origin of the congregation began with the appointing of the twelve but was not fully completed until Paul’s further revelation concerning the congregation spoken of in Ephesians 3:1-5. Bro. Kazee presents his position as follows:

The church emerged gradually. In the mind and purpose of Christ, it had its beginning with the call of the twelve (Matthew 10, Luke 9), but, as previously indicated, they must walk with Him through the offer and rejection of the kingdom before He could bring the church into its mission. Nevertheless, along the way He gives instruction insofar as they are able to receive it which prepares them for their church mission when it is inaugurated (e.g., Matthew 16:18; 18:15-19; 28:18-20, etc.). Those who argue for full church organization and “church authority” at this point have little on which to base their contention. So far as the Scriptures are concerned, the church has no organization at this time as we think of it. It needed no authority, for Jesus was the authority, and the apostles were dependent on him for each day’s revelation. Their church consciousness in this period is very slight.

*It is easy for us, two thousand years after Pentecost, to think of the church before that date as having been fully organized and instructed as congregations are today, but a fair look at the revelation will show that their whole concept of the church and its mission at this point is very immature. In fact, long after Pentecost they are learning of the mission of the church (Acts 9, 10, 11), and it remains for Paul to make the final revelation about this great institution (Ephesians 3).—Buell Kazee, **The Church and its Ordinances**, [Lexington, KY: The Little Baptist Press, 1965] pp. 43–44—emphasis mine*

In this lesson, I will deal only with Bro. Kazee's view. I believe he is in error, and by pointing out the errors of his view, all other wrong viewpoints will be equally exposed. However, there are some major points of agreement with Bro. Kazee that should be noted.

For example, Bro. Kazee did not believe that Christ came to offer plan A and then had to change to plan B.

In our view, the word "postponed" has never been appropriate in this connection. It is as if God had purposed to set up the kingdom with Jesus as King, but that because the Jews rejected Him, God changed His plan and resorted to the church as His agency for this age. Certainly, God did not change His mind.—Ibid., p. 38

Also, He believed that Christ offered the kingdom to Israel via entrance into the spiritual kingdom in connection with repentance and faith in Christ as their promised Messiah. Brother Kazee reasoned that God knew Israel would no more receive Christ than Pharaoh would receive Moses and let Israel leave Egypt. Therefore, just as God purposed to demonstrate his power through hardening of Pharaoh (Rom. 9:15–18), God hardened Israel to the gospel:

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore, they could not believe, because that Esaias said again. He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they

should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.—Jn. 12:37-41

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.—Rom. 11:7-9

However, he hardened them for the purpose to bring redeeming grace unto the Gentiles:

I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.—Rom. 11:10-11

Just as God had come to deliver Israel from Egypt, Christ had come in fulfillment as the sacrificial lamb and to establish a new covenant public administration with a new commission unto the Gentiles. This is all fine and good up to this point.

However, I believe that Brother Kazeo confuses what constitutes the essence of being an *ekklesia* with its administrative growth and progressive knowledge. For example, deacons are added only because they became necessary (Acts 6) due to the size and need of the congregation not because they are essential to be a New Testament church. The giving of a worldwide commission had to be given to the church first, before it could be obeyed by the congregation. Obedience to the commission in its widest extent (gentiles) did not make it a New Testament congregation nor did temporary disobedience deny it was a New Testament congregation.

The term *ekklesia* means “congregation” or “assembly” and the criteria inherent in the term “assembly” is two or more qualified persons. The qualifications of being a New Testament assembly of Christ are; (1) Professed believers in Christ; (2) scriptural baptism—the baptism of John; (3) assembled

under the authority of Christ ⁸³ in order to observe all things He commanded (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:41).

1. The Holy Spirit calls the assembly in Acts 2 “*the church*” (Acts 2:46) in spite of the fact they did not yet have deacons (Acts 6) or were yet willing to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-17). They were called “*the church*” before Paul was ever saved (Acts 9). The origin of “*the church*” cannot be progressive in nature and yet be called “*the church*.”
2. There were plural “*congregations*” already in existence prior to Paul’s conversion (Gal. 1:22; Acts 9:30). Already constituted congregations needed to grow in knowledge and grace. Paul prayed for growth and knowledge of already constituted congregations (Eph. 1:16-22):

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

⁸³ Christ’s authority to constitute congregations has been established through the instrumental “*ye*” of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20), or horizontal authority of a plural “*ye*” existing as a New Testament assembly.

3. Acts 1:21-22 declares that such an assembly had been regularly and habitually congregating with Christ from the baptism of John unto his resurrection. Significantly, that period of assembling included more disciples than the twelve apostles, or else there would have been no other disciples that could meet the qualifications set forth in Acts 1:21-22. Indeed, the necessity of additional disciples regularly assembly all during this time was the actual criteria for filling the vacant office of Judas. Remember, the twelve were chosen out of the many other disciples assembling regularly with Christ.

*And when it was day, he called unto him **his disciples**: and **of them** he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; - Lk. 6:1*

*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 1:21-22*

4. This theory attributes the origin of the congregation not merely to Christ, but in addition to the Holy Spirit, whereas, Jesus claims he is the builder (Mt. 16:18) of the institutional congregation.
5. The apostles are said to be the first officers “*set in the church*” (1 Cor. 12:28). It is not possible to place into something that does not already exist! For example, try putting money into a bank account that does not already exist? Those saved on Pentecost were “*added to*” the congregation (Acts 2:41). You cannot add anything to something that does not exist. It must first exist in order to be “*added to*.” The regular assembly that habitually gathered with Christ “*from the baptism of John*” until his resurrection, was still assembling with Christ after the resurrection (Acts 1:3) and after the ascension (Acts 1:13-26). It is this same body that is “*gathered together in one place*” on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1) which is called “*the church*” (Acts 2:46).

During the time of Christ, the Sadducees were in power. They computed Pentecost from the first regular Sabbath to the first day after the seventh regular Sabbath. Christ rose from the grave on the day after the first regular Sabbath (Sunday). Luke says that he assembled with his disciples 40 days

until his ascension. He regularly assembled with them on the first day of the week. Therefore, he had assembled regularly with them on the first Sunday after the first, second, third, fourth and fifth regular Sabbaths in that period of 50 days. The assembly in Acts 1:13-26 would have occurred on the Sunday after the sixth regular Sabbath, leaving only Pentecost Sunday after the seventh regular Sabbath. Hence, the same assembly that regularly met with Christ “*from the baptism of John*” until his resurrection continued to regularly assemble with Christ five out of the seven first days of the week between his resurrection and Pentecost Sunday and then it assembled together on the Sunday (sixth Sunday—Acts 1) prior to Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2:41) when 3000 were “*added unto*” that church.

Also, notice in Acts 1:21-22 the words “*went in and out from among them*” as one would go in and out of a building, thus conveying an organized assembly. The very same language is used to describe Paul’s relationship with the congregation at Jerusalem when he first came to them:

*And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed **to join himself** to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And **he was with them coming in and going out** at Jerusalem.—Acts 9:26-28⁸⁴*

Saul wanted to join the congregation at Jerusalem but they refused to accept him until he was recommended by Barnabas. After this recommendation “*he was with them*” or received into their fellowship. Saul was “*coming in and going out*” of the assembly which was located “*at*” (Gr. *en* “in”) Jerusalem.” The assembly was located “in” Jerusalem and it is this assembly he was “*coming in and going out*” just as Jesus “*went in and out from among*” his travelling *ekklesia*.

6. This theory violates the Old Testament pattern whereby the “*house of God*” had to be finished prior to its immersion in the Shekinah glory.

⁸⁴ In a later lesson it will be shown that the term “disciple” in the book of Acts is defined by Matthew 28:19-20 as a baptized believer in church membership (Acts 2:41).

According to this theory the *ekklesia* of Christ was not finished but still in the progress of being finished after Pentecost.

Therefore, I reject bro. Kaze'e's theory of a progressive founding between the appointment of the apostles and Ephesians chapter 3.

III. POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

There are two general objections to the origin of the congregation as described in Acts 1:21-22 or in John 1:35-55 where Christ first officially called baptized believers to assemble with him. The first objection is founded upon the future tense in Matthew 16:18 "*I shall build.*" The second possible objection is that the apostles are said to be the "*first*" to be set in the congregation in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and that they are said to be "*the foundation*" upon which the congregation is built in Ephesians 2:20.

A. "*I SHALL BUILD*"—MT. 16:18.

This is the future tense both in the English translation and the underlying Greek text. The objection is why use the future tense if the church already exists? However, this same objection is equally a problem to Bro. Kaze'e's position that the origin, although progressive in nature had its beginning point with the selection and ordination of the apostles long before Matthew 16:18 (Mk. 3:12-15; Lk. 6:12-15). How does Bro. Kaze'e handle this apparent difficulty? As far as I can find out, Bro. Kaze'e simply ignored Matthew 16:18.

There are two approaches to this future tense that don't conflict with the church's existence prior to Matthew 16:18. The first approach is to deal with it as a declaration rather than a point in time. In other words "I shall build" is a declaration of determination rather than a reference to a specific point in time. It is not the Father or the Holy Spirit that will build the church, but rather "*I will.*" It is not time that is in view but a deliberative objective that is in view with regard to a specific kind ("*my*" church) and specific foundation ("*upon this rock*").

The second approach is found in another possible translation. Instead of "I will build" it can be translated "I will build up" my church. For example, we know the same Greek word translated "*build*" in Matthew 16:18 is translated

“*built up*” in 1 Peter 2:5 and “*edify*” in other places. It is possible to translate it “*I shall build up*” my ekklesia in Matthew 16:18. Thus, it merely states the objective goal for the church as an institution regardless of what time it was actually constituted. Christ is still building up his church as an institution in Revelation 2-3. The church can be fully built with regard to its origin but still being edified or built up. Even today after congregations have been fully constituted they continue to be built up or edified.

The overall context confirms this interpretation to be true. Acts 1:21-22 declares his assembly had been gathering consistently from the time of John’s baptism. Matthew 18:15-20 declares its present existence during his ministry. Hebrews 2:12 best describes it as already in existence when the Lord’s Supper was instituted. Jesus asserted immediately after instituting the Lord’s Supper that he had “*finished the work*” the Father gave him and building His church was without doubt part of that work.

B. “*SET FIRST*” 1 CORINTHIANS 12:28:

I have already answered the objection based upon 1 Cor. 12:28. You cannot “*set*” anything into something until that something first exists. You cannot set money in a checking account that does not first exist. Hence, its origin must predate the apostles being ordained and “*set*” in the church. This is strongly implied by Acts 1:21-22 because no one else could be qualified to fill the office of Judas, unless there had been other disciples in addition to the twelve assembling “*from the baptism of John.*” Indeed, Luke explicitly states that the twelve were chosen out from among a larger group of disciples (Lk. 6:13). Hence, they were the first ordained men set in the ekklesia but not the first members.

C. “*THE FOUNDATION*”–EPHESIANS 2:20

Ephesians 2:20 restricts the “*foundation*” of the congregation to New Testament materials. There are three aspects of this “*foundation.*” Christ is the chief cornerstone, followed by the apostles and then by prophets. This precise order of apostles preceding prophets is confirmed again by Paul explicitly in 1 Corinthians 12:28.

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then

*gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.—1
Cor. 12:28*

The cornerstone provided the structural focus for all other aspects of the building to align with. In other words, the apostles and prophets are in alignment with Christ.

Some argue that this proves that the congregation could not have originated prior to the calling and appointing of the twelve apostles. However, this text is only referring to the first members gifted as leaders over that congregation, not the first members, as the apostles were chosen “out of” the other members (Lk. 6:13). Second, it represents the doctrinal foundation provided by Christ from the very beginning of his ministry, and thus, prior to the apostles and prophets providing it in written form.

IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT CONGREGATION EXISTS PRIOR TO ACTS 2

Although the congregation does not exist prior to the personal ministry of Christ, there is overwhelming evidence that it did exist prior to Acts chapter two.

Dr. Stanley E. Anderson was on the faculty of the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary of Chicago from 1951 to 1963. He then served as a Professor at Judson College from 1963 to 1970. In the preface of Dr. Stanley E. Anderson’s book, **The First Church** we find the following:

“A church is a group of baptized believers organized to worship and obey the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Such a church is found in the Four Gospels. (No verse says it began at Pentecost.) Since Christ is the builder and Head of His church, and since the Gospels record His work, one would expect to find much about the Church before Acts 2:2. Items:

1. *Christian believers before Pentecost had the gospel (Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:1; Matt. 9:35; 11:5; 24:14; 26:13; Mark 1:14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 16:9, 15; Luke 4:18; 9:6; 20:1; etc.).*

2. *They were converted (Matt. 3:5-8; 18:3; Luke 19:1-10).*
3. *They were baptized after conversion (Matt. 3:6; Acts 1:22).*
4. *They had Christ as their Head (Matt. 23:8; Mark 1:1; John 1:29).*
5. *They were instructed in church truths (Matt. 18:15-20).*
6. *They were called to obey Christ (Matt. 4:18-20).*
7. *They were ordained (Matt. 10:1-5; John 15:16).*
8. *They were commissioned (Matt. 28:18-20).*
9. *They were organized enough for their needs (Jon 13:29).*
10. *They had a missionary program (Matt. 10:1-11:1).*
11. *They had a teaching program (Matt. 4:23; 10:1-42).*
12. *They had a healing program (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1; 10:9).*
13. *They were promised a permanent church (Matt. 16:18).*
14. *They had church discipline (Matt. 18:15-17).*
15. *They had divine authority (Matt. 18:18; 28:18-20).*
16. *They had essentials of church life (Matt. 4:19; 18:20).*
17. *They had true church democracy (Matt. 23:8-12).*
18. *They had qualified pastors (John 15:16; 21:15-17).*
19. *They had the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-28).*
20. *They had the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; John 20:22).*
21. *They had divine power to do Christ's work (Like 9:1).*
22. *They sang "in the midst of the church" (Matt. 26:30; Heb. 2:12).*
23. *They had a prayer meeting (Acts 1:14).*
24. *They had business meetings (Acts 1:15-26).*
25. *They had a membership roll (Matt. 10:2-4; Acts 1:13-15).*
26. *They were united and "added unto" (Acts 2:1, 41).*
27. *Christ was their corner stone (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20).—S.E. Anderson, **The First Church.** [Little Rock, AK; The Challenge Press, 1972] pp. 8-9*

The Congregation was fully constituted in John 1:35-70

The very word *ekklesia* demands two or more persons are gathered together as one person does not constitute a congregation or an assembly. In John 1:35-70 is the record of two or more baptized believers assembling with Christ, and who continued to assemble with Christ on a habitual basis (Acts 1:21-22). Christ is their pastor-teacher who trained them to observe "*all things whatsoever I have commanded*" and then commissioned

this congregation to go forth and do likewise after his departure (Mt. 28:19-20).

Acts 1:21-22 does not only demonstrate an organized congregational business meeting occurred prior to Pentecost but the choosing and installing of an empty congregational office. Moreover, Peter uses the word “*beginning*” to define the point when the congregation of Christ actually first began to assemble with Christ.

*Which 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, to that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.**—Acts 1:21-22*

A huge exegetical mistake is to interpret the gospel narratives where the mention of “*disciples*” is found and assume that only the twelve are present. The above qualification is impossible without the term “*disciples*” including more than the apostles throughout the gospel accounts.

The Lord’s Supper is to be observed “*as oft*” as they did, and its observance occurred by that assembly prior to Pentecost.

After Pentecost, Peter dates the gospel ministry of the congregation to have “*began*” after the baptism John preached:

*That word, I say, you know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and **began** from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; - Acts 10:37 John 1:35-50 “*began from Galilee, after*” the baptism which John preached. John 1:35-50 is the constitution point of the congregation that Jesus built.*

CONCLUSION: The *ekklesia* of Christ was *finished* prior to Pentecost. All the essentials for constitution were *finished* prior to Pentecost. The baptism in the Spirit on Pentecost after the constitution of the new “*house of God*” follows the pattern in the Old Testament where the “*house of God*” was finished prior to being immersed in the Shekinah glory. I reject the progressive theory of congregational origin that gives rise to the hyper- dispensational view that the church really had not been completely founded until approximately

sometime after Acts 10 if not after Acts 20. I believe Acts 1:21-22 provides the proper time frame for the origin of the New Testament congregational institution which has Christ first assembling baptized believers around him in a characteristic fashion in John 1:35-57 right up till Pentecost.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. List four reasons why the non-dispensational Genesis theory of the origin of the Congregation is wrong.
2. List four reasons why the dispensational theory of the origin of the congregation is wrong.
3. Do the Scriptures before Pentecost distinguish between the regenerating, filling, indwelling, and equipping ministries of the Spirit?
4. How many different gospels of salvation, Saviors, ways of salvation are there in Scripture and can anyone at any time find salvation outside of Christ?
5. Does the Biblical pattern for building "*the house of God*" require it is first finished before it is publicly immersed in the Shekinah glory?
6. List the 27 reasons given by Dr. Stanley that the congregation originated prior to Pentecost.
7. What are the four major views of church origin among local congregational advocates?
8. What is the beginning point and ending point for the progressive view of congregational origin?
9. What are the six arguments presented in this lesson that opposes the progressive view?
10. How does the congregational salvationist view confuse the Old Testament typology under the Old Covenant?

WEEK 7 LESSON 2

The Great Commission Congregation—Part 1

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to introduce the student to the Great Commission essentials and (2) to obtain a basic understanding of Matthew 28:19-20 as a pattern for reproducing congregations of like faith and order.

INTRODUCTION: There is no Scripture more important than this Scripture in regard to the debate between universal invisible church advocates and the local congregational position. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to the Great Commission. Ultimately, this introduction will be expanded in a future lesson that will demonstrate by careful exegesis that there are specific credentials that characterize the proper administrator of this commission. These credentials ultimately eliminate all would be administrators except the New Testament congregation that Jesus built. Indeed, a very rudimentary understanding of the language of the Great Commission is all that is necessary to be able to define and defend the nature and perpetuity of the institutional congregation of Christ.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. - Mt. 28:18-20

This lesson along with the next lesson that follows will explore the Great Commission under the following subheadings:

1. The Grammatical Structure
2. Why is it called the “Great” Commission?
3. The Authorized Administrator
4. The Qualified Administrator
5. The Orthodox Administrator
6. The Age-long Administrator
7. The Organically Reproduced Administrator

As you read each of these sections, remember that each build upon the other. So, don’t skip a section, but try to see the relationship between each section.

I. THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE

It was about 20 years ago I was traveling between Puyallup and Eatonville Washington while listening to the radio program entitled “The Bible Answer Man” then hosted by Dr. Walter Martin. One of the radio listeners had called in and asked about the grammatical structure of Matthew 28:19-20 with regard to the primary verb (“*teach*” literally “make disciples”) and the three participles translated “*go...baptizing...teaching.*” Dr. Martin responded that they were but dangling participles. Of course, a dangling participle is a participle that has no logical or grammatical connection with the primary verb. However, is Dr. Martin correct?

Dr. Martin is saying that making disciples has no grammatical or logical connection with going to them with the gospel or baptizing or teaching them. However, is not this precise logical order spelled out in Acts 2:41-42 and is not this precise order consistently practiced throughout the book of Acts? If Christ is presenting the logical order, then evangelism must precede baptism and instruction.

In addition, let us carefully consider the grammatical relationship between the primary verb translated “*teach*” which more literally means “*make disciples*” and its connection with these three participles. I believe the primary verb instructs them WHAT must be done, while the participles instruct them HOW it must be done. Thus, the participles function as adverbial modifiers of the primary verb. What does that mean?

The primary verb is a Greek Aorist tense imperative second person plural. The first participle is Aorist tense while the last two participles are

present tense. In relationship to the primary verb translated “*teach*” but more literally means “make disciples” the aorist participle would denote a completed action prior to the action of the primary verb, while the two present tense participles denote contemporary or identical action with the primary verb. What does that mean? It means that evangelization of “*them*”⁸⁵ must be a completed action prior to baptizing or teaching “*them*” or as old Baptists would say “*blood before the water.*” As previously stated this grammatical relationship is verified throughout the book of Acts where evangelization occurs prior to either baptism or instruction in how to observe what Christ commanded. Therefore, this grammatical structure would deny that evangelism is inclusive of baptism as taught by sacramentalists. These are not dangling participles. They are provided in a logical and chronological order as demonstrated throughout the book of Acts. These participles do have a grammatical connection with the primary verb as that grammatical construction informs them precisely what is the prerequisite action (having already gone and evangelized—Mk. 16:15), and what are the inclusive actions in making disciples (baptizing and teaching those have been evangelized).

II. WHY IS IT CALLED THE “GREAT” COMMISSION?

Although the Scriptures never call this **the Great Commission**, yet nearly all Christendom does. Why? All professed Christians recognize this is the final command given to the congregation before Christ ascended into heaven, and the final words by Christ would never be trivial, but important and **great**. This commission is **great** in many ways: it is **great** in its geographical extent— “all nations.” It is great in its temporal extent— “*unto the end of the world.*” It is also **great** in its ambition— “*teach all nations*” (literally translated it reads “**make disciples** of all nations”). No wonder all Christendom calls it “The Great Commission.”

However, it is **great** in another sense that many fail to see. It is **great** in furnishing the very characteristics that are essential for a true congregation to

⁸⁵ “*them*” is consequential or the product of the completed action having evangelized the nations prior to the administration of baptism, thus denying sacramentalism which makes baptism inclusive of evangelization by proxy faith.

exist. No congregation can be found in the New Testament that exists without the gospel, without baptism, or without observing what Christ commanded. No true congregation can come into existence without these things. Where there is no scriptural gospel there is no true congregation. Where there is no scriptural baptism there is no true congregation. Where there is no scriptural observation of the commandments of Christ there can be no true congregation of Christ. These are the essentials of the Great Commission, and these are essential for the existence of all true congregations of Christ. If a congregation does not have these **Great** Commission characteristics, it is clearly not a true congregation of Christ, but an apostate one.

Perhaps you are thinking that all congregations have these characteristics. In this chapter, the focus of our study will be to discover the exact nature of these Great Commission characteristics. You may be in for quite a surprise once you take a more careful look at this commission. Simple questions will be asked, and simple answers will be sought from the text, and from the immediate and overall context. As this study develops, each segment will contribute essential characteristics that will distinguish true congregations of Christ from false congregations.

By a process of elimination, all congregations and denominations failing to measure up to these Great Commission credentials will be regarded as false congregations. Hence, the ultimate question will be, “*Is your congregation a Great Commission congregation?*” Bear in mind that the Great Commission involves far more than merely preaching the gospel to “*all nations*.” It is true that any true child of God can and ought to share the gospel with others, but this commission goes far beyond sharing the gospel.

III. DELEGATED AUTHORITY

“All authority is given to me in heaven and earth, go ye therefore....”

This text is introduced by the claim that Christ has “*all authority* (Gr. *exousia*) in heaven and in earth. All others on earth have only delegated authority while only Christ has “*all*” authority. Governments have been established by God and are given authority to exercise the sword by God but they do not have “*all authority*” but are “*ministers of God*” within the

framework of the authority delegated unto them by God and that is within the framework of “good” and not “evil”

*For he is **the minister of God to you for good**. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that does evil. - Rom. 13:4*

Hence, Governments have only limited delegated authority. Governments have no authority from God to do evil or to persecute Christians. Many ancient Baptists refused to serve in the military because the military was the secular arm of a state church union used to kill and persecute their fellow brethren.

Likewise, husbands have been given authority in the home, but that authority is delegated authority and therefore limited within the boundaries of “in the Lord.”

*Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, **as it is fit in the Lord**.—Col. 3:18*

Christ has given parents authority over their children, but again it is not “all authority” but it is delegated authority within the same specified boundary given to governments and husbands:

*Children, obey your parents **in the Lord**: for this is right.— Eph.6:1*

In Matthew 28:18-20 there is authority being delegated to make disciples within a limited boundary of “*whatsoever I have commanded.*”

IV. THE AUTHORIZED ADMINISTRATOR

“Ye” or “Them”?

“Go ye...baptizing them...” - Mt. 28:19

There are four very simple questions that must be considered to begin our journey of discovery into this amazing commission. These four basic questions are:

1. Who does Christ authorize to administer this commission?
2. What is Christ authorizing?
3. Unto whom is this commission to be administered?
4. Why are these questions and answers important?

Who does Christ authorize? The text only provides two options. The first option is defined by the pronoun “*ye*” while the second option is identified by the pronoun “*them*.” It should be obvious it is “*ye*” administering these actions, whereas, those receiving the actions are “*them*.” Thus, it is “*ye*” who are being commissioned by Christ. Christ was not addressing “*them*” nor did He authorize “*them*” to administer any part of this commission. This is important because this denies that unbaptized, untaught Christians (“*them*”) are authorized to administer this commission.

What is Christ authorizing “*ye*” to do? The primary verb or action word in verse 19 is “*teach*.” More literally the Greek term translated “*teach*” means “*make disciples*.” Hence the command is to “*make disciples of all nations*.” How are they instructed to do this? There are three participles that define what actions they are to take in order to accomplish this task. Those participles are represented by the terms (1) “*go*,” (2) “*baptizing*” and (3) “*teaching*.” In the parallel account found in Mark 16:15 we are told that the command “*go*” has reference to preaching the gospel to all nations. So, evangelization is but one aspect of three specific actions that are commanded. Although, an evangelized person can share his testimony with others, he cannot share what he has not experienced. For example, you cannot teach what you have not been taught nor are the unbaptized authorized to baptize themselves or others.

Unto whom are they to administer these things? The text clearly says they are to make disciples of “*all nations*.” Only those who actually receive the gospel from among the nations are defined in the context as “*them*” (i.e. “*baptizing them...teaching them...*”). The contextual identity of “*them*” is clear. They are all those who are converted to the gospel but have not yet been baptized or taught. The “*ye*” are equally identified as those who “*have*” already been through this threefold process (v. 20). Therefore, Christ never authorized the unconverted or the unbaptized and/or the untaught to administer this commission.⁸⁶

Finally, why are these questions and answers significant? They are important for the following reasons:

⁸⁶ This rule out the vast majority of professing Christendom.

First, many believe that just anyone can administer this commission. However, it is clear that those identified as “*them*” have not been authorized by Christ to administer this commission. Neither are they authorized to administer it to themselves. Therefore, Christ does not authorize any reader of the Scriptures to administer these things to themselves or to others. Thus, the idea that any true believer reading the Great Commission is authorized to administer it is proven false as that would be equivalent to denying any distinction between “*ye*” and “*them*” in the Commission.

Secondly, it proves there is an explicitly authorized administrator identified as “*ye*” that is distinct and separate from those identified as “*them*.” Thirdly, it proves that Christ Himself does not administer these things directly to the unconverted, unbaptized or untaught, nor do they have authority to administer these things to themselves or others. Instead, it proves that He administers these things through (horizontal authority) authorized administrators identified as “*ye*” who are distinct from those that stand in need of these things.⁸⁷

But who are those identified as “*ye*”? In this section we have learned that they are not of that crowd identified as the unconverted “*nations*” or the converted but yet unbaptized and untaught “*them*.” In each section that follows further identifying characteristics of “*ye*” will be provided. By the time you have reached the last section you will have no doubt about the identity of this Great Commission “*ye*.” This section denies that “*ye*” are the unsaved, or the unbaptized and/or untaught believers. The contextual “*ye*” are those who “*have*” already been through this discipleship process (evangelization, baptism, instructed in all things).

V. THE QUALIFIED ADMINISTRATOR—“YE”

Go ye . . . whatsoever I have commanded you - v. 20

We have established “*ye*” to be the authorized administrator of this commission — not the lost or the unbaptized and/or untaught “*them*.”

⁸⁷ *The Great Commission “ye” forever denies the idea of “direct” or “vertical” authority in making disciples. The idea of “direct” authority is that Christ directly gives authority to “them” to administer some aspect of this commission.*

Therefore, there is no Biblical authority from Christ for anyone to self-administer this commission.

Let's probe this text further. What kind of "ye" are being commissioned? How do we identify this "ye"? It should be obvious that they are different in kind from those designated "them." Those designated "them" are those who received the gospel but are yet either: 1) unbaptized or 2) uninstructed/unobserving baptized believers. By contrast those identified as "ye" are those who can "make disciples" out of "them" by first going to "them" with the gospel, then baptizing "them" and teaching "them." The difference between "ye" and "them" is (1) previous authority, (2) experience and (3) knowledge in all three areas of discipline. Those identified as "them" are in need of these things, while those commissioned have been previously through these things and therefore know all these things by experience. Take note that those who fall under the category of "them" (unbaptized and baptized believers, untaught believers) are not authorized to administer this commission. Those identified as "ye" stand between Christ and the administration of these things to "them" and thus "ye" represents a qualified horizontal administrator of these things with regard to "them."⁸⁸

"Come let us reason together." Would it make any sense for Christ to commission the unconverted, the unbaptized or the uninstructed to make disciples? How could they convert, baptize and teach others if they themselves were unconverted, unbaptized, and untaught? Would not that amount to the Lord commissioning the blind to lead the blind and the ignorant to teach the ignorant? Would not that amount to commissioning "them" to disciple themselves?

It is not only illogical, but the little word "have" in verse 20 necessarily demands such is not the case: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I **have** commanded you." The word "have" demands that the authorized "ye", are only those who **have** already gone through this threefold process and already **have** been made "disciples" of Christ, before being authorized to administer it to others. Hence, the prerequisite for anyone to "make disciples" is to have first been through the process of being disciplined. This is not only

⁸⁸ This is an absolute fatal blow to neo-Landmarkism or those who advocate that the only prerequisite for church constitution, and thus authority to administer this commission is mere baptism.

unequivocally asserted by the past tense “*have*”, but there is abundant biblical evidence to demonstrate they had already been made disciples previous to this commission. For example, all those being addressed as “*ye*” had not only been previously called “*disciples*” (e.g. Mt. 28:7 “*tell his disciples*”), but already were baptized believers that regularly assembled under the teaching ministry of Christ for nearly three and a half years. The very first chapter of Acts summarizes this evidence:

*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 1:21-22 - emphasis mine

In the above text, Peter is explaining the qualifications for choosing another apostle to fill the vacated office of Judas. In so doing, he is also describing what prerequisites were required to be a candidate for this office.⁸⁹ Let’s examine Acts 1:21-22 a bit closer. Proper qualifications are defined by the use of three different points in time. First, notice the past point of origin - “*beginning from the baptism of John.*” John had preached the gospel unto them (Mk. 1:15 with Jn. 3:36) and all had received the baptism of John (Jn. 1:35-40; 4:1; Lk. 7:29-30). Second, the present aspect is noted as they continued from that point in what can be defined as a traveling assembly under Christ: They “*companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.*” The terms “*in and out among us*” give us a picture of a traveling congregation or assembly that one could enter, and exit. Jesus built the first congregation around himself. He called out from the material prepared by John a people made ready to congregate with him as he travelled. In other words, after believing the gospel, and being baptized, they habitually assembled under the teaching ministry of Christ. Such habitual assembling would be the only logical way anyone could be taught

⁸⁹ *It is a mistake to think that only the apostles had been in this state with Christ since the baptism of John. This had to include more than the twelve apostles or else there would be none qualified to fill the vacated office. We know that previous to this commission there had been at least 70 commissioned by Christ. In Acts 1:15 there are at least 120 names on the church roll.*

how to observe “*all things*” commanded. They had continued in this process for nearly three and a half years before being commissioned by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20. Notice the future culmination point was until “*the day he was taken up from us.*” However, they were also assembled with Christ when this commission was given *after* his resurrection (Acts 1:1-11). In addition, Acts 1:15-2:1 demonstrates they continued to assemble habitually in this same manner after the ascension of Christ into heaven (Acts 2:1). Therefore, those authorized and identified as “*ye*” in Matthew 28:19-20 “*have*” been and still were defined by all these things that characterize what identifies a disciple. Hence, those commissioned had already been through the process and continued to assemble as such.

A true congregation of Christ by definition is a plural “ye” of baptized believers existing in such a state of discipleship that habitually assembles in order to teach and observe all things Christ commanded. This is the kind we find located in various parts of the world throughout the book of Acts and the epistles.

Therefore, disciples are not indefinable, nor do they evolve, neither are they self-made; but they are made through the very process spelled out in the Great Commission. Those commissioned in Matthew 28:19-20 had the gospel preached to them first, then they were baptized, and then they were brought into a teaching observing congregation with other baptized believers. Christ is commissioning the very congregation He had built prior to His ascension.

In this segment we learn that this authorized administrator is further defined as those who have already been through this same process and who presently abide as a teaching, observing New Testament congregation.

VI. THE ORTHODOX ADMINISTRATOR

whatsoever I have commanded you—v. 20

We have established by the immediate context that Christ has appointed an authorized horizontal agency for the administration of all these things. It is this congregational “*ye*” who are given this authority rather than the unbaptized and/or untaught “*them.*”

We have also established that authorized administrators of the commission are qualified to do so by the very fact they already **have** been

gospelized, they already **have** been baptized, and they already **have** been assembled together and taught how to observe all things commanded. It is this kind of plural “*ye*” existing as a New Testament congregation that is commissioned to bring “*them*” into this very same state of discipleship.

However, is there more to this commission than taking “*them*” through a general three-step process? For example, does it matter what kind of gospel is preached to “*them*”? Does it matter what kind of baptism is administered to “*them*”? Does it matter what they are instructed to observe? Does it matter with whom they assemble to be taught?

Is this a commission designed to reproduce a different kind of an assembly of disciples or is it designed to reproduce an assembly of disciples who are like faith and order with Christ? To ask this question in another way, did Christ commission anyone to go preach another kind of gospel, administer another kind of baptism and teach another kind of doctrine and practice other than “whatsoever I have commanded you”? For example, do not the scriptures describe those who preach “another gospel” as “accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9)? Did Christ authorize anyone to administer **another** kind of baptism other than what he administered (Jn. 4:1-2; Lk. 7:29-30) and commissioned? Does not Scripture identify those who reject the baptism of John as rejecting the “*counsel of God*” against themselves (Lk. 7:30)?

Did Christ authorize anyone to teach **another** kind of faith and practice other than what he commanded? (1 Tim. 4:1; Jude 3)? Does not Scripture condemn such as heretics who do that (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Thes. 3:6, 14; Rom. 16:17)?

If such were the case wouldn’t **another** kind of gospel, baptism and faith also produce **another** kind of disciple other than what Christ commanded and thus produce congregations different in faith and order than found in the New Testament? The answer should be obvious. That is precisely how other denominations of Christians arose (Acts 20:29-30), by failing to make disciples of like faith and order in these Great Commission things. However, the Lord does not leave it up to us to guess the answer. He explicitly forbids understanding this as a commission to make any other kind of disciple when He commands them to teach “*them*” only “*whatsoever I have commanded you.*”

Consider the following five reasons why this must be a commission to make disciples of like faith and order:

1. **It is a command to “make disciples”**. A “disciple” is a follower. To follow Him requires adopting His gospel, baptism and doctrine. Anyone embracing **another** gospel, baptism or faith and order would not be a follower of Christ but would be the follower of the one inventing that different kind of gospel, baptism and teaching.
2. **Christ did not give permission to be an innovator** but rather restricted disciple-making within the boundaries of “*whatsoever I have commanded you.*”
3. **The New Testament does not recognize another gospel** or baptism or faith as orthodox other than that delivered by Christ in this commission.
 - a. No other gospel but one:

*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach **any other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach **any other gospel** unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.... But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.—Gal. 1:8-9, 11-12 - emphasis mine*

- b. No other water baptism but one:

And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.—Lk. 7:29-30

*One Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, - Eph. 4:5 - emphasis mine*

- c. No other Faith and Order delivered but One:

*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for **the faith which was once delivered** unto the saints.—Jude 3*

*One Lord, **one faith**, one baptism, - Eph. 4:5 - emphasis mine*

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; - 1 Tim. 4:1

- d. **God is not the author of Confusion**—1 Cor. 14:33. If personal preference rather than “*whatsoever I have commanded*” is the rule for making disciples, then only division and confusion can result.
- e. **That would promote Apostasy** - Another gospel, another baptism, another faith and order other than what Christ commanded is exactly what the Scriptures condemn as apostasy which produces apostates and harlot congregations (2 Thes. 3:6; 2 Cor. 11:3).

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;—1 Tim. 4:1 - emphasis mine

How did the apostles instruct the congregations to respond to a “*brother*” or to those who apostatized from the faith once delivered?

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition [lit. Greek “things handed down”] which he received of us.—2 Thes. 3:6 - emphasis mine

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.—Rom. 16:17 (emphasis mine)

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.—2 Jn. 10-11 - emphasis mine

What does this mean in our search for the Great Commission congregations of Christ? It means that all true congregations of Christ will be *like faith and order with Christ* simply because they originate from from a previous assembly of like faith and order carrying out this commission. The Great Commission assembled “*ye*” are like faith and order *with Christ*.

The Great Commission is a reproductive system closed to “like faith and order” and guarded by church discipline.

All apostate congregations originate from one of four sources.

1. **They originate as a true congregation but later depart from the truth.** The Congregation at Rome is an example of this. Rome was a true congregation in its origin (Rom. 1:1-3) but then went into apostasy and the whole apostate Roman Catholic denomination is the direct result of that apostasy. Hence, true congregations can apostatize and become false congregations.
2. **They originate by members departing from a true congregation to form a competing denomination.** This is how the **The Church of Christ** and **The Christian Church** and **The Disciples of Christ** denominations all began (Ac 20:29-30).
3. **They originate from an apostate congregation.** For example, this is the case with Protestantism. Their baptism, ordinations and ordinances originated with what they all acknowledged to be Apostate Roman Catholicism or a “*ye*” that is **not** like faith and order with Christ—an apostate “*ye*” (Rev. 18:4).
4. **They self-originate.** For example, this is the case with all Restoration Type Congregations (Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals, etc.). They claim that the gates of hell did prevail against apostolic Congregations and God sent prophets to restore apostolic Christianity. This is the case with all Direct Authority churches.

The key to identifying the true congregations of Christ is that they preach the **same** gospel Jesus preached and commissioned, they administer the **same** baptism Jesus submitted unto and administered, to others and they teach the **same** faith and order Jesus commanded. This is “*the faith*” that was “*once delivered.*” They all have the **same** source—the Great Commission “*ye*” that is like faith and order with Christ. They all originate from a closed reproductive system of like faith and order guarded by church discipline.

CONCLUSION: Hopefully, this lesson has expanded your appreciation and understanding of Matthew 28:18-20 with regard to the congregation of Christ. This Commission provides a pattern for reproducing congregations of

like faith and order. Even one of the most ardent opponents of Landmarkism candidly admitted concerning this text:

*In this simple analysis of the commission is presented the very process by which Baptists are now made, **constituted into congregations**, and governed. That it was the process by which the first preachers made converts, and **constituted congregations**, is beyond question.* - T. G. Jones, **The Baptists, their Origin, Continuity, Principles, Spirit, Policy, Position, and Influence, a Vindication.** (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society) p. 27. - emphasis mine

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. List the four sources which produce apostate congregations.
2. What is the distinction between “*teach*” in verse 19 and “*teaching*” in verse 20 with regard to the meaning of the Greek term being translated in each case?
3. List the five reasons that the product of the Great Commission must be like faith and order.
4. Who is “*ye*” versus “*every creature*” versus “*them*”?
5. With regard to the horizontal administration (“*ye*” to “*them*”) of this commission what is the difference between “*ye*” and “*them*”?
6. Is a mere baptized “*them*” authorized to administer any part of this commission?
7. Does the Aorist tense “*have*” demonstrates the contextual authorized administrator “*ye*” has already been through this three-fold process of discipleship under Christ and therefore is existing in a church state? If not, why not?

WEEK 7 LESSON 3

The Great Commission Congregation—Part 2

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to establish that this commission is given to a body of baptized believers existing in a congregational order and, (2) to demonstrate this commission is designed to reproduce congregations of like faith and order until Christ returns and, (3) to carefully define congregation perpetuity to be institutional and organic in nature rather than a promise to any particular congregation.

INTRODUCTION: The commission given in Matthew 28:19-20 is the very same commission practiced in Acts 2:41-42. Luke uses the periphrastic construct in Acts 2:42 demonstrating this was the consistent and characteristic pattern of practice by the congregation at Jerusalem. Furthermore, after once spelling out this pattern in Acts 2:41-42, Luke from that point forward uses the word “added” in subsequent passages to summarize the same process rather than repeating Acts 2:41-42 over and over again (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 11:24). Why would they be “added” any other way than how Christ commanded in Matthew 28:19-20 or how the congregation understood and applied it in Acts 2:41-42? Why would they be added any other way after spelling out that this was the pattern followed by the congregation at Jerusalem?

Whenever, Luke uses the term “added” as in Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14 and 11:24 the number “added” is given. In Acts 2:41 there are 3,000 added. In Acts 5:14 there are 5,000 added, and so in Acts 11:24, the number “added” is countable.

When the number is too large to count, Luke changes from addition to multiplication (Acts 6:1, 7; 9:31; 12:24).

Therefore, both “*added*” and “*multiplied*” are summary expressions indicating Matthew 28:19-20 is authority to bring baptized believers into congregational order, and is the pattern laid down in Acts 2:41-42 that was followed by the congregation at Jerusalem. The pattern produces “*disciples*” in a congregational order when obeyed. If one removed all references to the congregation, its officers, its ordinances and its work between Acts and Revelation there would be very little New Testament left to read.

I. THE CONGREGATION IS THE ADMINISTRATOR

Teaching them to observe all things—v. 20

How can this commissioned “*ye*” baptize and teach anyone how to observe anything without actually assembling with them for that purpose? It should be obvious the very commission requires actual assembly with “*them*” to accomplish its purpose.

Thus far, we have seen that authority to carry out the Great Commission is given to “*ye*” but not to “*them*.” Therefore, “*ye*” represents a specific authorized administrator or horizontal agency between Christ and “*them*.” We have seen that it was given to those who have been through this three-fold process rather than those who have not. Thus, the administrator is a converted, baptized, teaching and observing **congregational** “*ye*.” We have seen that the commission has been given to those who are like faith and order with Jesus Christ in the **same** gospel, baptism, and doctrine rather than those who are not. Thus, the administrator is orthodox in contending for “*the faith once delivered*” (Jude 3). We have seen that the Great Commission is a reproductive system that is closed to “like faith and order.” That closed system is guarded by church discipline (Mt. 18:15-18; 2 Thes. 3:6, 14; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5).

A. THE CONGREGATIONAL “YE” - TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS

It has been duly noted that the actual commissioned “*ye*” were baptized believers who habitually assembled under the teaching ministry of Christ

(see Acts 1:21-22). Let's explore the contextual necessity for inclusion of the New Testament congregation in this commission.

The leaders in the first congregation at Jerusalem understood this commission to be inclusive of congregation membership. For example, if you compare Matthew 28:19-20 with Acts 2:41-42 you will see they interpreted congregation membership as a necessary integral part of the commission:

Mt. 28:19-20 - - Acts 2:41-42

1. "go teach" - - 1. "as many as received the word"
2. "baptizing them" - - 2. "were baptized and added unto them"
3. "teaching them" - - 3. "stedfastly continued in the apostles' doctrine"

Notice particularly the phrase "added unto them" in Acts 2:41 and precisely where it is located in this three-step administration of the great commission. It is placed between "baptized" and "stedfastly continued in the apostles' doctrine." They understood the phrase "teaching them to **observe** all things" as subsequent to (following) congregation membership.⁹⁰

In Acts 2:41-42 this addition is to an existing congregation—the congregation at Jerusalem (2:1, 47). However, when the commission is carried out on the mission field by a congregation sent representative, then, the third aspect of the commission is authority to bring such baptized believers into a covenant teaching, observing congregational relationship with each other (Ac 14:22-23).⁹¹ That is the essence of congregation constitution.

If the above arguments don't convince you that the Great Commission is inclusive of regular congregation order, then consider this. Can you think of any other possible way in those days that the third aspect of this commission could be **observed** apart from actual assembling with "them" in an organized and orderly fashion?

For example, how could they be taught to **observe** what Christ commanded them in Matthew 18:15-18 apart from membership in a congregation?

⁹⁰ This also demonstrates that baptism is the prerequisite to church membership and designed to identify you with an administrator of like faith and order as it is the administrator who is also authorized as the one "teaching them to observe all things."

⁹¹ The third aspect is a covenant relationship. It is a covenant to observe all things commanded by him.

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.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

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.”

Again, I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.—Mt. 18:15-20 - emphasis mine

Only a congregational member can obey this command “*tell it to the church.*” This command assumes that disciples are members of such a congregation. Matthew 18:17 assumes that all **observing** parties involved are members in the same congregation they tell it to.²² This procedure is part of the “*all things*” that the contextual “*ye*” are to teach “*them*” to observe. Hence, the third aspect of the commission requires habitually assembling together as a New Testament congregation.

In addition to Matthew 18:15-20, it is impossible to **observe** what the Lord commanded in Matthew 26:26-30 apart from being physically assembled together. In Matthew 26:26-30 the Lord commanded the observance of the Lord’s Supper. The “*ye*” of the Great Commission cannot teach “*them*” how to **observe** the Lord’s Supper unless they physically assemble together at the same time and in the same place with one another. In 1 Corinthians 11:18-20. Paul says in regard to the observance of the

²² *The “church” in this context, is the same church Jesus claims as “my church” in Mt. 16:18. Such a command restricts the nature of this church to a local visible body of baptized believers as it is utterly impossible to obey this command if such a church were universal and invisible.*

Lord's Supper—"when ye come together in the church...in one place." There is no example anywhere in Scripture where the Lord's Supper is **observed** by anyone but baptized believers assembling together. No one can rationally or Biblically deny that congregation membership is included in the command "*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" The third aspect always requires either addition to an already existing congregation or the formation of a new congregation, as that is the only way this aspect of the commission can be obeyed and **observed**.

Finally, remember that those who are addressed as "ye" already "have" been through this same process before being authorized to administer it to "them." If that is true, then, they too were already members in the congregation at Jerusalem before being commissioned in Matthew 28:19-20. The Scriptures plainly and clearly declare that they already had been assembling together with Christ for more than three years prior to being commissioned:

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.—Ac 1:21-22.

Note the language of an ongoing assembling where Jesus "*went in and out among us.*" The event described here is the selection of another man to fill the vacated "church" office of apostle.

Paul says that apostles were "*set in the church*" first (1 Cor. 12:28). You cannot set an office into something that does not already first exist. How early were the apostles set in the congregation? The selecting and placing of apostles in the congregation occurred very early in the ministry of Christ (see Lu. 6:12-13). The very fact that they were chosen "*out of*" other disciples demonstrates a larger assembly existed at the time of this selection. Moreover, the office was already functioning and a newly chosen congregation member was selected and placed in office before Pentecost.⁹³ Hence, the congregation had to exist at least as early as Luke 6:12-13 according to 1 Corinthians 12:28.

Acts 1:21-22 requires continued assembling together with Christ from the baptism of John until the ascension of Christ in order to be qualified for

⁹³ Paul was not chosen as part of the twelve. He was chosen as an apostle to the gentiles (Gal. 2:9)

the office of apostle. Therefore, from the baptism of John to the resurrection there were more assembling with Christ than the twelve apostles or no one else would have qualified to fill the office of apostle. We know Christ had previously sent out 70, and in Acts 1:15, there were at least 120 members present during this meeting.

The congregation was empowered on Pentecost, but it certainly did not begin on Pentecost. Instead, it had its beginning from the ministry of John the Baptist when he supplied the very first baptized believers to assemble with Christ (Jn. 1:37-51). Peter tells the house of Cornelius that the gospel ministry of the congregation began after the baptism of John (Ac. 10:37). Jesus speaks of the congregation as presently existing in Matthew 18:15-18. The evidence is irrefutable. There can be no obedience to the Great Commission outside membership in a New Testament congregation. Therefore, those being commissioned were already members in the first congregation at Jerusalem. The third aspect of the Great Commission includes congregation membership (Ac. 2:41 “*added unto them*”) as well as authority to constitute baptized believers into a congregation if no congregation exists.

B. THE CONTEXTUAL “YE” IS THE CONGREGATION OF CHRIST—*SOME DOUBTED*

Was the congregation present when the Great Commission was given? The immediate context in Matthew 28 demonstrates clearly that more than the eleven apostles were present at the giving of the commission. For example, beginning in verse 7 the angel says to the women:

*And go quickly, and tell his **disciples** that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*—Mt. 28:7 - emphasis mine

In verse 10 Jesus appears to these same women as they were going to tell “*his disciples*” and he says:

*Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my **brethren** that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*—Mt. 28:10 - emphasis mine

Notice the language used by the angel and Christ. The angel says “*his disciples*” and Jesus says “*my brethren*.” Matthew 28:7 may include the women as well. These terms are more comprehensive than “*the eleven disciples*.”

Matthew 28:16-17 spells out exactly where in Galilee “the women” and “*his disciples*” and “*my brethren*” were appointed to see Him:

*Then the eleven **disciples** went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.*—Mt. 28:16-17
 - emphasis mine

The natural flow of this context is too forceful to ignore. Verses 7-8 and 10 imply that the “*women*” and “*my brethren*” and “*the disciples*” would meet “*in Galilee*” while verse 16 identifies where in Galilee Jesus appointed, noting that the appointed leadership of the congregation was present. Especially note the words “*but some doubted*.” This is absolute proof that more than the eleven were present at this appointed place in Galilee. Why? Jesus had already appeared in Jerusalem several times to the eleven and to the women for the sole purpose to remove such doubts. Back in Jerusalem Jesus waited for the last doubting apostle to arrive so that He could remove any doubt among them long before going to this mountain.

Moreover, this is the only possible mentioned location that more than five hundred brethren (1 Corinthians 15:6) could see him at once. Some of those brethren could have “*doubted*” as this was their first time to see him. We can thus conclude that the very same three-fold description of persons (“*women*”, “*my brethren*”, “*the disciples*”) which both the angel, and Christ said would meet him in Galilee are the very same persons described in Acts 1:13-15:

*And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the **women**, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his **brethren**. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of **the disciples**, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty - Acts 1:13-15
 - emphasis mine*

This very same group is referred to in Acts 2:1 (“*they were all*”), and this is the very same group identified in Acts 2:41 unto whom the newly baptized believers “*were added unto them*” and this is the very same group identified explicitly as “*the church*” in Acts 2:47.

The natural flow of the context in Matthew 28 beginning in verse 7 “*into Galilee*”, continuing to verse 10 “*into Galilee*”, and concluding in verse 16 “*into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them*” infers that this mountain was the fulfillment where the congregation (“*women*” “*brethren*” “*his disciples*”) met with, and saw Christ. Therefore, those being addressed in the Great Commission were already in congregational order, just as they were already in a saved and baptized condition previous to being given this worldwide commission.

In addition, it should be noted that this was not the first commission given His congregation. Previously, they had been given a commission to go only to the nation of Israel:

*These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of **the house of Israel**.—Mt. 10:5-6 - emphasis mine*

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.—Luke 10:1

Here are seventy plus the “*apostles*” that made up part (82) of the hundred and twenty names in the Pre-Pentecost congregation in Acts 1:15-22. It was out of these that the congregation chose a successor to fill the congregation office vacated by Judas. The “*ye*” in Matthew 28:19-20 is this assembled congregation with its leadership on the mount in Galilee. Furthermore, Matthew 28:19-20 is a commission to “*make disciples*” which is inclusive of disciplinary authority (instructive, corrective and punitive). Such authority had already been given “*to the church*” in Matthew 18:15-18. The “*keys of the kingdom*” symbolize all aspects of administrative authority in the kingdom and such authority is given “*to the church*” (Mt. 18:17-18).

Such authority is seen later in the book of Acts as it is the congregation that “*sent*” out its ordained men and apostles (Acts. 11:22; 15:1-3). It is

common congregational members that call Peter to give an account of his actions (Acts. 11:1-3). It is the congregation that Jesus writes the seven letters in Revelation—“*let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the congregations*” (Rev. 2-3). In these letters it is “*the church*” that Christ holds responsible to teach and to observe all things He commands.⁹⁴

The “*ye*” of the Great Commission is the New Testament congregation. Hence, this commission is addressed to a plural “*ye*” of baptized believers existing in congregational order. No authority is given by Christ to anyone existing outside the membership of a New Testament congregation to administer this commission. There are no clear explicit examples of anyone existing outside the membership of a New Testament congregation administering this commission.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *In Matthew 18:19-20 some wrongly imagine that this text teaches that wherever two or three believers (unbaptized, immersed, sprinkled, poured, orthodox, heretical, etc.) get together “in my name” that this is a church.*

“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.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

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.

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.—Mt. 18:17-20

However, they overlook the contextual link between verses 15-18 with verse 19-20. The link is the word “again” in verse 19. Jesus is still confirming the authority given to the church in verses 17-18 whether it meets in that capacity or any other capacity in keeping with His commandments (even if it is for prayer). The absolute proof that this text refers to the church rather than any random meeting between two or three believers is the fact that in Matthew 18:16 two or three believers meet together in his name (by his authority) and it is not considered to be a church by Christ as he goes on in verse 17 to instruct these “two or three” witnesses to “tell it to the church.” Matthew 18:20 simply confirms that the authority of the keys is committed to the church and Christ will stand behind their use of these keys regardless how large or small they may be, even if they are reduced to only “two or three” in membership.

⁹⁵ *Philip was an ordained deacon in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). Those scattered preaching the gospel in Acts 8-11 were all male members of the church in Jerusalem. Acts 9:31 indicates there were other congregations constituted due to this scattering from the church at Jerusalem and Ananias is explicitly called a “disciple” who met with an assembly of plural “disciples” in Acts 9:10,19. The church at Jerusalem was also referred to as “disciples” (Acts 9:26) as the term by definition included those in a church state (Acts 2:41-42). Saul and Barnabas were “sent” by*

II. THE AGE LONG ADMINISTRATOR

- and, lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world. Amen—Mt. 28:20

In summary, so far in this study we have established there is a proper authorized administrator of the Great Commission. That the administrator is “*ye*”, but not “*them*.” Those administrators are those who have already been through this discipleship process, unlike the unconverted “*nations*” or unbaptized or uninstructed “*them*.” That administrator is like faith and order with Christ in the same gospel, same baptism and same faith and order, unlike those who are of a different faith and order due to a different gospel, different baptism and different doctrine and practice. That administrator is the New Testament congregation with its ordained ministry.

However, does the Great Commission supply even more defining characteristics of this Great Commission “*ye*”? The answer is yes! Another equally important characteristic is supplied by the last phrase in Matthew 28:20. Christ promises that He will be with this “*you*” until the end of the world. In the next section of this study we will look at the language of this promise in greater detail, but for the present it is sufficient to note that there is a divine promise that Christ will be with this “*you*” “*always even until the end of the world*.” Hence, whoever this “*you*” may be, they are promised existence until the end of the world. We have demonstrated previously that this plural “*ye*” of like faith and order is the New Testament Congregation. We believe this promise confirms that identification for the following reasons.

If “*you*” are considered as individuals, most died before the end of that century, much less the end of the world. Therefore, Christ could not have given this commission to them as individuals. This “*ye*” cannot be the Apostles as all but one was dead by the end of the first century. Therefore, this “*ye*” cannot be the apostolic office through succession, as taught by the Catholic Church, because of four specific reasons. First, the qualifications set forth to fill the apostolic office limit it to personal eye witnesses of the physical resurrected body of Christ (Acts. 1:22-23). Christ personally appeared to

the church at Antioch (Acts 13:3 with Acts 14:26-27. Apollos, after being corrected, stopped his free-lance activity and worked in and through congregations (Acts 18:27).

Paul and taught Paul for some years in Arabia (Gal. 1:16-18). Second, Paul claimed that he was “*last*” of all the Apostles to have personally seen Christ. The Greek term, translated “*last*,” is *eschatos* and it is used in I Corinthians 15 three times and it means the very last with none to follow. Jesus is the “*last*” Adam and there are none to follow. The changing of our bodies occurs at the “*last*” trump and there is no such resurrection trump to follow.

Third, Paul claims that the apostles were set in the congregation “*first*” (1 Cor. 12:28) and were foundational (Eph. 2:20) rather than a continuing office (Eph. 2:20).

Last, when Paul lists the officers in the congregations he only lists “*elders*” and “*deacons*”. The term “*elders*” (Gr. *Presbuteros*) are equally called “*overseers*” (or Bishops) as well as those who “*feed*” (pastors) as a comparison of Acts 22:16 with Acts 20:28 will easily demonstrate. Although, Apostles were “*elders*” as well as “*disciples*” these congregational “*elders*” and “*deacons*” are never called “*Apostles*” (see Acts 20:17; Philip. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1).

Neither is “*ye*” the unconverted, unbaptized, or unassembled and/or uninstructed persons, as that is the very condition of those identified as “*them*.” Neither can they be Christians in general because “*ye*” are Christians of like faith and order with Christ in the same gospel, baptism and doctrine.

Only the congregation as an institution is promised age long existence (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:26).

What does this mean in regard to our search for the Great Commission congregations of Christ?

First, remember this is a commission to reproduce like faith and order.

Second, this means that New Testament congregations do not evolve but are reproduced after their own kind. It means that all false congregations originate either by departing from this reproductive cycle or originate by **self-administrating** this commission. This is a reproductive system closed to “like faith and order” guarded by church discipline.

Whatever “*ye*” and “*you*” represent, it must be in keeping with the inherent characteristics thus far established by the context. Thus, “*you*” must be representative of plural baptized believers in a congregational order that is like faith and order with Christ. The New Testament congregation by contextual definition is a plural “*ye*” of baptized believers who are like faith and order with Christ and who can and do habitually assemble together in

order to carry out all things whatsoever Christ commanded.⁹⁶This is the promised age long “you” in Matthew 28:20.

III. THE ORGANICALLY REPRODUCED ADMINISTRATOR

and, lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world. Amen—Mt.28:20

We can find Scriptures that indicate it is the church that chooses and determines the qualifications of those to be set apart to be ordained (Acts 6:5). Don’t those who select and choose always have greater authority than those being examined and chosen? We can find Scriptures where such ordained men are “set in” the church and are said to be “gifts” for the church and thus are subservient in the final analysis to the congregation (Eph. 4:11; I Cor. 12:28).

However, most importantly, we can find no Scriptures that promise age long continuance to the ordained ministry per se, but we do find Scriptures that promise age long continuance to the congregation (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 3:21) in perfect harmony with the age long promise in Matthew 28:20.

Finally, we can find other examples where Christ directly addresses the ordained leadership in a congregation for the purpose to convey His command to the congregation (“unto the angel of the church which is at... he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith **UNTO THE CHURCHES**”—Rev. 2-3). It is a very common thing to address an organization or institution by addressing their appointed leadership. If all the contextual data that

⁹⁶ *Some attempt to avert this strong evidence by suggesting that this commission was given to the ordained class within the congregation. To support this position, they argue that only the ordained class is capable of performing all three aspects of this commission; whereas the ordinary church member is not, and if given to the church it would authorize women and children to administer it. They argue that in the book of Acts in every case of baptism it is performed by the ordained membership and silent passages cannot be used to contradict this conclusion. All of these things are true.*

However, we believe that the same evidence supports the conclusion that the Great Commission was given to the congregation to be administered through its ordained membership under its authority. Indeed, the overall Biblical evidence demands this conclusion. For example, we can find explicit cases where the church is the one sending out its ordained membership to carry out this commission (Acts 11:22; 13:1-3; 15:1-3); and the one sending is superior in authority to the one being sent. We can find an explicit and clear command of Christ that appoints the congregation as the final authority in kingdom affairs when he instructs individual congregational members to “tell it to the church” but no such command can be found that says “tell it to the ministry.”

strongly infers that “*my brethren*” and “*the women*” as well as the “*eleven disciples*” were on that mountain, then there is other contextual warrant to suggest that Christ is addressing the congregation through its ordained leadership on that mountain—thus commissioning the congregation through its ordained leadership just as he speaks to the congregations through its ordained leadership in Revelation 2-3.

This church authorized representative argument is also strengthened by the non-technical usage of “*apostle*” in the Scriptures (Acts 13:3 “*sent*” 14:4 “*apostles*”). The church at Antioch set apart Barnabas and Saul for the mission field by the laying on of hands in Acts 13:1-3. Paul had been appointed as a technical apostle, equal with the twelve by Jesus Christ. However, the church at Antioch had ordained him as their missionary on the mission field. The verb form of the term “*apostle*” is used in Acts 13:3 and translated “*sent*.” Greek scholars say this term conveys the idea of an authorized representative or one sent by authority. It is the church that not only sets them apart for this mission (by the laying on of their hands) but later the same term is used as a result of a called business meeting. The church determined they should be “*sent*” (See A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures**, Acts 15:2 on the word “*appointed*”) as authorized church representatives (Acts 15:1-3).

We have demonstrated that there is an age long promise that New Testament congregations will reproduce after their own kind until the end of the world. What is the nature of their continuity? Does the Great Commission text define it? Yes, it does. It defines it in three ways. (1) Organic link to link contact; (2) Natural cycle of succession; (3) Supernatural promise of day in and day out continuity.

A. ORGANIC LINK TO LINK CONTACT:

The Great Commission “*ye*” and “*them*” are described in terms of direct organic link (“*ye*”) to link (“*them*”) relationship with each other in this commission. The first link is “*ye*” and the second link in direct contact is “*them*.” The “*them*” are the direct objects in direct contact in both time and space with this commissioned “*ye*.”

Remember, there were no TV’s and modern electronic means of communication when this commission was given.

It is impossible for the Great Commission to be administered without direct hands on contact in time and space between “*ye*” and “*them*.” For

example, preaching the gospel to “*them*” requires that the “*ye*” physically “*go*” to “*them*.”

Likewise, the second and third aspects of the commission require actual physical contact between “*ye*” and “*them*” in carrying out this commission. Baptism was a physical hands-on connection between “*ye*” and “*them*.” Furthermore, teaching “*them*” required actual assembling together with “*them*” over a period of time in order to accomplish the goal of “*teaching them to observe all things.... commanded.*” Organic link to link contact cannot be successfully repudiated if we take the commission at face value. In fact, there is no other possible way that such a commission could be administered but by organic link to link contact in time and space.

To deny this, those identified as “*ye*” must cease to exist from not only this text but from some point in time between the first and second advent and those defined as “*them*” (the unconverted or converted but unbaptized/untaught/unchurched) must receive direct authority to re-originate this commission. There is no other alternative but self-administration if the “*ye*” is ever dropped in time and space. Is it possible for this reproductive cycle to fail in some generation so that no true congregations are available to reproduce congregations for the next generation? Let us suppose this is not only true but actually has happened. If so, then there are only three possible sources from whence new disciples could be made, if at any point in time, “*ye*” ceased to exist:

1. After that point, the undisciplined must disciple themselves to restart this process.
2. After that point, God must make disciples directly through the Scriptures.
3. After that point God must send a prophet to restart the reproductive cycle.

Nearly all of Christendom embraces one of the above alternatives,⁹⁷ because most believe a practical observing Christianity did fail more than once since Christ gave this commission. They believe this because they refuse to identify with any of those groups that claim historical continuity from the apostolic age (Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Anabaptists, etc.).

⁹⁷ *The promise of the Great Commission is the perpetuation of practical observance of “all things” commanded. It is not a promise of the perpetuation of the spirit or isolated and unobserving truths of Christianity.*

However, Christ never authorized the undisciplined to disciple himself or herself. There is no example in Scripture where undisciplined persons disciple themselves in these things. Furthermore, there is no precept or example where God directly used the Scriptures to make disciples in these things.

There is an example in Scripture where God did send an unbaptized prophet to originate these things among men—John the Baptist. However, John was prophetically anticipated and announced by the Scriptures to do this (Mk. 1:1-4) and uniquely and directly authorized by God Himself to do this. Furthermore, any person claiming to be a prophet sent by God to originate this process must be able to pass the Biblical tests for a prophet. Up to this present day there are none yet who have been able to pass all the Biblical tests for a prophet.⁹⁸

B. NATURAL CYCLE OF SUCCESSION:

Doesn't the third aspect of this commission command the observance of all things whatsoever Christ commanded? Yes! Does not this include obedience to this commission as well? Notice that the very nature of this commission is a natural cycle of reproduction after its own kind:

Go... baptizing... teaching" which demands them to
Go.... baptizing.... teaching" which demands them to *Go...*
baptizing... teaching them... etc., etc.

So, the very nature of this commission is a natural historical cycle of succession by reproduction after its own kind in organic link to link fashion.

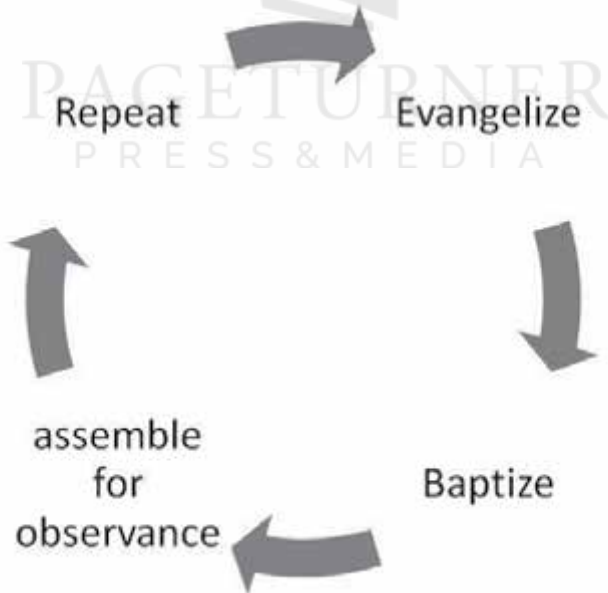
Look at all denominations today and you will see this is exactly how they naturally reproduce after their own kind. For example, Luther started the Lutheran Church and every Lutheran Church was a product of previous Lutheran doctrine and practice. Calvin started the Presbyterian Church and every Presbyterian Church afterwards was a product of previous Presbyterian faith and order. When a split occurred in a denomination, at that split a new kind of congregation was formed, and all following congregations forming that new denomination are products of the previous

⁹⁸ See my book *Some Non-prophet Organizations where I list seven Biblical tests to distinguish true from false prophets*

one of like faith and order. All present denominations operate according to this natural cycle.

However, it is Christ that started the very first congregation in Jerusalem during His earthly ministry, which was like faith and order with Him. It is Christ that promised the contextual “ye” that He would be present with them day in and day out until the end of the age reproducing congregations of like faith and order. Will you suggest that Luther can start his kind of congregation, which naturally reproduced after its own kind for the past 400 years without the continual presence of Luther, and yet Christ starts His own kind with His continual presence but He is unable to reproduce after its own kind for more than 400 years? If the Lutheran Church can and still does reproduce after its own kind without Luther for the past 400 years then the congregations of Christ can and will reproduce after their own kind with the presence of Christ from the apostolic age until He comes again.

The Great Commission Cycle - Mt. 28:19



C. SUPERNATURAL PROMISE OF DAY IN AND DAY OUT SUCCESSION UNTIL THE END OF THE AGE

- and, lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world. Amen.

Literally, the Greek says “*all the days until the end of the age.*” Greek scholars say this is an idiom which literally means “*day in and day out*” until the end of the age (William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary**, *Matthew*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. p. 1003). Therefore, Christ did not perceive of a single day between His first and Second Advent that would be void of such an explicitly qualified administrator. This is why Jude says the faith was “*once delivered*”—Jude 3. The same Greek term translated “*once*” in Jude 3 is translated “*once for all*” in Hebrews 10:14. This means that the kind of congregations found in the New Testament not only continued to reproduce after their own kind in the apostolic age (book of Acts) but will continue to do so after the apostolic age in every generation up to the present generation in which we live. This means congregations consisting of such qualified disciples have been and will be reproduced in every generation from the New Testament period until Christ comes again. The gates of hell shall never prevail against His congregation simply because He remains with it providentially making sure there is a continuing reproduction of like kind until the end of the world.

Therefore, it is impossible to deny organic link to link congregation succession without editing out and denying what Matthew 28:19-20 clearly states and promises.

Many will reject this conclusion due to their view of secular church history. However, this objection will be dealt with later (See Lesson 1—**The Great Commission**—Part 3—**The Prophetic History**). For the present it must be remembered that, unlike the Scriptures, secular church history is (1) uninspired, (2) incomplete, and (3) often inaccurate. Others will attempt to deny this is based upon the mistaken notion that this means every particular congregation must continue until the end of the age. This is not a promise that guarantees the perpetual existence of any particular congregation until the end of the age, but rather, a promise that guarantees that before the demise of all particular congregations within any generation there will be new congregations of like faith and order reproduced for the coming generation.

There is no authority given by the Scriptures for “*them*” to restart, re-originate this commission at any time between the giving of this commission until the end of the age. However, that would be required for Christ to fulfill His promise any other way.

Hence, the New Testament congregation will be found in one of those historical groups that have existed prior to the Reformation, prior to Constantine the Great, prior to the so-called church fathers. The only groups of observing congregations that lay claim to such historicity are the Roman Catholic Church and those they labeled *heretics* or *anabaptists*.

D. THE TEST OF HISTORY AND DOCTRINE

There are several groups of professed Christians that claim historical continuity from the apostolic age and thus claim to be the true congregations of Christ today.

There can be no question that one valid test to be the true congregations of Christ is historical continuity, due to divine promises of continuity in the Scriptures (Mt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21). However, remember that this promised continuity is through the process of reproduction after its own kind. This means that historical continuity alone is not sufficient to prove groups are the true congregations of Christ, but they must also preach the same gospel, administer the same baptism and teach the same faith and order Jesus commissioned. Therefore, the true congregations of Christ are known today by their historicity and doctrine.

These tests are not new to Christianity but are very ancient tests used as far back as the second century A.D. In the second century Tertullian recognized the same two tests. He summarizes both tests and then expounds the historical test in the following three paragraphs and then refers to the doctrinal test in the final paragraph:

*[The apostles] founded congregations in every city, from which all the other congregations, one after another, derived the tradition of the faith, and the seeds of doctrine, and are every day deriving them, that they may become congregations. Indeed, it is on this account only that they will be able to deem themselves apostolic, as being **the offspring of apostolic congregations**. Every sort of thing must necessarily revert to its original for its*

*classification. Therefore, the congregations, although they are so many and so great, comprise but the one primitive Church, [founded] by the apostles, from which they all [spring]. In this way, all are primitive, and all are apostolic, while they are all proved to be one in unity. . . .*⁹⁹

*But should they even affect the contrivance [of composing a succession list for themselves], they will not advance a step. **For their very doctrine, after comparison with that of the apostles [as contained in other congregations], will declare, by its own diversity and contrariety, that it had for its author neither an apostle nor an apostolic man; because, as the apostles would never have taught things which were self-contradictors. . . .***

*Then let all the heresies, when challenged to **these two tests** by our apostolic Church, offer their proof of how they deem themselves to be apostolic. But in truth they neither are so, nor are they able to prove themselves to be what they are not. Nor are they admitted to peaceful relations and communion by such congregations as are in any way connected with apostles, inasmuch as they are in no sense themselves apostolic because of their diversity as to the mysteries of the faith—Tertullian, **The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers**, Vol. 3, pp. 20,21,32. - emphasis mine*

[W]hat it was which Christ revealed to them [the apostles] can, as I must here likewise prescribe, properly be proved in no other way than by those very congregations which the apostles founded in person, by declaring the gospel to them directly themselves . . . If then these things are so, it is in the same degree manifest that all doctrine which agrees with the apostolic congregations—those molds and original sources of the faith must be reckoned for truth, as undoubtedly containing that which the congregations received from the apostles, the apostles

⁹⁹ Tertullian defines the one catholic church in a collective sense of unity or as one institution consisting of all particular congregations, thus making “the congregations” equal to “one primitive church, from which they all [spring].

*from Christ, [and] Christ from God. Whereas all doctrine must be prejudged as false which savors of contrariety to the truth of the congregations and apostles of Christ and God. It remains, then, that we demonstrate whether this doctrine of ours, of which we have now given the rule, has its origin in the tradition of the apostles, and whether all other doctrines do not ipso facto proceed from falsehood... But if there be any [heresies] which are bold enough to plant [their origin] in the midst of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: **Let them produce the original records of their congregations; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [their first] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men—a man, moreover, who continued steadfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic congregations transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter...***

What about the doctrinal test? Does the Bible provide essential characteristics that positively define exactly what is the same gospel, same baptism and same observances Jesus commanded? We believe the Bible provides identifying characteristics of these things so they can be easily and clearly identified and defined.

Baptists have generally held that a church is both an organization and an organism. As an organism (a living being, or as the Bible calls the church 'lively stones' in I Peter 2:5) a church can bring forth after her kind (Gen. 1:24). We mean by this that a church may dismiss some of her members to form a new and separate church, or by sending forth a missionary with authority to organize a new and separate church. We do not believe in the spontaneous generation of congregations any more than we believe in spontaneous generation of animal or

human life. We hold, as the Scriptures teach, that all life comes from antecedent life. - Milburn Cockrell, **Scriptural Church Organization**, (Collierville, TN: Instant Publisher, 2nd ed., 2003), back cover.

CONCLUSION: This Great Commission *reproduction after its own kind* concept is in direct opposition with the universal invisible church theory. Both cannot be right. The universal invisible church theory demands the very opposite kind of congregation is produced by the Great Commission. The Great Commission is a reproductive cycle closed to “like faith and order” guarded by church discipline. The universal invisible church is an system, and inclusive of diverse faiths and orders.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Is it possible to administer any part of this commission apart from organic contact between “*ye*” and “*them*”?
2. Is there not a clear direct link to link contact between “*ye*” and “*them*”?
3. Does Christ’s promise leave out even a single day from the time He gave it until the end of the world?
4. Does not the three-step commission naturally reproduce after its own kind if followed?
5. Does not the supernatural presence and promise of Christ guarantee it will be followed?
6. Is this a promise that any particular congregation will continue to the end of the age, or that there will be new congregations reproduced by this reproductive cycle for every generation until the end of the age?
7. Is it possible according to this commission that a new congregation can be constituted apart from a previous existent “*ye*”?

REQUIRED READING:

Some Non-Prophet Organizations by Mark W. Fenison—pp. 6-27 <http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/Some Non-Prophetbook.pdf>

WEEK 8

LESSON 1–Great Commission–
Part 3–The Prophetic History

LESSON 2–Great Commission–
Part 4–The Prophetic History

LESSON 3–Great Commission–
Part 5–Post New Testament History

WEEK 8 LESSON 1

Great Commission—Part 3— The Prophetic History

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to determine what should be the Biblical attitude toward secular “Church History” and, (2) to discover the historical sources for what many call “Church History” between the 2nd and 8th centuries and, (3) to examine the inspired prophetic history of the church provided by Biblical writers and compare it with secular “Church History”;

INTRODUCTION: All congregations found in the pages of the New Testament were of like faith and order. The Great Commission is the promised means to reproduce congregations of like faith and order until Christ returns. Church discipline of heretical members and disfellowshipping heretical congregations preserve the Great Commission reproductive cycle within the framework of “like faith and order”. Therefore, one would suspect that we should find such congregations being reproduced after their own kind when we look into the pages of secular church history right up until the present.

However, when one examines the pages of the vast majority of books on “church history” such congregations are conspicuously missing for the first 1600 years. Instead, what is found within the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers are churches foreign to those found in the New Testament. For example, what is found at first is the slow rise of certain bishops who become territorially dominant over smaller congregations until one of those bishops gains preeminence over the rest which unites with the secular empire forming a church state type of Christianity. This state church type of Christians has such things as Cardinals, popes, priests, and nuns which have no existence in the pages of the New Testament! This state church type of Christianity dominates the world and condemns all who oppose it as “heretics.” Even though there is a radical and profound

difference in theology between the church at Rome found in the pages of secular history from the church at Rome found in Scriptures, nevertheless, the vast majority of secular and religious historians treat them as though they are one and the same church.

Even prominent protestant leaders such as Dr. John MacArthur and Dr. R.C. Sproul when they speak of the Roman Catholic Church during the first fifteen hundred years call it “The Church.” The current host of the syndicated radio program *The Bible Answer Man*, Hank Hannegraff, as well as its former host Dr. Walter Martin, espouses the idea that the Roman Catholic Church is the true apostolic church until the Reformation period, and even now continues to be “a” true church of Christ in error.

Indeed, if the creeds produced by this state church in the seven ecumenical councils between 325-451 A.D. are definitive of what is orthodox versus what is heretical, then, the obvious conclusion is that either the Roman and/or Eastern Orthodox Catholic congregations are the true apostolic congregations of Christ or the history we possess is largely a product of Roman Catholic revisionism of actual history.

Is there any evidence that the secular church history from the second to the sixteenth century could have been manipulated? It is common knowledge that the selecting of materials, writing and preservation of ecclesiastical records up to the Reformation period have for the greater part been solely in the hands of Rome.¹⁰⁰ She alone determined what should be preserved and what should be destroyed during the first fifteen hundred years of recorded history. She has defined what is to be recognized as orthodoxy, and what is to be recognized as heretical, and who are to be regarded as orthodox and who is to be recognized as “heretics.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ “The original sources of our information are, almost exclusively, the Catholic writers—a race of men who, while they had an interest in disguising the truth, appear to have delighted themselves in culminating all that dissented themselves from their communion. And even since the Reformation. . . our Protestant historians have been but too implicitly led by those false guides. There is scarcely any history of the Christian Church extant in our language from which it would not be easy to exemplify the truth of this representation. . . But with any man with his eyes open, and capable of exercising two grains of discrimination, should have first of all permitted himself to be so far imposed upon by the Catholic writers, as to give credit to such a tissue of absurd and ridiculous fooleries, and then gravely to detail them to his readers for the truth of history, is at once a striking weakness of the author, and of the necessity of exercising continual vigilance on the part of the reader, if he would neither become the dupe of Papal slander, nor of Protestant credulity.” William Jones, **The History of the Christian Church.** (Louisville: Norwood & Palmer, 1831) Vol. I, Preface.

¹⁰¹ “Church councils often have been manipulated and ecclesiastical tradition has been falsified to give credence to some teaching entirely unknown to the New Testament.” Robert

The Roman Catholic Church history paradigm dominates nearly all histories of Christianity and is the predominate view being taught in most Bible Colleges and Seminaries in the world today. However, this Roman Catholic paradigm is based largely upon the accuracy and trustworthiness of Rome. According to this paradigm “Sacred Tradition” is the basis for determining and defining the true nature of New Testament Christianity, as well as, the post-New Testament development of church history.

I. A NEW CHURCH HISTORY PARADIGM

What happens if we reject this dominant paradigm of church history and develop a new paradigm based upon the following assumptions? What happens if the historian begins with the assumption that secular church history unlike the Scriptures is:

- A. **Uninspired**, thus subject to personal bias;¹⁰²
- B. **Incomplete**; and therefore insufficient;
- C. **Often inaccurate**,¹⁰³ and therefore not reliable.

What happens if the historian begins with the New Testament and its inspired characteristics of true New Testament Christianity and its inspired predictions as the template or paradigm for evaluating all future uninspired secular church histories?

Isn't it true that most major denominations today have provided their

A. Baker, **The Baptist March in History** (Nashville: Convention Press, 1958) p. 2

¹⁰² *No men are less to be trusted than the monkish historians, when they speak of the character and doctrine of dissidents from Rome.” Benjamin Evans. **The Early English Baptists**, (Greenwood: The Attic Press, Reprint 1977) Vol. 1, p. 13*

¹⁰³ *“...no impartial reader can, I think, investigate the innumerable grotesque and lying legends that, during the whole course of the Middle Ages, were deliberately palmed upon mankind as undoubted facts, can follow the histories of the false decretals, and the discussions that were connected with them, or can observe the complete and absolute incapacity most Catholic historians have displayed, of conceiving any good thing in the ranks of their opponents, or stating with common fairness any consideration that can tell against their cause, without acknowledging how serious and how inveterate has been the evil. There have been, no doubt many noble exceptions. Yet, it is, I believe difficult to exaggerate the extent to which this moral defect exists in most of the ancient and very much of the modern literature of Catholicism.” William E. H. Lecky, **History of European Morals. 2 Vols.** (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1887) Vol. 2, p. 212*

own uninspired history? For example, don't the Mormon's and Jehovah's Witnesses have a written record of their history and don't each claim to be the model of New Testament Christianity? However, it is not their secular historical record that determines whether or not they are true representatives of New Testament Christianity, but both their record and doctrine is compared to the inspired Scriptures to determine if they are true representatives of New Testament Christianity. Likewise, should not that be the case with Roman and Eastern Catholicism and their secular records (Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers)?

What if the inspired Scriptures predict the soon rise of an apostate form of Christianity that will dominate the stage of history shortly after the apostolic era that will wax worse and worse until the Second Coming of Christ?

Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; - 1 Tim. 4:1

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.—Acts 20:29-30

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.—2 Tim.3:13

What if the inspired Scriptures predict that apostate form of Christianity will claim to be orthodox apostolic Christianity while perverting, then condemning, and then persecuting true New Testament Christianity as heretical and unorthodox?

If an historian began with this inspired premise of the post-apostolic state of Christendom and judged the merits of secular church history based upon how it conformed to this New Testament paradigm what would be the outcome of that approach?

For example, how credible is Rome's testimony and how accurate are her definitions in comparison to this New Testament paradigm? How accurate are her records? Not all scholars completely trust her definition of orthodoxy or the reliability of her records. There have been many historians from many

denominations, including some candid Roman Catholic historians that view the data preserved by Rome in a completely different light.¹⁰⁴

What are the inspired templates provided by New Testament predictive prophecies of the future state of the New Testament church? According to prophetic scriptures where are we to look to find New Testament congregations in secular history?

II. DON'T LOOK AMONG CONGREGATIONS WHO PERSECUTE

*These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, **that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.** And these things will they do unto you, **because they have not known the Father, nor me.** - Jn. 16:1-3 - emphasis mine*

At the very minimum, this is clearly a Biblical prophecy that should warn us not to look for the true congregations of Christ among those who profess to serve God by persecuting and killing other professed people of God.

It does not take much study of secular church history from the fourth century to the sixteenth century to realize that the Roman Catholic Church perfectly characterizes this kind of Christianity. The doctrine of the “two swords” is clearly the trademark of the Roman Catholic Church between the 4th and 17th centuries. This doctrine claimed that God had given the church two swords, one wielded by the church to condemn heretics, while the other given to the secular government to prosecute whom the church condemned as heretics.¹⁰⁵ The Law formulated by Rome to carry out this

¹⁰⁴ “The Catholics... instead of assuming such honorable pride, the orthodox theologians were tempted, by the assurance of impunity to compose fictions, which must be stigmatized with epithets of fraud and forgery. They ascribed their own polemical works to the most venerable names of Christian antiquity; the characters of Athanasius and Augustine were awkwardly personated by Vigilius and his disciples.... Even the Scriptures themselves were profaned by their rash hands... the example of fraud must cite suspicion.” Edward Gibbons, **The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire.** (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier. 1845) Vol. 3, pp. 555,556,557

¹⁰⁵ Leonard Verduin, **The Reformers and their Stepchildren,** (Erdmann’s: Grand Rapid, MI, 1964), pp. 42, 46, 57

doctrine was called the Code of Theodosius (312-348 A.D.) which was later incorporated into the Justinian Code (529-534 A.D.).¹⁰⁶ These same codes were used by Rome between 313 A.D. up to the 1800's. It does not take much study of the Reformation period right up until the declaration of Independence in America, to realize that both Roman and Reformed Catholicism (Protestantism) killed and persecuted one another. In addition, both at times, joined forces and persecuted professed Christians, who were neither part of their denominations, nor took part in such acts of persecution.

Where then do you look for His true congregations? If prophetic Scripture is our guide, then you don't look among those known for their persecution of other professed Christians. You look among those whom Rome and Reformed Rome persecuted and martyred as "heretics."¹⁰⁷ This is the inspired predicted plight of the true congregations of Christ during this time of predicted apostasy. Their history is traced by the trail of blood of their martyrs.

*And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints,
and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her,
I wondered with great admiration. - Rev. 17:6*

III. DON'T LOOK AMONG STATE CONGREGATIONS

*And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: **With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication**, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So, he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of*

¹⁰⁶ A list of these laws can be found at: <http://www.mountainman.com.au/essenes/codex/theodosianus.htm>

¹⁰⁷ There was no doubt genuine "heretics" condemned by Rome. However, Rome condemned all who opposed her as "heretics." Therefore, among those persecuted as heretics, especially those labeled "Anabaptists" are the true apostolic congregations to be found.

blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. - Rev. 17:1-5 - emphasis mine

Some attempt to interpret this prophetic woman as merely secular and political Rome, but that is contextually impossible. In Revelation 17:1-5, the symbolic descriptions are provided, whereas in Revelation 17:6-18, these symbolic descriptions are explained. In both the symbolic description and explanation, she is clearly distinguished from secular government and its kings:

*With whom **the kings** of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.—Rev. 17:2*

*And the ten horns which thou sawest are **ten kings**, which have received no **kingdom** as yet; but receive power as **kings** one hour with the beast... and give **their kingdom** unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.—Rev. 17:12, 17*

The descriptions of the seven headed “*beast*” are the same descriptions given by Daniel. They characterize secular Gentile kingdoms (Dan. 7). Her relationship to this beast is two-fold.

1. She sits upon it—Symbolism of being supported by the beast and ruling over the beast.
2. She commits fornication with the kings of the earth—Symbolism of illicit union—a marriage of state and religion = state religion

Furthermore, she is symbolically identified as “*Mystery Babylon*.” The term “*mystery*” when attached to “*Babylon*” commonly referred to the pagan religions that originated from Babel. Babel was the first organized and institutionalized religious rebellion against God. Nimrod took the truth of God written in the heavens, and transformed it into astrology, and perverted

the nature of the Creator into that of the creature, making himself a god man. When God confused, and scattered the citizens of Babel, this “*mystery*” religion was scattered throughout the world. Babylon was the greatest center of this “*mystery Babylon*” religion during the time of Daniel, from which, much of the symbolism is taken from in the book of Revelation. “*Mystery Babylon*” is state sponsored and state institutionalized false religion.¹⁰⁸

She has been the state religion of every gentile government that has risen previous to Rome (Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Medes and Persians, Greece). This harlot has controlled and manipulated every one of these former gentile governments in order to persecute and kill the people of God. Hence, John could say, she was responsible not only for the death of all the prophets and the saints “*upon the earth,*” but responsible for deceiving all the nations:

*for by thy sorceries were **all nations** deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of **all that were slain upon the earth.***—Rev. 18:23-24 - emphasis mine

Therefore, this predicted apostate Christian killer (Jn. 16:1-4) is also the predicted apostate state religion. The Babylonian mystery religion had its seat of power in the city of Rome at the time John wrote this vision:

*And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.... And the woman which thou sawest **is** that great city, which **reigneth** over the kings of the earth.*—Rev. 17:9, 18

Indeed, Vespasian had minted a Roman coin in 71 A.D. prior to John’s imprisonment that depicted a woman (*Dea Roma*) sitting on the seven hills of Rome just as John describes her in Revelation 17:9:

¹⁰⁸ Alexander Hislop, **The Two Babylons or the Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His wife;** (Loizeaux Brothers, NY; 1945)



In the ancient Roman religion, the goddess *Dea Roma* personified the city of Rome. On other early Roman coins can be found a picture of Caesar with the words “*Pontifex Maximus*” (Pope’s title) which was the title for the High Priest of the Mystery Babylonian religion. He was the High Priest over a lower class of priests who were called the “college of pontiffs” (college of cardinals). This title is depicted in early Roman coins during the apostolic age with a picture of Caesar on the throne.



John was on the island of Patmos, because he refused to offer up incense, dedicated to this deity of Rome, the High Priest of the Mystery Religion “Pontifex Maxim.”

However, John’s message is concerning the future of this harlot. She will be destroyed by ten kings, who have not yet come to power at the time John wrote, nor will they come to power, until “one hour” just preceding the second coming of Christ.

*And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, **which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.** These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war*

with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful... and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.—Rev. 17:12, 17

These prophetic parameters deny that this “*harlot*” is secular Roman government since the secular Roman government fell in 476 A.D. However, even before 476 A.D. the secular arm of Rome enforced the Code of Theodosius against heretics. After 476 A.D. it is Vatican Rome that has ruled over the secular Rome and attempted to rule over all the “*kings*” of the world through its religious arm.

Significantly, that “*hour*” of her destruction has not yet arrived even unto this present day. That means she is still ruling over the secular and economic government of Rome (Rev. 17-18). There are true children of God found within her (Rev. 18:4).

At the writing of Revelation, mystery Babylon was located in the city of Rome (Rev. 17:18). Due to the rise of a false sacramental gospel and lax church discipline, many congregations between 150 and 325 A.D. would be infiltrated and contaminated by those still holding to and practicing many aspects of this Babylonian mystery religion. In 312 A.D. the Code of Theodosius would be enforced and in 325 A.D. these congregations would form an alliance with Constantine the Great and would become the recognized state religion of the Roman Empire with its religious center in Rome. After the death of Constantine, Bishop Leo (440-461) assumed the title *Pontifex Maximus* in Rome and every bishop in Rome thereafter claimed that title. In 476 A.D. secular Rome was overthrown by the Germanic tribes and since that time Rome has been under the rule of the Vatican state and the new Pontifex Maximus—the pope. Below are samples of coins minted in Rome under pagan Rome and Vatican Rome where the same title of the High Priest of the Babylonian Mystery religion is seen (Pont. Max = Pontifex Maximus).



The Reformation in the 16th century was a movement within the Roman Catholic Church by those called Reformers (thus, Reformation) who failed to transform Rome. **Significantly all these Reformers reverted back to the New Testament as the basis to reform the Catholic Church, rather than to the church fathers, because they soon realized that the “sacred tradition” logically led to the current condition of Rome.** Moreover, (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, etc.) charged Rome to be the “*Great Whore*” of Revelation. They were forced out and started their own denominations (Luther = Lutherans; Calvin = Presbyterians; etc.). However, they too became state congregations or metaphorical “*harlots*” who persecuted and kill Catholics and others just like their metaphorical “*mother*.”

1. Lutheranism - The Church of Germany
2. Presbyterianism - The Church of Scotland;
The Church of Switzerland
3. Episcopalian - The Church of England
4. The Reformed Church - The Church of Holland

Even today, Rome recognizes them as her metaphorical “*daughters*” and they recognize Rome as their metaphorical “*mother*.”

And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. - Rev. 17:5

However, in the overall context of Revelation 17-21 John is contrasting two types of religious institutions with each other. The first is a state supported religious institution while the latter is the New Testament church institution.

The first, is described as a metaphorical impure, and unfaithful woman (Rev. 17:5 harlot, whore), while the second is described as a metaphorically pure and faithful woman or bride (Rev 19:6-7). The first has its seat of authority in an earthly worldly city (Rev. 17:18), whereas the second has her seat of authority in the heavenly city (Rev. 21). The contrast is too clear to miss. This is the ultimate contrast between polluted and pure institutionalized religion, right up to the second advent of Christ. The two chief characteristics of metaphorically polluted institutionalized Christianity (“*harlot*”) are (1) they are the Persecutors and killers of professed Christians and, (2) Union with secular government.

Predicted apostate state Christianity would be permeated by the Mystery Babylonian religion. The titles of Pontifex Maximus, Pope (papa) and College of Cardinals (college of Pontiffs) are all foreign to the New Testament but well-known titles found in the mystery Babylonian religion.

The College of Cardinals, with the Pope at its head, is just the counterpart of the Pagan College of Pontiffs, with its ‘Pontifex Maximus,’ or ‘Sovereign Pontiff,’ which had existed in Rome from the earliest times, and which is known to have been framed on the model of the grand original Council of Pontiffs at Babylon.—Alexander Hislop, **The Two Babylon’s or The Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His wife.** (Loizeaux Brothers, New Jersey, 1959), p. 206

The traditions that characterize Roman Catholic holidays such as Easter, Halloween, and Christmas were holidays and customs of the Babylonian Religion that Rome adopted under Christian names. The idea of sacraments, Lent, the feast of assumption, and many other standard things practiced by Roman and Greek Catholicism also come directly from the Babylonian Mystery Religion.¹⁰⁹

Between 325 and 451 A.D. the state church through a series of seven councils defined orthodoxy versus heresy. The secular state enforced these distinctions which brought on the Dark Ages.

¹⁰⁹ See “*The Two Babylons*” by Alexander Hislop for more documented evidence.

Take note that neither the idea nor the origin of a state church is promoted in the New Testament, but originates with paganized Christianity, and three hundred years after the writing of the New Testament.

We are not to look for apostolic Christianity among any kind of state church, or state religion. Such, is an unholy union (harlotry—“*fornication with the kings of the earth*”). This Biblical prophecy rules out Rome and her Reformation daughters, as possible candidates to be New Testament congregations. Where are we to look then? We are to look among those condemned for refusing to join this unholy union between church and state. Those identified by state congregations, as “heretics.” Not just any kind of “heretics” but those who were “anabaptist” or those who reject the whole ceremonial structure of the state church refusing to accept her ordinances as valid.

IV. DON'T LOOK AMONG THOSE CONGREGATIONS WHICH EMBRACE PREDICTED APOSTATE DOCTRINES

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. - 1 Tim. 4:1-5

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. - Gal. 1:8-9

Roman Catholicism is well known for prohibiting its priests and nuns to marry as well as prohibiting them to eat meats on certain days. Seventh Day Adventism, and other apostate Christian cults, are also well known concerning their dietary laws. These, along with multitudes of new denominations distort, and thus deny the gospel of grace, and teach justification by works.

There are other equally clear scriptural warnings about those who would distort the true nature of God (John 1:1; 1 Jn. 4:1-4; 2 Jn. 9-11; Mt. 28:19). Among those who fall under this category are the Roman Catholics,¹¹⁰ United Pentecostal Congregations, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Latter Day Saints, and scores more. Rome believes in a Quadrinity (Mary) rather than a Trinity. The early Catholic church included Arians right up to its highest level. They call Mary the "Mother of God" and attribute to her every divine title of God.

Seeds of such false doctrines and apostasy were already being sown in the apostolic age. The New Testament consisted primarily of epistles written to correct false doctrines. Secular church history provides evidence that such doctrines rapidly began to permeate the very type of Christianity recorded in the second and third centuries which eventually became the state church religion headquartered in Rome. Therefore, the historical records which were preserved by Rome are an accurate record of the development, and fulfillment of this predicted apostasy that ultimately was formed into the state church type of Christianity.

Evangelical Christians are in a dilemma. If the early records accurately portray the development of true apostolic Christianity between the second and sixteenth century, and all other forms are "heretical" as those records demand, then either true apostolic Christianity was erased off the face of the earth for fifteen hundred years or these historical records simply preserve the history of apostasy just as the Scriptures predicted. Therefore, true apostolic Christianity is found among those called "heretics" during this period.¹¹¹

What the apostate church called truth and orthodoxy, the Bible and apostolic Christianity calls heresy. What Roman and Reformed Catholicism

¹¹⁰ *Catholics deify Mary as the "Mother of God" and attribute to her attributes and titles only fitting for God. Between 312 and 325 A.D. the state church consisted of Arian congregations (those who denied the Trinity and the deity of Christ). Indeed, Constantine himself waited to be baptized upon his death bed by an Arian bishop.*

¹¹¹ *Landmark Baptist base their view of church history upon the promises of Christ and the apostles, that the church as an institution would remain chaste until Christ returns and the gates of Hades would never prevail against it. Meaning, there would always be true congregations in every generation until Christ returns (Mt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:26).*

condemned as heretics, the New Testament defined as the congregations of Christ “*contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.*” During the period of secular church history (the period of great apostasy), we are clearly warned not to look for the congregations of Christ among those who hold to such explicitly condemned heresies. We are to look for the true congregations among those who opposed these heresies and as a consequence were labeled “heretics” by the ruling state congregations.

V. DON'T LOOK AMONG THOSE WHO PERVERTED AND DISTORTED THE BELIEFS OF OTHERS

It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?—Mt. 10:25

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! - Lk. 7:33

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.—Lk. 6:22

Apostate Christianity at a very early date put into practice four very ingenious slanderous types of methodology when dealing with apostolic Christianity.

1. They would normally select an apostate type person and then attribute his bizarre characteristics to a larger free congregational movement outside of their fellowship based only on superficial resemblances to these characteristics. This practice would repudiate any apostolic claim by dating them after the apostolic age and deny they were apostolic in doctrine.

2. They would establish ecclesiastical laws and then use the secular arm to enforce those laws and put them to death thus claiming they never killed anyone.
3. They would deny that such groups believed certain orthodox doctrines simply because they rejected the Catholic version of that doctrine.
4. They would methodically destroy the writings of their enemies and then select the materials and produce a revisionist “Church History” to reflect their own views as orthodoxy.

They called the true congregations of God, **Anabaptists**. The term means to **rebaptize**. New Testament congregations refused to recognize the ordinances of apostate congregations, as scriptural, and therefore, would properly baptize those coming over from the apostate congregations. The practice of anabaptism is the complete rejection of the whole ecclesiastical character of the state church. New Testament congregations denied they rebaptized anyone, but rather claimed that the apostates were never truly baptized. Rome, early on, instituted state enforced ecclesiastical laws against “Anabaptism,” punishable by death. These laws were formulated very early against “Anabaptists” and others regarded as “heretics” and were called the *Codex Theodosius* in 312- 348 A.D. which was included in the *Codex Justinianus* in 529-534 A.D. These laws against heretics were used consistently from 312-1583 A.D.¹¹² The fabrications, and slanders brought against the apostolic Anabaptists by Rome, and her Reformed daughters, are legion.¹¹³ When apostolic Christianity used the Bible as their defense, the inquisitors used Catholic tradition to repudiate their orthodox beliefs, labeling them “*heretics*” instead.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Roman Catholic historians and pro-Catholic historians dispute this. However, they claim that only the secular arm of government ever administered such.

¹¹³ “...The writers of that age searched out the most degrading and insulting epithets that language afforded and applied them with malignant gratification... Yet these men could appeal to those who witnessed their sufferings, and boldly declare, with the axe or the stake in view, none venturing to contradict, that they were not put to death for any evil deeds, but solely for the sake of the Gospel.” J.M. Cramp, **Baptist History**. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication) p. 155

¹¹⁴ “...two heresies penalized by death in the *Codex Justinianus* were a denial of the trinity and a repetition of baptism. This ancient legislation directed against the Arians and Donatists was revived in the Sixteenth Century and applied to Anti-Trinitarians and Anabaptists. Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin all appealed to the imperial law... In fact, the very name ‘Anabaptist,’ meaning ‘Rebaptism,’ was invented in order to subject to imperial law those who preferred to call

Rome accused the ancient apostolic Anabaptist Paulicians for embracing the heresy of Manichaeism even though the Paulicians openly denied it and openly condemned Manichaeism as heresy themselves.¹¹⁵ The ancient Anabaptists were accused of denying marriage, denying the Lord's Day, denying observances of the ordinances, denying Christ, etc., simply because they denied the Roman Catholic version of these things.¹¹⁶ By the time of the Reformation the term "anabaptist" took on a new slanderous accusation. The radical militant Pedobaptists (baby baptizers) led by Thomas Muntzer in Germany were labeled as Anabaptists by the Lutheran State Church in order to exterminate all evangelical Anabaptists by the thousands even though Muntzerites were Pedobaptist and not Anabaptists. Anabaptists condemned the Muntzerites as anarchists and denied such were ever part of the true Anabaptist (pacifist) movement, but that mattered little to the Lutheran, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic state inquisitors.

This Muntzerite distortion was carried over into England where Baptists were called "Anabaptists" in order to characterize them as militant anarchists. Indeed, in the 1644 London confession of Faith the title page says:

CONFESSION OF FAITH of seven congregations or congregations of Christ in London, which are commonly, but unjustly, called Anabaptists; published for the vindication of the

themselves simply Baptists. They would never admit they baptized over again, for infant baptism was to them no baptism but rather a 'dipping in the Roman bath.'" Roland H. Bainton, **The Travail of Religious Liberty** (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958) pp. 98-99

¹¹⁵ "The Paulicians sincerely condemned the memory and opinions of the Manichean sect and complained of the injustice which impressed that invidious name on the simple votaries of St. Paul and of Christ." Edward Gibbons, **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire**. (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1845) Vol. 5, p. 387

¹¹⁶ William Jones says of the Waldenses, "The names imposed on them in France by their adversaries, they say, have been intended to vilify and ridicule them, or to represent them as new and different sects. Being stripped of all their property and reduced by persecution to extreme poverty, they have been called 'poor of Lyons.' From their mean and famished appearance in their exalted and destitute state, they have been called, in provincial jargon, 'Siccan,' or pickpockets. Because they would not observe Saints day, they were falsely supposed to neglect the Sabbath also, and called 'Inzabbatati' or 'InSabbathists.' As they denied transubstantiation or the personal and divine presence of Jesus Christ in the host or wafer exhibited in the mass, they were called 'Arians.' Their adversaries, premising that all power must be derived from God through his vicegerent, the Pope, or from an opposite and evil principle, inferred that the Waldenses were 'Manicheans' because they denied the Pope's supremacy over the emperor and kings of the earth." William Jones, **The History of the Christian Church**, (Norwood & Palmer, Louisville: 1831) p. 300

truth and information of the ignorant; likewise, for the taking off those aspersions which are frequently, both in pulpit and print, unjustly cast upon them. – London Baptist Confession of Faith 1644 (Printed in London, Anno 1644.)

In the early American Colonies, they were still being called “Anabaptists” in attempt to identify them with the Muntzer incident and characterize them as militant anarchists.

Robert A. Baker, the Southern Baptist historian says of the credibility of Roman Catholic sources:

*Church councils often have been manipulated and ecclesiastical tradition has been falsified to give credence to some teaching entirely unknown to the New Testament. –Robert A. Baker, **The Baptist March in History** (Nashville: Convention Press, 1958) p. 2*

Therefore, no student of church history should look for apostolic Christianity among those groups who distorted, perverted and persecuted other professed Christians.

VI. DON'T LOOK AMONG THE SO-CALLED CHURCH FATHERS

Early church history is divided up into various sections as it relates to the Council of Nicaea called by Constantine the Great in 325 A.D. at which time the Nicene Creed was formulated. Those writings after the completion of the New Testament but prior to this council are called **The Ante-**[before] **Nicene Fathers** which consists of a section called **The Apostolic Fathers**, or writings by those who knew the apostles followed by writing of others up to 325 A.D. The next section is called **The Nicene Fathers** which consist primarily of the writings of Augustine of Hippo and Chrysostom who wrote around the time of the council of Nicaea. Those historical sources from 325 to 451 A.D. are called **The Post** [after]-**Nicene Fathers**.

The Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers cover the critical transition period between the Apostles and the Dark Ages. Rome considers these writings to be their “Sacred Tradition” wherein the so-called Seven

Ecumenical Councils under the control of the state church determined and defined the difference between orthodoxy and heresy.

Few, if any evangelical scholars recognize The Nicene Church and Post-Nicene Church Fathers as true representatives of New Testament Christianity. Why? Because they are so radically different from New Testament congregations and obviously like modern Roman Catholicism, that to accept them, would logical lead one to become a Catholic. **That is precisely why the Reformers did not appeal to the “church fathers” as their basis for reform but appealed directly to the Scriptures.** They rightly saw these preserved documents accurately reflect doctrinal evolution into Roman and Orthodox Catholicism.¹¹⁷

However, evangelical scholars today cannot see that **The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers** are the logical historical foundations for **The Nicene** and **The Post-Nicene** records. Within **The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers** we find the origin of explicit errors of baptismal regeneration, and the gradual development of infant immersion, and various orders of ecclesiastical offices that are found explicitly in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers but not in the Scriptures. All of these things are foreign to the New Testament. The Ante-Nicene Fathers record the gradual beginning of apostasy that eventually developed into the Nicene and Post-Nicene pagan form of Christianity or Catholicism. These records are the preserved historical development of the Great Harlot and her daughters and how they originated rather than the record of apostolic Christianity.

Indeed, nearly all historians candidly admit that the Post-Nicene Fathers are clearly connected with Roman Catholic doctrine and practice.

¹¹⁷ George Salmon says concerning the so-called Church Fathers, “And then, when we search for apostolic traditions in the writings of the Father’s, there is nothing to mark their apostolic origin. We have no certain means, by our own ingenuity of distinguishing truth from false traditions, not one of the Fathers are recognized as singly trustworthy guide, every one of them is admitted to have held some views which cannot be safely followed.”—George Salmon, **Infallibility of the Church**, pp. 131. The so-called Church Fathers have been selectively preserved to defend their own history—a history of apostasy. Fredrick W. Farrar in his **History of Interpretation** said of the so-called “Church Fathers”—“There are but few of them whose pages are not rife with errors—errors of method, errors of fact, errors of history, of grammar, and even of doctrine. This is the language of simple truth, not of slighting disparagement. I should be most unwilling to speak with disrespect of the Fathers of the Church. They, like ourselves were children of their age... remember that the Fathers had been thrust into a position of autocracy which they repeatedly and emphatically disclaim, and which they ever claimed it would have been completely nullified by their own writings.”—pp. 162-164

The Nicene Fathers, especially the writings of Augustine are clearly the logical and theological foundations for Roman Catholic ecclesiology. The Ante-Nicene Fathers provide a clear transitional foundation for much of the Nicene theological positions. This is precisely why Rome has preserved and edited these writings because they will logically lead anyone reading them to the Roman Catholic Church theological position as their logical conclusion.

If you reject one, you should reject the other, as they are developmentally inseparable from each other. I reject all and consider them to be the developmental history of apostasy from the close of the apostolic age to the Reformation period.

Is there any value in **The Apostolic Fathers** and **The Ante-Nicene Fathers**? When **The Apostolic Fathers** are compared to **The Post-Nicene Fathers** it reveals clearly how far **The Post-Nicene Fathers** had departed from what was formerly believed and practiced. **The Apostolic Fathers** provide some insights into early Christianity. However, as one progresses in **The Ante-Nicene Fathers**, so does the progression of error until it becomes full bloom in the Post-Nicene condition of Rome.

Therefore, don't look for the true congregations of Christ among the Ant-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers. You will only find the roots and development for the anti-biblical state church from the church fathers.

VII. AN INDISPUTABLE FALSIFICATION OF HISTORICAL SOURCES BY ROME

The “False Decretals” were documents during the Middle Ages that were falsely attributed to famous historical persons in order to provide a basis for ultimately establishing the Catholic Bishop as “pope” over both state and religion worldwide. These forgeries served their purpose as they were not recognized as forgeries until during the Reformation period. Rome now admits to this:

False Decretals is a name given to certain apocryphal papal letters contained in a collection of canon laws composed about the middle of the ninth century by an author who uses the pseudonym of Isidore Mercator, in the opening preface to the collection. For the student of this collection, the best,

indeed the only useful edition, is that of Hinschius, "Decretales Pseudo-Isidorianæ" (Leipzig, 1863). The figures in parenthesis occurring during the course of this article refer the reader to the edition of Hinschius. The name "False Decretals" is sometimes extended to cover not only the papal letters forged by Isidore, and contained in his collection, but the whole collection, although it contains other documents, authentic or apocryphal, written before Isidore's time.

The Collection of Isidore falls under three headings:

A list of sixty apocryphal letters or decrees attributed to the popes from St. Clement (88-97) to Melchiades (311-314) inclusive. Of these sixty letters fifty-eight are forgeries; they begin with a letter from Aurelius of Carthage requesting Pope Damasus (366-384) to send him the letters of his predecessors in the chair of the Apostles; and this is followed by a reply in which Damasus assures Aurelius that the desired letters were being sent. This correspondence was meant to give an air of truth to the false decretals, and was the work of Isidore.

A treatise on the Primitive Church and on the Council of Nicæa, written by Isidore, and followed by the authentic canons of fifty-four councils. It should be remarked, however, that among the canons of the second Council of Seville (page 438) canon vii is an interpolation aimed against chorepiscopi.

The letters mainly of thirty-three popes, from Silvester (314-335) to Gregory II (715-731). Of these about thirty letters are forgeries, while all the others are authentic. This is but a very rough description of their contents and touches only on the more salient points of a most intricate literary question.—New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia—<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05773a.htm> 1/16/2016

However, should we take the word of these popish monks that "*all the others are authentic*"? There are short versus long versions of "Apostolic

Fathers.” The point is that the trustworthiness of all these early documents rests solely upon the trustworthy character of popish monks who were behind one of the most systematic vicious persecuting and killing endeavors in human history during the Dark Ages, as well as, in later inquisitions.

Nearly all early Baptist historians reject these Catholic documents as historically trustworthy. For example, Benjamin Evans says;

*No men are less to be trusted than the monkish historians, when they speak of the character and doctrine of dissidents from Rome. – Benjamin Evans. **The Early English Baptists**, (Greenwood: The Attic Press, Reprint 1977) Vol. 1, p. 13*

It is this kind of distortion, false accusations by the ruling State Churches that defined the Anabaptists as “heretics” that led modern historians to view them through the eyes of their enemies, and it continues to this day.¹¹⁸

We are not to look for the Lord’s congregations among those who intentionally distorted and perverted the historical records. Where are we to look then? We are to look for the Lord’s true congregations among those who are slandered as the “heretics” by such state congregations.

VIII. DON’T LOOK TO THE MAJORITY OF PROFESSING CHRISTENDOM

In the parable of the tares in Matthew 13, the Lord makes it clear that the vast majority of professing Christendom consist of “tares” whereas the true seed is “hid” among the professing stuff.

Likewise, in Matthew 7:13-23 the Lord clearly states that the “many” or majority among professing Christendom are false professors while only “few” or the minority among professing Christendom are truly saved.

¹¹⁸ “Because of this malignant prejudice, the historians of the day dismissed these groups without attempting to gain a documentary understanding or an objective judgment. This prejudging and condemnation of the Free Church movement has been carried on even in later times, a truth illustrated by subsequent Protestant historical accounts of the Anabaptists in the time of the Reformation. Only in recent years has a serious research attempt been made among historians to reconstruct a true picture of the Anabaptist movement.” Earl D. Rachmacher, **What the Church Is All About** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978) p. 67

Furthermore, the last days are characterized by a great apostasy rather than great revivals (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thes. 2:9-11) and that deceivers and deception will only “*wax worse and worse*” (2 Tim. 3:13). The Great Harlot and her daughters will dominate the religious world in the last days (Rev. 17:1-10).

When Jesus was encouraging his disciples to persevere in prayer, he asked the rhetorical question, “*shall I find faith when I come*” (Lk. 18:1-8) implying the great apostasy in the last days will be so great that few true believers will populate the earth during those days, as he likens those days unto the days of Noah, and the days of Lot. Very few true believers existed in the days of Noah or the days of Lot.

However, it should be expected that apostate Christianity will view and tout this great influx of converts among them in the last days as a great “revival” rather than a great apostasy.

Don't look for New Testament Christianity in the majority of professed Christendom but in its minority.

CONCLUSION: The New Testament predicts a type of Christianity that will profess to serve God but will persecute and kill apostolic Christianity. The New Testament predicts that apostate Christianity will be a state religion characterized by the Mystery Babylonian religion. The New Testament predicts that apostolic Christianity will be perverted and falsely accused. The New Testament predicts that apostate Christianity will become the dominating type of Christianity until the coming of Christ. Therefore, the secular record of church history reflects with total accuracy this prophetic view by the New Testament. The very ones that secular history characterizes as orthodox, the New Testament predicts to be apostate Christianity. Those that secular history characterizes and condemns as “heretics” are what the New Testament anticipates and predicts will be the plight of New Testament Christianity. Remember, secular church history is uninspired, thus biased, and it is incomplete, thus not sufficient, and often wrong, thus unreliable.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What three facts should students keep in mind when studying uninspired? historians and secular history?

2. List five places one should not look for true New Testament Congregations.
3. Is there a logical and doctrinal development between the Ante-Nicene and Nicene and Post-Nicene records?
4. Why should the “Church Fathers” be regarded as the developmental history of the Roman and Orthodox Catholic Church and thus, the history of apostasy?
5. If the “church fathers” do not logically lead one to Catholicism, but are the source of Christian orthodoxy, then why didn’t the Reformers use the “church fathers” instead of Scripture as the basis for reform?
6. Where does the title “Pontifex Maximus” originate?
7. Where does the “College of Cardinals” originate?
8. Who was the first Bishop of Rome to claim the title “Pontifex Maximus”?
9. Give reasons why “mystery Babylon” in Rev. 17 cannot be secular government.
10. Give reasons why “mystery Babylon” continues up to the end of this age.

WEEK 8 LESSON 2

Great Commission—Part 4— The Prophetic History

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to show that prominent historians and theologians in other denominations have recognized that Baptist kind of congregations have continued from the apostolic period to the present and were found among those called “heretics” in secular church history also called “Anabaptists” and, (2) to show that universal church historians accept and promote a biased secular church history and use it to attack New Testament church perpetuity and, (3) to expose the student to the so-called “scientific method” of historical research and its biases.

INTRODUCTION: If the Roman Catholic Church is not the true outward visible historical representative of New Testament Christianity between the second and sixteenth centuries than who is? Did the outward form of New Testament Christianity cease to exist until after the Reformation? Many believe that it continued to exist among those groups that Rome condemned as “heretics” especially among those called “Anabaptists.”

I. THE TESTIMONY OF OTHERS

There were many non-Baptist historians who lived prior to and during the time when earlier Baptist historians published their works that acknowledged the antiquity of the Baptists. For example,

1. **Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727)**—one of the greatest scientists who ever lived says:

*The Modern Baptist, formerly called Anabaptists, are the only people who have never symbolized with the Papacy—*William Whiston, **Memoirs of Whiston**, quoted in W.A. Jarrell's **Baptist Church Perpetuity**. (Dallas, 1894, reprinted by Calvary Baptist Book Store, Ashland, Kentucky) p. 313

2. **John Clark Ridpath**, Methodist, author of the monumental work "Ridpath's History of the World" says in a private letter to Dr. W.A. Jarrell:

I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as 100 AD, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists. - John Clark Ridpath, personal letter to W.A. Jarrell, quoted in W.A. Jarrell's **Baptist Church Perpetuity** (Dallas, TX: 1894, reprinted by Calvary Baptist Church Book Store, Ashland, K.Y.), p. 59

3. **The King of Holland** appointed Dr. J.J. Dermout and Dr. Ypeij of the Reformed Church to write a history of Christianity and they say of the Baptists:

We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites were the original Waldenses, and who have long in history received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all ages... - Ypeij en Dermout, *Geschiedenis Der nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk*. (Breda 1819) quoted by J.T. Christian in **A History of the Baptists** (Texarkana, AR; Bogard Press, 1922) vol. 1, pp. 95-96

4. **Mosheim, Lutheran Historian** says,

*Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay secreted in almost all the countries of Europe persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists—*Johann Laurenz von Mosheim, **An Ecclesiastical History**, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1860), [Reprinted by Old Paths Book Club, Box V, Rosemead, CA., Second ed.], Vol.

II pp. 119,120

5. **Cardinal Hosius**, Roman Catholic, Ambassador of the Pope to the Council of Trent says in the year 1563 AD

For not so long ago I read the edict of the other prince who lamented the fate of the Anabaptists who, so we read, were pronounced heretics twelve hundred years ago and deserving of capital punishment. He wanted them to be heard and not taken as condemned without a hearing. - Ott, Michael. "Stanislaus Hosius." **The Catholic Encyclopedia**. Vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.¹¹⁹

Hosius dated the Anabaptists to at least 363 A.D.

6. **Zwingli, Swiss Reformer**, writing in 1525 says of the Anabaptists:

The institution of the Anabaptists is no novelty, but for THIRTEEN HUNDRED YEARS has caused great trouble to the church.—**Christian**, op cit. p. 86

This Reformer dates Baptists back to 225 A.D.

7. **Alexander Campbell**, founder of the Disciples of Christ says of the Baptists;

From the Apostolic Age to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced.—**Alexander Campbell, A Debate on Christian Baptism, Between the Rev. W.L. Maccalla, A Presbyterian teacher, and Alexander Campbell**, ("Buffalo," NY., Campbell and Sala, 1824) pp. 378, 379

8. **Robert Barclay**, a Quaker says,

There are also reasons for believing that on the continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many

¹¹⁹ *Nam & alterius Principis edictum non ita pridem legi, qui vicem Anabaptistarum dolens, quos ante mille ducentos annes haereticos, capitalique supplicio dignos esse pronunciatos legimus, vult, ut audiantur omnino, nec indicta causa pro condemnatis habeantur.* (**The letters of Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius, Liber Epistolarum 150**, titled "Alberto Bavariae Duci" in about 1563 A.D.)

of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the time of the Apostles—Robert Barclay, **The Inner Life of the Societies of the Commonwealth.** (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1876), pp. 11, 12

The Protestant Reformer Henry Bullinger confirms the fact that these apostolic congregations rejected both Protestant and Catholic congregations and their ordinances as representative of New Testament Christianity when he says of them:

The Anabaptists think themselves to be the only true church of Christ, and acceptable to God; and teach that they, who by baptism are received into their congregations, ought not to have communion [fellowship] with [those called] evangelical, or any other whatsoever: for that our- [i.e., evangelical Protestant, or reformed] congregations are not true congregations, any more than the congregations of the Papists. - J.R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism What Is It?** (Reprint by Calvary Baptist Church Book Shop, Ashland, KY) p. 115

All Baptist historians prior to 1880 believed that Baptists congregations and/or Baptist principles could be found in every generation from the apostles to their present time among those called “Anabaptists.”

Some Baptist congregations have even provided historical links to trace their church back to the New Testament. These links are based upon congregations being directly established by other congregations or indirectly through their ordained ministry. For example, the following is provided by the Baptist Church at Dyer, Tennessee which was organized by J.W. Jetter.

BAPTIST SUCCESSION BACK TO CHRIST

1. Link One: The Baptist church at Dyer, Tennessee, was organized by J. W. Jetter, who came from the Philadelphia Association.
2. Link Two: Hill cliff Church, Wales, England. H. Roller came to the Philadelphia Association from The Hill Cliff Church. See minutes of Philadelphia Association, book 3, item 1.
3. Link Three: Hill cliff Church was organized by Aaron Arlington, A. D. 987. See Alex Munston’s *Israel of the Alps*, p. 39.

4. Link Four: Lima Piedmont church ordained Aaron Arlington in 940. See Jones' Church History, p. 324.
5. Link Five: Lima Piedmont church was organized by Balcolao, A. D. 812. See Neander's Church History, vol. 2, p. 320.
6. Link Six: Balcolao came from the church at Timto, Asia Minor. See Neander's Church History, vol. 2, p. 320.
7. Link Seven: Timto church was organized by Archer Flavin, A. D. 738. See Mosheim's History, vol. 1, p. 394.
8. Link Eight: Archer Flavin came from the Darethea church, organized by Adromicus, A. D. 671, in Asia Minor. See Lambert's Church History, p. 47.
9. Link Nine: Adromicus came from Pontifossi, at the foot of the Alps in France. See Lambert's Church History, p. 47.
10. Link Ten: Pontifossi church was organized by Tellestman from Turan, Italy, A. D. 398. See Nowlin's Church History, vol. 2, p. 318.
11. Link Eleven: Turan church was organized by Tertullan from Bing Joy, Africa, A. D. 237. See Armitage's Church History, p. 182.
12. Link Twelve: Tertullan was a member of the Partus church at the foot of the Tiber, that was organized by Polycarp, A. D. 150. See Cyrus' Commentary of Antiquity, p. 924.
13. Link Thirteen: Polycarp was baptized by John the Beloved or Revelator, on the twenty-fifth of December, A. D. 95. See Neander's Church History, p. 285.
14. Link Fourteen: John was with Jesus on the Mount. Mark 3: 13-14; Luke 6: 12-13.

II. THE PERPETUITY PROBLEM

The above is an example of how Baptist could still use flawed secular church history to show the *plausibility* of historical succession of congregations back to the New Testament through the process of the Great Commission.

Even most universal invisible church Baptists in the late 19th and early 20th century who denied New Testament church succession, admit that the outward visible form of apostolic Christians continued from the apostolic times unto the Reformation among those "heretics" called "Anabaptists." They

also admit that present day “Baptists” originated from such “Anabaptists.” One such Baptist universal invisible church historian says:

*But it is impossible to show that any one person, or any one sect, for a period of more than a thousand years, consistently held the entire body of truth that Baptists believe the Scriptures teach, or even all its vital parts. It is possible that with further research that such proof may be brought to light: - Henry C. Vedder, **Short History of the Baptists.** [Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1907] p. 9*

Dr. A.C. Underwood, an English Baptist historian, who also opposed New Testament church succession, admitted that Baptists were the historical “spearhead” of such earlier groups known under various names that later became identified as Baptists:

*No modern reader of some of the earlier histories of the Baptists can fail to be surprised at the extraordinary way in which their descent from the New Testament is traced through such groups as the Montanists, the Novatianists, the Paulicians, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the Lollards and others, all of whom are claimed as Baptists. The instincts of the writers who made these excursions into genealogy were sounder than their scholarship. We cannot now agree that all the groups they so industriously enumerated were Baptists, **but they did belong to the same type of Christianity, and of that type Baptists have been the spearhead.**—A.C. Underwood, *A History of the Early English Baptists*, (Kingsgate Press: London, 1947) p. 15—emphasis mine*

III. A NEW BREED OF BAPTIST HISTORIANS

Early Baptist historians between 1656 and 1880 identified Baptists with the apostolic congregations in the New Testament which continued to reproduce themselves among various groups of Anabaptists up to their present day. However, in 1880 a new breed of Baptist historian emerged who

claimed that all previous Baptist historians were in error based upon a new “**scientific method**” of historical research. This group of historians claimed their research methods were not denominational or doctrinally biased but stood solely upon “primary sources.” However, later research revealed they were doctrinally biased and that “primary source” materials were just an excuse to ignore other mitigating factors that would question the credibility of such “primary sources.” It was just a smoke screen to justify the Roman Catholic view of history as the vast majority of “primary sources” were Roman Catholic in origin.

Dr. Robert Ashcraft points out that German Rationalism entered the halls of academia among Baptists in the late 1800’s at Louisville Southern Baptist Seminary under the guise of the “**new historical critical method.**” This same method when applied to textual criticism of the Scriptures resulted in denial of Biblical inspiration and promoted evolution. When applied to church history along with a theological bias of universalism, it supported the view of Reformed Romanism. - Robert Ashcraft, **Contending for the Faith.** (Baptist Sunday School Committee, Texarkana, TX. 2006) pp. 601-606

It should be no surprise that Baptist universal/invisible church historians defend the “critical method” as it supports their ecclesiastical bias and very effectively repudiates the perpetuity of any outward form of New Testament Christianity. By “outward form” is meant the New Testament *ekklesia* and its ordinances.

This “*new breed*” of Baptist historians have come on the scene in the latter part of the 19th century and are “*literally rewriting the history of Baptists to suit their own Protestant concepts*” (I. K. Cross, **The Battle for Baptist History** (Brentwood Christian Press: Columbus GA, 1990), p. 117.

This “*new breed*” of historians are characterized by four major characteristics. (1) All of these new historians are universal invisible church advocates; (2) They all accept the Roman Catholic source materials as generally accurate representations of actual history and justify that position by claiming their view is based upon the “primary source materials.” (3) They all set aside the conclusions of earlier Baptist historians by simply accusing them as being denominationally biased, and not being objective or accurate according to the new “scientific method” of research. (4) They all quote each other and Roman Catholic sources as final authorities.

The earliest Baptist historians who adopted this new “scientific method” were largely trained in Protestant Seminaries either in the states or in Europe, or in seminaries where the universal church doctrine is regarded as the standard of orthodoxy.



Dr. William H. Whitsitt (1841-1911)

The very first Baptist pioneer of this new “scientific method” was Dr. William H. Whitsitt. Whitsitt entered the University of Virginia in 1866, and then the following year (1867) entered Southern Seminary where he remained for two sessions before going to Europe in 1869 where he was accepted at the University of Leipzig and at the University of Berlin where he completed his graduate studies in 1871. In 1872 he was accepted as the professor of church history at Louisville Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and taught that course from 1872 to 1895. It was in Europe he claims he was introduced to “the historical method of research” or what was later called among Baptists the “new scientific method” of research. During his studies as a student in these very liberal Protestant institutions in Europe he researched the origin of Baptists especially in England from documentary sources, chiefly found in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library. The conclusion of his research was that immersion originated among some Paedobaptists in England in the year 1641. Thus, he believed that Baptists did not originate in the New Testament times nor were they perpetuated from the apostolic times unto his present day but originated with Paedobaptists in England in 1641. Dr. Whitsitt fully understood that his new view of the origin of Baptists was contradictory to all previous Baptist historians, and to most Baptists living in America. In the 1890’s, Whitsitt wrote an article for the *Johnson’s Universal Encyclopedia*, in which he set forth his belief that Baptists in England had originated as Paedobaptists

who began to practice immersion in 1641 but previously either poured or sprinkled. Prior to this article, he had anonymously presented this theory in the *New Year Independent* in 1880 through its editor, Dr. William Hayes Ward but under a fictitious name. In September 1896 Whitsitt published a book entitled *A Question in Baptist History*. Whitsitt says in this book:

During the autumn of 1877, shortly after I had been put in charge of the school of church History at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in preparing my lectures on Baptist History, I made the discovery that, prior to the year 1641 our Baptist people in England were in the practice of sprinkling and pouring for baptism. I kept it to myself until the year 1880. - William Heth Whitsitt, **A Question in Baptist History: Whether the Anabaptists in England Practiced Immersion Before 1641** (Louisville, C.T. Dearing, 1896)

William H. Whitsitt was the first to make the “scientific method” of research popular among academic universal invisible church Baptists. However, Whitsitt’s own research methods in this very area were exposed to be superficial and inaccurate by the methodical research of Dr. John T. Christian.



Dr. John T. Christian (1854-1925)

Dr. John T. Christian, who later became the professor of church history at New Orleans Bible Institute (later known as New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) went to Europe and investigated the source materials that had been used by Dr. Whitsitt to arrive at his new conclusion about Baptists and their history. However, he discovered that prior to 1641 it was illegal in England for dissenters of the state recognized church to publish anything. In 1641 this publishing ban was lifted and therefore Baptists

began to publish and defend their views. Therefore, Christian discovered why Whitsitt could not find any published writings prior to 1641. When such views began to be published from 1641 forward, Whitsitt had assumed that immersion, and thus Baptists had begun in 1641. Dr. Christian thoroughly exposed the superficial research by Dr. Whitsitt in a series of books: (1) “Did they Dip” - 1896; (2) “Baptist History Vindicated” 1899; (3) A History of Baptists, 2 Vols., 1922. Those who sided with Dr. Christian were called “Landmark” Baptists.¹²⁰

Dr. Christian produced many source materials that proved immersion was the ordinary mode of baptism in England prior to 1641 (see APPENDIX II).

IV. PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS THAT OPPOSE WHITSITTISM

Some of the original ministers in the seven congregations of London, which Whitsitt assumed originated immersion among themselves, provided evidence they had not self-originated as sprinkled or poured separatists from the Church of England as Whitsitt had supposed.

Instead, they claimed they had originated from previous ministers from congregations outside of London. For example, Hensard Knollys asserted that these congregations had been gathered by properly ordained ministers who had been driven into the city due to persecution:

*I say that I know by mine own experience (having walked with them) that they were thus gathered; Viz., Some godly and learned men of approved gifts and abilities for the ministry, being driven out of the countries where they lived by the persecution of the Prelates [Episcopalians-R.E.P.] came to soujourn in this great city, and preached from house to house....—Hensard Knollys, **A Moderate Answer Unto Dr. Bastwicks’s Book Called Independency not God’s Ordinance**, (London, 1645).*

¹²⁰ The term “Landmark” was set forth in book by Dr. J.M. Pendleton entitled, **An Old Landmark Reset**. Later it was used by Dr. James R. Graves in a book entitled, **Old Landmarkism, What is it?** Graves defended this view of Baptist history, and thus the doctrine has since been labeled “Landmarkism.”

Also, the very man (William Kiffin) that Whitsitt and his defenders thought provided the primary evidence for their position through a supposed copy of one of his letters which surfaced over 150 years after his death, said:

*It is well known to many and especially to ourselves, that our congregations as they are now, were erected and framed according to the rule of Christ **before** we heard of any reformation **even at the time** when the episcopacy was **at the height of its vanishing glory**. . . . As to the second part of your querie, That we disturb the great Work of Reformation now in hand; I know not what you mean by this charge, unless it be to discover your prejudice against us, in Reforming our selves **before** you.*—William Kiffin: **A Brief Remonstrance of the Reasons of those People Called Anabaptists for their Separation.** (London: 1645) p. 6—emphasis mine

The universal church advocates among Baptists attempted to defend Whitsitt. According to A. H. Newman, the Presbyterian Reformation began in England in 1640, but according to Augustus Lofton it began in 1643. A.H. Newman attempted to confine Kiffin's words to the Presbyterian reformation (1640) while George Lofton attempted to use the date 1643 in order to defend Whitsitt's view that these Baptist congregations were constituted about 1641.

However, Kiffin wrote this in 1645 right in the very period both Newman and Lofton demand Baptists began, and he traces the origin of the constitution of the Baptist congregations in London "*before*" the Presbyterian reformation (1640 or 1643) but "*at the time when*" the church of England "*was at the height of its. . . glory.*" The Church of England was in its decline from 1603-1640 as this when the Presbyterian reformation movement began its ascendancy. Indeed, as a movement, Presbyterianism began in England in 1558. Therefore, the height of the Church of England's glory would be in the latter part of King Henry VIII's reign through the reign of Queen Elizabeth. King Henry declared himself to be the head of the Catholic Church in England in 1534. He separated the Catholic Church in England from Rome in the year 1536 and put down all resistance with a firm hand. There can be no doubt that the glory period of the Church of England came to its pinnacle during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

When both Knolly's and Kiffin's statement are taken together we obtain the correct information concerning the constitution of the first Baptist congregations in London. They had been formed from preachers fleeing from persecution outside of London, driving them into London. These preachers had come from churches outside of London which had been formed "before" the Presbyterian Reformation of 1640, or 1643 "*at the time*" when the Church of England was at the "*height of its... glory*" during the reign of Henry VIII (1536-1557) and Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603). According to Knolly such were **not** self-ordained free-lance preachers but had been previously "approved" according to how Knolly and other Baptists defined "*approved*" = called of God and ordained by the church. This proves that the London Baptists were constituted by ordained ministers from other Baptist congregations existing prior to 1640 outside of London. The archaeological evidences from the church graveyards of the Baptist congregations at Hill cliffe and "the Church in the Hop Garden" at Longworth show a continuous existence to the late 15th century and the other to the late 14th century long before Henry the VIII and the Church of England. During this same period (14th to 16th centuries) there are also laws upon the books against Anabaptists, and so their existence cannot be questioned. Also, as will be shown later, the mode of baptism (immersion) is not the issue, (see Appendix II for source materials) but the issue was immersion of infants as both the Catholic and Church of England observed immersion and had fonts. Hence, the views of Whitsitt formed according to the so-called "historical critical method" are proven to be based upon superficial evidence and faulty research methods.

All contemporary (and earlier) English Baptist historians opposed Whitsitt's claims by asserting that Baptists pre-existed the Catholic Church in England. Earlier English Baptist historians (Henry D'Anvers - 1674; Thomas Grantham-1678; Jospeh Hooke - 1701; Samuel Stennett - 1775; Jospeh Ivimey - 1830; J. Davis - 1835; G.H. Orchard - 1855; Benjamin Evans - 1862-1864) claimed that Baptists had continued since the first century in England.¹²¹

¹²¹ For problems with the view of Landmarkism see at: www.baptisthistory.com

Dr. William H. Whitsitt resigned as the President of Louisville Southern Baptist Theological Seminary under mounting pressure from Baptists all over America. However, universal invisible church advocates (George Lofton, A.H. Newman, etc.) came to his defense, and adopted his “new scientific method” of historical research, along with his flawed and fully exposed view of Baptist origins. Today, his views are still maintained and propagated by universal church advocates in all Southern Baptist Seminaries. However, unto this day, none of these universal church advocates have overthrown the research provided by Dr. John T. Christian that exposed and repudiated the claims of Dr. Whitsitt.

I was a student at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis Tennessee, where I was exposed to the Whitsitt view of Baptist origins. My professor of Church History (who embraced the universal invisible church theory) was honest enough to say that the historical sources can fit one of two scenarios. He likened the historical sources to apples and he compared the two possible scenarios as unto two apple trees. He said you can take the very same apples (source materials) and place them on either one of two trees. If you assume the trustworthiness of the Roman Catholic primary source materials you can place them on the tree scenario that represents what most Protestant and modern Baptist Historians view as Baptist history. If you question the credibility of Roman source materials, you can place them on the tree that represents what all older Baptist historians viewed as the historical origin of Baptists.

Even one of the staunchest universal church advocates admit that even though it is impossible to show by use of secular history that any denomination has been perpetuated from the 2nd to the 16th century, it would be equally impossible to prove that such did not exist and perpetuate during that time:

*One cannot affirm that there was **not** continuity in the outward and visible life of the church, founded by the apostles down to the Reformation. To affirm such a negative would be foolish, and such an affirmation, from the nature of the case, could not be proved.*—Henry Vedder, **Short History of the Baptists**, (Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1907) p. 9 - emphasis mine

Therefore, the new “scientific method” cannot disprove Baptist perpetuity. Why? It cannot disprove it because secular history is; (1) Uninspired and thus subject to bias; (2) Incomplete and thus insufficient and; (3) often inaccurate and thus not trustworthy.

However, when secular church history is viewed through the lens of Biblical predictions concerning the post-apostolic rise of apostate Christianity and its dominance over apostolic Christianity (as considered in the previous lesson), then secular church history correctly portrays what Scriptures predicted. Hence, as one looks into secular church history, according to the Scriptures, they ought to see dominant Christianity characterizing apostolic Christianity as “heretics” for rejecting their type of orthodoxy. That is precisely what is seen! Therefore, evangelical Christianity is forced to choose between what all admit to be a very depraved Roman Catholic Church as clearly exhibited in the “Dark Ages” or those “heretics” called “Anabaptists” as the true apostolic church. They are either forced to accept secular church record as the true history of New Testament Christianity or accept that record as the real history of apostasy as predicted by scriptures.

The doctrine of New Testament church perpetuity cannot be proven from secular sources but, neither can it be disproven by secular sources. However, neither can secular history prove you came through a succession of human beings reproducing one another back to the time of Christ, nor to the time of Adam, and yet that is the claim of Scripture and it is that reproduction cycle we observe right now—human beings reproducing after their own kind. Likewise, what is true of human beings can be argued for the perpetuity of New Testament congregations. In the final analysis, all admit that doctrine and practices must be established on the principles of God’s word regardless of the testimony of uninspired, incomplete and often incorrect secular history.

V. THREE SOURCES OF ORIGIN FOR ENGLISH PARTICULAR BAPTISTS:

In the history of English Particular Baptists there seems to be three sources for their origin. (1) Welsh Source; (2) Holland Source; (3) English Anabaptist source.

A. WELSH SOURCE

The Old Olchon Court Baptist Church in Wales has a traceable lineage of Baptist preachers before the Reformation. Jonathan Davis the Welsh Baptist historian says:

We know that at the reformation, in the reign of Charles the first, they had a minister named Howell Vaughan, quite a different sort of a Baptist from Erbury, Wroth, Vavasor Powell and others, who were the great reformers, but had not reformed so far as they ought to have done, in the opinion of the Olchon Baptists. And was not to be wondered at; for they had dissented from the Church of England, and probably brought some of her corruptions with them, but the mountain Baptists were not dissenters from that establishment. We know the reformers were for mixed communion, but the Olchon Baptists received no such practices. In short, these were plain, strict Apostolic Baptists. They would have order and no confusion, the word of God their only rule.

The earliest congregations forming the Oldest American Baptist Association (Philadelphia) consisted of whole congregations moving from Wales to America and living on the Welsh Tract land in Pennsylvania.

B. HOLLAND SOURCE

According to the Old Kiffin manuscript at the time of Crosby, (the first English Baptist Historian) Richard Blount was sent to Holland to receive baptism from the particular immersionists Anabaptists in Holland. Both Thomas Fuller and John Lewis (Church of England historians) vouch for this trip of Blount to Holland.

C. ENGLISH ANABAPTIST SOURCE

Both the Church in the Hop Garden (not far from Oxford England) and the Hill Cliffe Baptist Church (not far from Warrington England) are traceable back to the 15th century due to dated headstones in the church grave yard and testimony from the inhabitants of that area.

Dr. Thomas Fuller, and Dr. John Lewis, both Church of England historians confirm that peaceful and reasonably doctrinally sound (from their perspectives) Anabaptists have documented existence in England from the early 1500's. My own investigation of original source materials confirms this. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the earlier "Lollards" in the 14th century were related to these same Anabaptists, who in turn were related to the old Britain Baptists that go back to the first century.

CONCLUSION: There is clear undeniable and consistent historical testimony that immersion was the common mode in England before King Henry VIII right up until 1641. Whitsitt was wrong! The "new scientific method" is nothing but a pious method to justify the credibility of Roman Catholic sources. The inspired prophetic view of church history predicts precisely how secular church history would characterize New Testament congregations.

The Scriptures clearly teach that the outward visible form of New Testament Christianity will continue in all generations until Christ comes again (Mt. 16:18; 28:19-20; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:26). No evidence exists that any major group of professed Christians between 100 to 1525 A.D. believed or embraced the universal invisible church theory.¹²²

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. In what Southern Baptist institution did the "new scientific method" first arise with regard to church history and inspiration of the Scriptures?
2. Who is the father of the "new scientific method" among Baptists?
3. What ecclesiastical doctrine is embraced by all Baptists who advocate this "new scientific method"?
4. Who exposed this view and its results at Southern Seminary as superficial and historically inaccurate?
5. What are some the earliest uses of "catholic" in secular church history?

¹²² *Universal Church advocates attempt to prove the existence of this view by pointing to a few individuals during this period. However, every error imaginable can be identified with some individual's during this period. However, no major groups during this period embraced that view and the Anabaptists all through this period opposed any other view but the concrete and abstract view of the church and the future glory church of all the elect.*

6. Who is the father of the *universal visible* church theory?

REQUIRED READING:

A Successionism View of Baptist History, by James R. Duvall <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/succession.view.bapt.history.duvall.html>

Appendix II—*Primary Source Materials Prove Immersion in England Prior to 1640*

Other Recommended reading materials

1. *Did they Dip?* By John T. Christian
<http://www.reformedreader.org/history/christian/dtd.htm>
2. *Baptist History Vindicated*—by John T. Christian
<http://www.oldschoolbaptist.org/articles/BaptistHistoryVindicated.htm>
3. *A History of Baptists*, 2 Vols.—by John T. Christian
<http://www.landmarkbaptist.org/documents/A History of the Baptist John T Christian.pdf> <http://pbministries.org/History/John%20T.%20Christian/vol2/index.htm>
4. *The Battle for Baptist History* by I.K. Cross
<https://www.standardbearer.org/Shop/Detail.aspx?ID=369>

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WEEK 8 LESSON 3

Great Commission—Part 5— Post New Testament History

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to identify the time for the first clear expression of the universal invisible church theory in secular church history and, (2) to trace the progression of the universal church theory among English and American Particular Baptists and, (3) to examine the article on the church in the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

INTRODUCTION: The Bible is completely trustworthy in all that it says, but one must be very skeptical of “Church history.” The student must constantly keep four facts in view when entering into the study of post-Biblical “church history” documents:

- (1) They are uninspired, thus subject to personal bias;¹²³
- (2) They are incomplete; and therefore insufficient;
- (3) They are often inaccurate,¹²⁴ and therefore not reliable.

¹²³ “No men are less to be trusted than the monkish historians, when they speak of the character and doctrine of dissidents from Rome.” Benjamin Evans. **The Early English Baptists**, (Greenwood: The Attic Press, Reprint 1977) Vol. 1, p. 13

¹²⁴ “...no impartial reader can, I think, investigate the innumerable grotesque and lying legends that, during the whole course of the Middle Ages, were deliberately palmed upon mankind as undoubted facts, can follow the histories of the false decretals, and the discussions that were connected with them, or can observe the complete and absolute incapacity most Catholic historians have displayed, of conceiving any good thing in the ranks of their opponents, or stating with common fairness any consideration that can tell against their cause, without acknowledging how serious and how inveterate has been the evil. There have been, no doubt many noble exceptions. Yet, it is, I believe difficult to exaggerate the extent to which this moral defect exists in most of the ancient and very much of the modern literature of Catholicism.” William E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*. 2 Vols. (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1887) Vol. 2, p. 212

(4) They are obtained by, and preserved by predicted Apostate Christianity¹²⁵

Predicted apostate Christianity dominates the nations for the first 1600 years after the New Testament. The recognized “church” in secular history for the first 1600 years bears no resemblance to Christianity found in the pages of the New Testament. This apostate form of Christianity began to develop while the apostles were still alive as much of the New Testament was written to suppress it. After the departure of the apostles, the apostolic fathers began to over emphasize the office of presbyter, no doubt to protect the congregations from false teachers and false prophets that were on the rise. However, this over emphasis developed into a tradition which quickly transferred the authority from the congregation to the presbyter and so a presbytery form of government began to arise which by the sixth century eventually had one chief presbyter or “papa” (pope) over the apostate form of Christianity.

Moreover, most scholars admit that during the New Testament era it is extremely difficult to find any true believer outside the membership of the concrete congregations.

Even as the New Testament knows of no member of the church who is unregenerate, so also it knows of no regenerate person who is not a member of a local church.—Earl D. Radmacher, **The Nature of the Church**, (Western Baptist Press, Portland, OR 1972), p. 342

Of course, that is in keeping with the great commission command and practice of New Testament Christianity as seen in the book of Acts. Every believer should be baptized into the membership of a New Testament congregation. Therefore, it is easy to see how quite early the idea that salvation and church membership became inseparably linked together in the minds of many. However, the idea that church membership and salvation are inseparable is not the doctrinal reality of the New Testament as the New Testament doctrinal reality is salvation precedes church membership. Nevertheless, due to this Biblical based historic reality, the second century mindset could easily develop into the idea that the institutional church

¹²⁵ *The New Testament predicts the dominance of apostate Christianity which will characteristically misrepresent New Testament Christianity and characterize it as heretical.*

and all the elect in the world are one and the same, as Christians were not normally found outside the institutional church. Hence, such over emphasis of apostolic historic realities (presbytery leadership/membership in concrete congregations) became root errors in the developing apostate form of Christianity.

I. THE BIRTH OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH THEORY

A. PRE-REFORMATION CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the pages of secular church history there is a development in the doctrine of the church. This development began with the usage of *ekklesia* by the apostolic fathers and transitioned into a new meaning with Augustine in his debate with the Donatists in the fourth century. Between the apostolic era and the council of Arles in 314 A.D. the only uses of the term *ekklesia* found during this period of time are the abstract (institutional, generic, collective) and concrete senses. However, with the rise of Augustine came a brand-new meaning which included uniting the secular state with Christianity as overlapping entities called, “The Holy Roman Catholic Church.”

This development began with the apostolic fathers. The apostolic fathers consist of those pastors who were contemporaries of the apostles. These “fathers” introduced the term “catholic” as a descriptive adjective of the church. The first usage of the term “catholic” was reactionary toward the Jewish idea that God’s house was restricted to a certain ethnic people and restricted to a certain nation and city within that nation (Jerusalem). In contrast, the Christians argued that the institutional Christian church was “catholic” or “universal” with regard to both its ethnic membership and locations. It consisted of all nationalities and was located in all nations and in every city. However, they never used the term “catholic” in the Roman Catholic sense until the time of Augustine or in Reformed Roman Catholic sense until the time of Martin Luther. Significantly, this term is never used in Scripture as a descriptive of the Lord’s congregation.

1. CLEMENT OF ROME:

Clement wrote only one epistle - the epistle to the Corinthians. There are only four occurrences of *ekkklesia* in this epistle written to the congregation at Corinth. Dana examines all four uses and states:

The word *ekkklesia* occurs only four times in the entire epistle, but each time it is used in an undeniable local sense.—H.E. Dana, *A Manual of Ecclesiology*, p. 99

Radmacher dissents from Dana and claims that one passage refers to the universal invisible church idea. However, Radmacher refuses to acknowledge the abstract institutional use of *ekkklesia* as a valid historical application. The disputed passage reads:

Through envy and jealousy, the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the church] have been persecuted and put to death—Clement of Rome.

Can the abstract institutional use of *ekkklesia* make sense in this passage? Yes, it can.

2. IGNATIUS:

Ignatius used *ekkklesia* 39 times in his epistles. No one disputes that 30 instances are clearly concrete cases of *ekkklesia*.

Ignatius (30-107 A.D.) is credited as the first person to unite the term “Catholic” with “church.” Ignatius used the combination of these two terms as follows:

*The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to the church of God sojourning in Philomelium, and **to all the congregations of the Holy and catholic church in every place**;*—Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nice Fathers*, (Erdmann's Pub. Grand Rapids, MI, 1973), Vol. I, p. 39, “*The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrna concerning the Martyrdom of the Holy Polycarp.*”—emphasis mine

Take note that the singular “church” in the above quote is **not** used to include all Christians in every place in the world, but to include “*all the congregations...in every place.*” Ignatius clearly uses the term “church” in either the institutional or collective sense. Again, Ignatius said:

*Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of **the catholic church which is in Smyrna.*** - Philip Schaff, ed., **The Ante-Nicene Fathers**, [Grand Rapids: MI, Eerdmans, 1978] Vol. I, p. 42 chapter xvi–Polycarp. - emphasis mine

Notice where this “*catholic church*” is located? It is located “*in Smyrna.*” Ignatius believed that each and every church could be properly called “the” catholic church. Why? He believed the Christian church did not restrict membership to just one ethnic people but consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. He says;

*From whom we also derive our being, from His divinely-blessed passion, that He might set up a standard for the ages, through His resurrection, to all His holy and faithful followers, whether among **Jews or Gentiles, in the one body of His church.*** - emphasis mine

Many scholars understand the term “*catholic*” when applied to the word “*church*” within the Ante-Nicene period (100-325 A.D.) to be a term that distinguishes the non-ethnic character of the Christian “house of God” from the ethnic character of the Jewish “house of God.”

For example, the Presbyterian Confession of Faith or the Westminster Confession acknowledges this is the ante-Nicene meaning when they dealt with the term “*catholic*” under their 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–emphasis mine.

Writing to the congregation at Philadelphia, Ignatius said:

Since, also there is but one unbegotten Being, God, even the Father; and one only-begotten Son, God, the Word and man; and one Comforter, the Spirit of truth, and also one preaching, the one faith, and the one baptism; and one church which the holy apostles established from one end of the earth to the other by the blood of Christ, and by their own sweat and toil; it behooves you also, therefore, as, "a peculiar people, and a holy nation" to perform all things with harmony in Christ.

Can the idea of "one (institutional) church" make sense in this passage, just as much as it makes sense in Acts 20:28 when applied to the congregation at Ephesus? Yes! Notice, that he takes the phrase "a peculiar people, and a holy nation" and makes a concrete application to the congregation at Philadelphia demonstrating that every congregation is a visible representation of the kingdom of God. The church is the administrative agency within the kingdom of God.

3. POLYCARP

Polycarp makes it clear that he used the terms "*catholic church*" and "*church of God*" in an obvious abstract institutional sense:

The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to the church of God sojourning in Philomelium, and to all the congregations of the holy and catholic church in every place....

....And all the people wondered that there should be such a difference between unbelievers and the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the catholic church which is in Smyrna.

His concept of the "*holy and catholic church*" consists of "*congregations*" which are located "*in every place.*" Each congregation is "*the catholic church*" as a concrete congregation.

4. THE TERM “CATHOLIC” USED AS A SYNONYM FOR THE “TRUE” AND “HOLY” CHURCH

In about 150 A.D. worldliness began to dominate many congregations in so much that many other congregations began to separate themselves from such corrupted congregations. This separation began with the premise that holiness and truth should characterize the true apostolic church. The Montanists, Novationists, Donatists, Paulicians, Catharists, Waldenses and sixteenth century Anabaptists were part of that movement that defined the church by holiness and truth. Later, Rome identified these groups as the “Anabaptist” movement because all these groups baptized those who came over from Rome to them, thus refusing to acknowledge the ordinances of Rome as Christian because it was not a “holy” or “true” church.

Early on, these unholy congregations under the leadership of Augustine and Constantine were formed into what became known under the title of The Holy Roman Catholic Church. This title (“The Holy Roman Catholic Church”) characterized the very issues that separated the Anabaptists from these worldly congregations. Under the leadership of Augustine, these worldly congregations redefined the term *ekklesia* to include an illicit union between the Roman state and Christianity, between tares and the good seed that they defined as “the church.” Thus, the very nature of the term *ekklesia* was changed to be “universal” in the same visible sense of the secular state and inclusive of the same citizens of the state.

Leonard Verduin says of Augustine:

*No one knew better than did Augustine just what was at issue in the conflict that had flared up between the Catholics and the Donatists. Said he, “The issue between us and the Donatists is about the question where the body is to be located, that is, what and where is the Church?”—Leonard Verduin, **The Reformers and Their Stepchildren**, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI; 1964) p. 33b*

It is this same issue of “where the body is to be located, that is, what and where is the Church” that characterized the difference between Rome and all the Pre-Reformation Anabaptists:

This concept of the church simply as a local congregation has not been confined to the Donatists prior to the Reformation, but was consistently held by those Baptists, called heretics by those

who held the Catholic (universal) concept.—I.K. Cross, **The Battle for Baptist History**, (Brentwood Christian Press, Columbus, GA, 1990) p. 19

However, the true underlying issue was that these Anabaptists believed the apostolic churches were characterized by truth and holiness, both of which, were invalidated by this new meaning of *ekklesia* that united the church with the secular state and tares with the true seed.

Augustine used the term “catholic” as a synonym for “true” when he said:

*However, we must distinguish between the case of those who unwittingly join the ranks of these heretics, under the impression they are entering the **true** church of Christ, and those who know that there is no other **Catholic** Church save that which, according to the promise, is spread abroad throughout the whole world... - Philip Schaff, ed., **Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers**, [Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1979] Vol. IV., *The works of St. Augustine on Baptism, Against the Donatists*, p. 414*

However, the Donatists argued that the state supported congregations (consisting of the Arian and non-Arian congregations) could not possibly be the “true” church. Such mixture with the state and with apostates invalidated their ordinances. Augustine explained how he saw this difference with the Donatists:

*There are two propositions, moreover, which we affirm, - that baptism exists in the Catholic Church, and that in it alone can it be rightly received—both of which the Donatists deny. Likewise, there are two other propositions which we affirm, - that baptism exists among the Donatists, but that with them it is not rightly received, - of which two they strenuously confirm the former, that baptism exists with them, but they are unwilling to allow the latter, that **in their Church** it cannot be rightly received—**Ibid.**, p. 412¹²⁶ - emphasis mine*

Augustine defined his view of the church as all inclusive. He would include the state, heretics and the Donatists but the Donatists wanted

¹²⁶ Of course, this account is one sided as it is Augustine’s version of this debate. The Donatists claimed that Augustine’s account perverted their words.

nothing to do with that kind of church nor would they recognize it as a “holy” or a “true” church.

Augustine attempted to justify his view of the church by using the parable of the tares in Matthew 13 where he defined the “*field*” to be the church inclusive of both tares and seed. The Donatists rightly replied that the Lord defined the “*field*” to be “*the world*” not the church (Mt. 13:39). However, Augustine, accompanied by the Emperor Constantine and a perverted record of his debates with the Donatists prevailed, sending the Donatists into hiding. Such has been the case with Rome and the Anabaptists from that time to the Reformation.

The student of history must admit that the only kind of church/state found in the New Testament is the Jewish kind and the Great Harlot kind in Revelation. Hence, the only other possible alternative candidates of true apostolic Christianity to those who followed Augustine in uniting with Constantine and the Roman state are those early Anabaptists. These Anabaptists consistently identified this mixture of state and Christianity as “The Great Whore” of Revelation. Hence, they regarded Roman churches neither “holy” or “true” but a polluted “harlot.” Between Augustine and the Reformation, the only uses of *ekklesia* are the concrete, institutional, future glory church, and Augustine’s new universal visible concept.

B. THE REFORMATION–16TH CENTURY

The Reformers had no intention of leaving the Roman Catholic Church. They were Roman Catholics attempting to reform Rome, thus, a “Reformation” by “Reformers.” However, they found themselves forced out by excommunication. This presented a dilemma for them. They believed there was no salvation outside the Catholic Church¹²⁷ and yet they believed there was no salvation apart from justification by faith without works. They found themselves outside the church embracing justification by faith alone without works. So, either their idea of the church was wrong or their idea of justification was wrong.

¹²⁷ Calvin believed the universal visible church was the means used to obtain salvation through baptism, but the invisible church was the sphere or state of salvation. Calvin said, “By baptism we are initiated into faith in him”

John Calvin revisited the Augustinian formulation of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to the parable of the tares. Like Augustine, he continued the same error in confusing the “*kingdom*” with the church as well as mixing the state with Christianity under the term “*church*.” John Calvin knew the Anabaptists repudiated their interpretation of the tares. Calvin said:

(v.24) It is an appropriate comparison, when the Lord calls the Church his field, for believers are the seed of it; and though Christ afterwards adds that the field is the world, yet he undoubtedly intended to apply this designation, in a peculiar manner, to the Church, about which he had commenced the discourse.... (v. 39). This passage has been most improperly abused by the Anabaptists and by others like them, to take from the Church the power of the sword. But it is easy to refute them; for since they approve of excommunication, which cuts off, at least for a time, the bad and reprobate, why may not godly magistrates, when necessity calls for it, use the sword against wicked men?—John Calvin, Calvin’s Commentary—Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43—emphasis mine

Notice that he attempts to make both the “*seed*” and the “*field*” to be the church when Jesus says “*the field is the world*” (Mt. 13:38) not the church. The “*seed*” is his “*kingdom*” not the church. Instead of recognizing an *invisible kingdom* versus a *manifest visible kingdom*, they interpreted the two aspects of the kingdom as two aspects of the church, a visible universal church (“*the world*”) versus an invisible universal church (“*the seed*”). According to Roman Catholic Church doctrine to be excommunicated out of the visible church was to forfeit one’s salvation. The Reformation doctrine of the church resolved this dilemma they were put in by excommunication out of the visible universal church by wicked men but not excommunication out of the invisible universal church. Still, the Reformers held that the universal visible church was the divine means or “*mother*” to obtain salvation through baptism but it was not the sphere of salvation or where salvation was sustained, as that was the universal invisible church. In contrast, as Calvin affirms, the Anabaptists believed in excommunication from the congregation but not from the kingdom as Matthew 13 defines the field to be “*the world*” not the church.

Thus, the basic concept of the Reformed view of the church was formed. However, this basic concept was gradually refined over a period of time.

Dr. J Faber, who served as Professor of Dogmatology and Principal at the **Hamilton Theological College** from 1969-1989 in the Netherlands claims the Reformed doctrine of the Church was doctrinally refined in five stages during the Reformation. He says, “*we should not forget that already in the time of the Reformation the doctrine of the church had to be refined.*” He lists the five stages as follows:

1. There is the period of **the first reflection and consolidation**, in which period cities such as Zurich, Berne, Basel, and Strasbourg are in the center. At the beginning of this period stand Zwingli’s Sixty-Seven Articles of 1523 and the Ten Theses of Berrie (1528), and the end is formed by the First Helvetic Confession of 1536.
2. Then follows the period of **new orientation**. It is the period of Calvin with his Geneva Confession (1536) and Geneva Catechism (1541), and of Bullinger with his Second Helvetic Confession (1562 or 1566).
3. In the mean-time a third group of confessions arises: the confessions of the Reformed congregations **under the cross**: the French, Scottish, and Belgic Confessions of Faith (1559, 1560, 1561).
4. The period of the **Second Reformation** brings us the Hungarian Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563).
5. Then the last group is formed by the confessions of the **Reformed posterity**. To this period belong the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Standards.¹²⁸

Significantly, Faber claims the Reformation struggle in formulating the doctrine of the church against the Anabaptists had a remarkable parallel with that of Augustine and the Donatists:

Also, in this antithetical context, there is a remarkable parallel with, for example, Augustine’s struggle against Donatism. This reflects not only upon the Reformed doctrine of the sacraments—especially baptism but also upon the doctrine of the church.—Ibid.

¹²⁸ ¹²⁹ http://spindleworks.com/library/faber/010_thechurch.htm 05/29/16

II. THE REFORMATION DONATISTS— THE ANABAPTISTS

When the Reformers presented their doctrine of a universal invisible church, the Reformation Anabaptists, like the Donatists, denied that a church embracing all (universal) could be reconciled with a church receiving only baptized members based upon a personal profession of faith. Did the church consist of all the baptized (infants and confessors—*Corpus Christianorum*) or only baptized believers (*Corpus Christi*)?

If one examines the Anabaptist confessions, it is clear that the only present kind of church they embraced was the kind that received water baptized professing believers.

Robert Friedmann is a recognized authority on the beliefs of Anabaptist.

He summarizes the Anabaptist ecclesiology in the following words:

4) **Ecclesiology.** The **Corpus Christi** is here stressed over against the **Corpus Christianorum**. In other words, the brotherhood of dedicated Christians stands here against the body of all baptized Christians, saints and sinners. The Catholics as well as the Reformers accepted the **Corpus Christianorum**, the concept of a Christian society at large, hence their opposition to the idea of an exclusive **Corpus Christi[anum]**. The church (**Gemeinde, also Gemein, Gemeinschaft**) [community] and the brotherhood are with the Anabaptists one and the same, both a sacred and a secular body **without separation of these two functions**. No one can ever reach God except together with his brother. The Anabaptist church was once well-called the “fellowship of committed disciples,” and the Lord’s Supper among them is the external symbol of this fellowship (occasionally called the “fellowship at the Lord’s Table”). Brotherhood is more than a concern for the other’s salvation, it is *Gemeinschaft*, community, both in things spiritual and worldly. It is essentially a love-relation (hence it implies more than merely an “ethic” of love).

At the same time this church is a disciplined church, a church which insists on supervision by the bishop or Vorsteher, and naturally insists on the ban. More than once it was called a “church of order” (cf. Mennonite Encyclopedia, I, 595–a), the term itself occurring time and again in Anabaptist tracts. Of course, the world of the children of God must be a world of

order, and not one of confusion or arbitrariness. Whether Grebel or Riedemann, Marpeck or Menno Simons or Dirk Philips, they all stressed this element of order and discipline as part of the true church of God. It belongs as a second element to the first one of brotherly love and cooperation and sharing.—Robert Friedmann, **Anabaptist Theology**¹²⁹

In the vast majority of Anabaptist confessions, the only kind of church mentioned is a visible body of baptized believers. There are only two exceptions. One confession mentions the glory church consisting of all the elect yet to be gathered in the future. In a Mennonite confession dated well after the time of Luther there can be found the Reformer's view of the church. Reformation "Waldenses" living in the valley of the Piedmont had been converted to Presbyterianism later in the Reformation period.

However, all other Anabaptists confessions make no mention of a universal church of any kind. For example:

The Discipline of the Church—Moravian Anabaptists - 1527

When brethren and sisters are together, being one body and one bread in the Lord and of one mind, then they shall keep the Lord's Supper as a memorial of the Lord's death (Matt.26; Mark 14; Luke 22; I Cor.11), whereby each one shall be admonished to become conformed to the Lord in the obedience of the Father (Phil.2,3; I Pet.2,4; Rom.8; I John 2--Obedience: Rom.2; Phil.2; II Cor.2,10; II Thess.1; I Pet.1).

Schleitheim Confession—Swiss Brethren 1527

Third. In the breaking of bread, we are of one mind and are agreed [as follows]: All those who wish to break one bread in remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and all who wish to drink of one drink as a remembrance of the shed blood of Christ, shall be united beforehand by baptism in one body of Christ which is the church of God and whose Head is Christ.

¹²⁹ http://www.anabaptistchurch.org/anabaptist_theology.htm 05/29/16

Ridemann's Rechenschaft, - Hutterite - 1540

I. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE SPIRIT

An assembly of children of God who have separated themselves from all unclean things is the church. It is gathered together, has being, and is kept by the Holy Spirit. Sinners may not be members unless and until they have repented of their sins. The essence of the church is its bearing of the Light; it is a lantern of righteousness in a world of unbelief, darkness, and blindness. It is a pillar and ground of the truth, which is conformed, ratified, and brought to pass in her by the Holy Spirit. The "power and key" to forgive sins which was received by Christ from the Father is given to the church as a whole and not to individual persons. In its nature the church is spiritual, but concretely it is known as the pure sacred community. Church assembly and community are equated together.

The Moravian Anabaptist—1545

the Holy Ghost.... which Spirit proceeded from the Father and Son and is, with the Son and Father in power and being, one God, who still today assembles the congregations of Christ or his congregation- emphasis mine

Amsterdam Confession—Dutch Anabaptist - 1611

Article X—a company of faithful people, separated from the world by the word and the Spirit of God being knit unto the Lord, and one unto another, by baptism, upon their own confession of faith and sins.

Article XI—That though in respect of Christ the Church be one, yet it consisteth of divers particular congregations, even so many as there shall be in the world; every one which congregations, though they be but two or three, have Christ given them with all the means of salvation, are the body of Christ...

Article XIII—That every church is to receive in all their members by baptism, upon confession of faith and sins, wrought by the preaching of the gospel according to the primitive institution and practice. And, therefore, congregations after any other manner, or of any other persons, are not according to Christ's testament.

The Dordrecht Confession—Dutch Mennonite - 1632

VIII. Of the Church of Christ

We believe in, and confess a visible church of God, namely, those who, as has been said before, truly repent and believe, and are rightly baptized; who are one with God in heaven, and rightly incorporated into the communion of the saints here on earth. These we confess to be the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, who are declared to be the bride and wife of Christ, yea, children and heirs of everlasting life, a tent, tabernacle, and habitation of God in the Spirit, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Jesus Christ Himself is declared to be the cornerstone (upon which His church is built). This church of the living God, which He has acquired, purchased, and redeemed with His own precious blood; with which, according to His promise, He will be and remain always, even unto the end of the world, for consolation and protection, yea, will dwell and walk among them, and preserve them, so that no floods or tempests, nay, not even the gates of hell, shall move or prevail against them—this church, we say, may be known by their Scriptural faith, doctrine, love, and godly conversation, as, also, by the fruitful observance, practice, and maintenance of the true ordinances of Christ, which He so highly enjoined upon His disciples. I Cor. 12; I Pet. 2.9; John 3.29; Rev. 19.7; Titus 3:6, 7; Eph. 2:19–21; Matt. 16.18; I Pet. 1.18, 19; Matt. 28.20; II Cor. 6:16; Matt. 7:25.

III. EARLY ENGLISH BAPTIST CONFESSIONS

Significantly, none of the earliest Baptist confessions acknowledge any other church but the concrete, abstract (generic, institutional, collective) and future glory kind.

A. THE LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION - 1646

The early particular Baptists in London in their very first confession of faith claimed no other kind of church but a local body of baptized believers:

The London Baptist Confession - 1646

XXXIII.

Jesus Christ hath here on earth a [manifestation of His] spiritual kingdom, which is His Church, whom He hath purchased and redeemed to Himself as a peculiar inheritance; which Church is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of faith of the gospel, being baptized into that faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances commanded by Christ their head and king.—The London Confession of Faith, 1646—emphasis mine

They rightly viewed the church as a “manifestation” or public representation of the kingdom, rather than equal to the kingdom.

Thomas Bakewell, a Presbyterian divine, directly accused those who composed the 1646 Baptist Confession of Faith for denying the Protestant universal invisible church theory. Bakewell’s charge is,

you believe that this purchased redeemed Church of Christ is visible, and a company of Saints called and separated from the world by the Word and Spirit of God to the visible profession of faith, and the Gospel, and baptized in the faith, and joined to the Lord, and to each other by mutual agreement in practical

*enjoyment of the Ordinances commanded by Christ as their Head and King....but how dare you publish to the world that those whom Christ has purchased and redeemed, are visible, making profession of faith and the Gospel, and baptized and joined to the Lord, and to each other in practical enjoyment of the Ordinances....then **you say you are ignorant of any invisible church or house of God.***¹³⁰-emphasis mine

Benjamin Coxe in the appendix attached to the 1646 reprint of the 1644 confession of faith defended this local church only position and yet at the same time clearly stated that the Baptists believed there were saved people outside of their congregations as unbaptized believers (Presbyterians and others) simply because they did not conflate the church with the kingdom:

*XVI. Although a true believer, whether baptized, or unbaptized, be in the state of salvation, and shall certainly be saved: - Benjamin Coxe, **The 1646 London Baptist Confession**–Appendix¹³¹*

Again, the early Baptists (still called Anabaptists) distinguished the kingdom from the church denying that all the saved in the kingdom were members of the church.

B. THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF THIRTY CONGREGATIONS GATHERED ACCORDING TO THE PRIMITIVE PATTERN–1651–THE GENERAL BAPTISTS

51. That the only foundation of the Church of God, is the Doctrines of the Apostles or Prophets, as they spring from Jesus Christ the chiefe corner stone, whereon this or any other people are to be built together as the house of God; Eph. 2. 20, 21.

¹³⁰ *Thomas Bakewell, **An Answer of Confutation of Divers Errors Broached and Maintained By the Seven Congregations of Anabaptists contained in those Articles of their Confession of Faith Presented to Parliament, and other gross Opinions held by them against the clear light of the gospel,** (Imprinter John Downham, 1646)*

¹³¹ *However, previous to the 17th century Anabaptists unitedly denied salvation existed among sacramentalists and they alone were the true congregations of Christ.*

52. *That the chief or only ends of a people baptised according to the counsel of God, when they meet together as the congregation or fellowship of Christ, are, or ought to be, for to walk suitably; or to give up themselves unto a holy conformity to all the Laws or Ordinances of Jesus Christ, answerable to the gifts and graces received, improving them for the glory of God, and the edification of each other in love, Eph. 4. 15, 16.*

C. THE MIDLAND BAPTIST CONFESSION 1655 AND ASSOCIATIONAL MINUTES 1640-1660

Neither does the particular Baptist “Midland” Confession of Faith in 1655 or the “Somerset” Confession of 1657 mention any kind of universal invisible church.

The English Baptist confessions and associational meetings between 1641 and 1686 used “*the church*” abstractly, to convey the idea of a collective unity of all Baptist congregations of like faith and order on earth at any given moment. This is close to the abstract generic use of that term. The early English Baptists used it this way in their associational minutes which record their meetings up to 1660. They spoke of the “*assemblyes of Zion*”.

That persons soe baptized ought to walk together by free consent as God shall give opperturnitie in distinct congregations or assemblyes of Zion continuing in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers....

White, B.R. ed. **Association of The Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660**, “Part 1, South Wales and Midlands” p. 20 - emphasis mine

To them, “*Mount Zion*” expressed the collective unity of all congregations that were *like faith and order*. Significantly, they denied all state congregations (Rome and Protestants) were included in “*Mount Zion*” (Ibid. pp. 154, 169). They also denied that “*disorderly*” congregations, or congregations that were not “*rightly constituted*” (e.g. John Bunyan’s mixed membership church) were in this “*Zion*.” This concept they also called “*The church in generall*.”

*Because in respect to union in Christ there is like relation betwixt the particular congregations each towards other, as there is betwixt particular members of one church. **For the congregations of Christ doe all make up but one bodye or church in general** under Christ their head, as Eph. 1:22f., Col. 1.24, Eph. 5:23., I Cor. 12.13 ff., as particular members make up one particular church under the same head, Christ and **all the particular assemblies are but one Mount Syon.** Ibid., “Part 3, Abingdon Association” p. 128 - emphasis mine*

This concept of “*the church in general*,” or “*Mount Zion*,” consisting of all congregations of like faith and order in aggregate, was the position of the vast majority of Associational Baptists in America (those who embraced the Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith and New Hampshire Confession of Faith) and can be found among American Baptists right up to the Landmark movement in the 1850’s.

*Dear Brethren, — Your letters have excited in us mingled emotions of joy and sorrow; while we rejoice at the general stability and soundness in the faith of **our congregations**, it is to be lamented that error has made partial ravages in **our Zion**.— Jesse Mercer, **History of the Georgia Baptist Association**, 1838, “circular letter written to the congregations in 1805” p. 104, The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc. Version 1.0 © 2005 - emphasis mine*

IV. THE 1689 LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

Many universal church advocates feel that the transition between the older Baptist ecclesiology (manifested in the pre-1677 Baptist Confessions) and Reformed ecclesiology among Baptists occurred in England, somewhere between 1676 and 1688. They believe this transition was manifested in the Second London Baptist Confession in 1689 and in America with the adoption of that confession in 1707. Universal invisible church advocates claim both of these confessions teach their view of the church.

However, a careful study of this confession will demonstrate that the 1689 confession only asserted the “glory” church view while completely and utterly repudiating the Reformed view.

A. THE GREAT TRIBULATION PERIOD - 1660-1688

It is helpful to understand the events that took place between the writing of the 1644-46 Confession and the 1689 Confession. Between 1660 and 1688 there was a period of persecution in England that Baptists in England labeled “The Great Tribulation.” The state church (Church of England/ Catholics) during this period persecuted all dissenters. The Baptists and Presbyterians were both objects of the wrath by the state church. In 1688 the government fell into the hands of the Presbyterians under William and Mary’s rule. The Baptists were hoping that the Presbyterians, who also had been objects of persecution along with the Baptists, would not continue government persecution upon those who dissented from the religion held by the Government. In order to show they were orthodox, they intentionally took the Westminster Confession of Faith and used it as the format for the Second London Confession in 1689. The Presbyterians had previously been offended at the first London Confession which denied any existence of the universal invisible church, which they thought denied any salvation outside of Baptist congregations because the Baptists regarded them as unbaptized and non-congregations.¹³² So the article on the church was a very sensitive issue. These Baptists were in the difficult situation where they had to affirm what they previously stated in their first confession and associational minutes without denying those outside of their congregations were saved. Therefore, the Baptists used every word and phrase they possibly could from the Westminster Confession to describe their view of the church.

¹³² *However, in the 1646 edition Benjamin Cox corrected that misunderstanding by the Presbyterian divines by plainly stating that Baptists recognized saved persons outside of their fellowship of congregations. “XVI. Although **a true believer, whether baptized, or unbaptized, be in the state of salvation, and shall certainly be saved:** Yet in obedience to the command of Christ every believer ought to desire baptism, and to yield himself to be baptized according to the rule of Christ in His word.”—Appendix to 1646 Edition of the **London Baptist Confession** by Benjamin Cox—emphasis mine.*

The problem arises when the first section in this article on the church is jerked out of its context rather than further defined and explained by the sections that follow. That is precisely what most big church advocates do. The first section only affirms a future glory church consisting of all the elect in all ages, which is perfectly consistent with the previous views of these Baptists, while the sections that follow it carefully repudiate the idea of a universal invisible church presently consisting of all true Christians in heaven and earth. Thus, they achieved defending their former Confession of Faith and associational teaching on the nature of the church, and at the same time have not denied there are true Christians outside of their own congregations.

B. COMPARING THE CONFESSIONS

By comparing the confessions section by section on the article of the church the differences are easily manifested:

Westminster Confession

The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all.[1]

London Baptist Confession

The catholic or universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

The same Baptists who were instrumental in defining their view of ecclesiology in the former London Confession and in the former associational minutes are instrumental in defining the church in the 1689 Confession. In their associational minutes they make it clear they believe in a yet future glory church consisting of all the elect in all ages.

Notice that the Baptists added the phrase “with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace” in order to distinguish from the *paedobaptist* Reformed concept of the church. Some believe this first article is a substantial change from what these Baptists formerly believed. However, the debate is over the meaning of “*the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or **shall be** gathered into one...*” Some claim this is a clear assertion of the universal invisible church theory which the Baptists had formerly repudiated. However, others put the emphasis on the words “*shall be gathered*” and claim they are simply reasserting their former position of a yet future glory church consisting of all the elect in all ages.

However, the explanatory sections that follow clearly show they rejected any kind of present church consisting of all the elect.

It is the second article of the Baptist Confession where the stark contrasts between the Presbyterian Universal Invisible church theory and the Baptist view of the church begins to be clearly seen.

Westminster Confession

2. The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; [2] and of their children; [3] and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, [4] the house and family of God, [5] out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. [6]

Notice carefully that the Presbyterians confuse the church with the kingdom as they believe the “visible Church” is inclusive of all “that profess the true religion” along with “their children” and is synonymous with both the “kingdom” and “family of God.” This is the basis for the defense of infant baptism and a visible congregation consisting of unregenerate and regenerates.

Now read the direct response to this claim by the Baptists:

London Baptist Confession

*2. _____ All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, **not destroying their own profession by any errors***

perverting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.—emphasis mine

In response, the Baptist Confession repudiated every point in Section II. The Baptist refused to use the term “*visible church*” or “*catholic*” or “*universal*” but replaced all those terms with the plural term “*congregations*.” They refused to acknowledge that all who “*profess*” the gospel are to be called the church, but “*may be called visible saints*.” Hence, they denied that all present living saints were the church. They defined “*saints*” as only those who were capable of believing the gospel and who could produce fruits of obedience—thus, eliminating infant baptism. They refuse to confuse the future glory church consisting of only the elect in the future with any present church consisting of all who professed salvation along with their children. They refused to make the church equal to the kingdom and family of God.

Westminster Confession

- III. *Unto this catholic visible Church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and does, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto.*
- IV. *This catholic Church has been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular Congregations, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.*
- V. *The purest Congregations under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no Congregations of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will.*

The London Baptist Confession

3. *The purest congregations under heaven are subject to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no congregations of Christ, but synagogues of Satan; nevertheless, Christ always hath had, and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name.*

The Baptist response to sections III-V is found in their sections 3-15. The Baptist begin with section V in the Presbyterian confession and then work backwards to answer sections III and IV. The Presbyterians are attempting to justify infant membership in the visible church by confusing the church with the kingdom and family of God. Baptists had historically charged sacramental congregations to be mixtures of unregenerate infants with regenerate members, and thus no congregations at all. The Presbyterian response was to admit that even the “*purest congregations*” were not without “*mixture*” of good and evil, but Presbyterians believed this was all in keeping “*according to his will*” with regard to infant membership because according to them, the purpose of the visible church was for “*the perfecting...effectual thereto*” salvation of that “*mixed*” membership through its ministry, oracles and ordinances. The Presbyterians wanted to justify a dual church “*on earth*” more or less “*visible and invisible*” including all professors on earth with their unregenerate children.

The Baptists understood their intent and would have none of it. Sections 3-15 were designed by the Baptist to completely refute this dual kind of church presently existing on earth. The special focus of the Baptists in this section is the Presbyterian claim that there will be - “*always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will.*” This phrase is the focus of the Baptist response in sections 4-15. In sections 4-15 Baptists define precisely what kind of “church” will always be on earth to worship God according to his will and it is only a local visible kind.

In the 1646 Baptist Confession the Baptists distinguished between the church and the kingdom of God. They denied that all the saved-on earth was in the church, but only admitted they were in the kingdom. Hence, the Baptists replaced the term “church” as used by the Presbyterians in Section V with the word “kingdom.” It is the “kingdom” not the church “*Christ always*

hath had, and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him and make profession of his name.” Notice, according to the Baptists the kingdom is made up of only such persons that first believe in him who make profession of his name, thus eliminating infants. Moreover, this use of “kingdom” to replace “church” is an outright denial of any present kind of church on earth that is either universal or invisible. They agreed with the Presbyterian that the purest “congregations” contained error, but the “kingdom” of God was made up solely of “*such as believe in him, and makes profession of his name.*” In the previous Baptist Confession, they alleged that the congregations were representative of the kingdom, therefore, they argued that the only ones fit for membership in the congregations are first citizens of God’s kingdom or those who are believers and have made profession of Jesus Christ. Thus, where the Presbyterians confused the “kingdom” with the “church” the Baptists distinguished them from each other. According to these Baptists, all the saved presently on earth were citizens in the kingdom not the church.

In sections 4-15 Baptist now focus upon the Presbyterian phrase in Section V of the Westminster that said, “*Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will.*” Sections 3-4 deny what kind of church “*shall always be “one earth to worship God.”*” The Baptists deny it is paedobaptist in nature and deny it is Rome. Sections 5-15 positively define precisely what is the nature of that church, and it is not an invisible, but a visible congregation of water baptized believers.

The London Baptist Confession

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

Notice the repetitious use of “the church” in article 4. However, it is Articles 5-15 that define the precise nature of that church on earth that will

“*worship God according to His will*” and it is “*congregations*” of like faith and order with Baptists.

5. *In the execution of this power wherewith he is so intrusted, the Lord Jesus calleth out of the world unto himself, through the ministry of his word, by his Spirit, those that are given unto him by his Father, that they may walk before him in all the ways of obedience, which he prescribeth to them in his word. Those thus called, he commandeth to walk together in particular societies, or congregations, for their mutual edification, and the due performance of that public worship, which he requireth of them in the world.*

6. *The members of these congregations are saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ; and do willingly consent to walk together, according to the appointment of Christ; giving up themselves to the Lord, and one to another, by the will of God, in professed subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel.*

7. *To each of these congregations thus gathered, according to his mind declared in his word, he hath given all that power and authority, which is in any way needful for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline, which he hath instituted for them to observe; with commands and rules for the due and right exerting, and executing of that power.*

8. *A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members; and the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church (so called and gathered), for the peculiar administration of ordinances, and execution of power or duty, which he intrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are bishops or elders, and deacons.*

9. *The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person, fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit, unto the office of bishop or*

elder in a church, is, that he be chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the church itself; and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands of the eldership of the church, if there be any before constituted therein; and of a deacon that he be chosen by the like suffrage, and set apart by prayer, and the like imposition of hands.

10. The work of pastors being constantly to attend the service of Christ, in his congregations, in the ministry of the word and prayer, with watching for their souls, as they that must give an account to Him; it is incumbent on the congregations to whom they minister, not only to give them all due respect, but also to communicate to them of all their good things according to their ability, so as they may have a comfortable supply, without being themselves entangled in secular affairs; and may also be capable of exercising hospitality towards others; and this is required by the law of nature, and by the express order of our Lord Jesus, who hath ordained that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.

11. Although it be incumbent on the bishops or pastors of the congregations, to be instant in preaching the word, by way of office, yet the work of preaching the word is not so peculiarly confined to them but that others also gifted and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it, and approved and called by the church, may and ought to perform it.

12. As all believers are bound to join themselves to particular congregations, when and where they have opportunity so to do; so all that are admitted unto the privileges of a church, are also under the censures and government thereof, according to the rule of Christ.

13. No church members, upon any offence taken by them, having performed their duty required of them towards the person they are offended at, ought to disturb any church-order, or absent themselves from the assemblies of the church, or administration of any ordinances, upon the account of such

offence at any of their fellow members, but to wait upon Christ, in the further proceeding of the church.

14. As each church, and all the members of it, are bound to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all the congregations of Christ, in all places, and upon all occasions to further it (everyone within the bounds of their places and callings, in the exercise of their gifts and graces) so the congregations (when planted by the providence of God so as they may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it) ought to hold communion among themselves, for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.

15. In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of doctrine or administration, wherein either the congregations in general are concerned, or any one church, in their peace, union, and edification; or any member or members of any church are injured, in or by any proceedings in censures not agreeable to truth and order: it is according to the mind of Christ, that many congregations holding communion together, do, by their messengers, meet to consider, and give their advice in or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the congregations concerned; howbeit these messengers assembled, are not intrusted with any church-power properly so called; or with any jurisdiction over the congregations themselves, to exercise any censures either over any congregations or persons; or to impose their determination on the congregations or officers.

It is this kind of church (congregations) that the Baptists reinterpreted the Presbyterian words ***“Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will.”***

Therefore, the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith does not contradict the earlier 1646 London Baptist Confession of Faith. Indeed, it was from among these very same Baptists that the very first written defense of Baptist Perpetuity was provided. They consistently maintained the only present existing church consisted of water baptized believers, while claiming there is a yet future glory church consisting of all the elect in all ages.

V. THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CONFESSION OF FAITH

The second and probably most popular American Baptist Confession of Faith, The New Hampshire Confession of Faith in 1833, makes no mention of any kind of universal invisible church consisting of all true believers from all denominations or any future church consisting of all the elect. This confession was used as the basis for “The Baptist Faith and Message” or the confession of faith for the Southern Baptist Convention. Up to 1962 “The Baptist Faith and Message” had no mention of any kind of universal invisible church. Between 1888 and 1962 the older form of ecclesiology (designated as “Landmarkism”) was still dominate within the Southern Baptist Convention but the 1940’s began to see a decline and was gradually overcome by the new ecclesiology that dominated its seminaries and other educational institutions. The older ecclesiology is still the dominate position within The Landmark American Baptist Association, The Bible Baptist Fellowship, and Bible Missionary Association, and thousands of independent Baptist congregations. However, it is struggling to survive or non-existent in other Baptist fellowships and associations (The Conservative Baptist Convention; General Association of Regular Baptists, etc.).

VI. BAPTISTS SLOWLY LEAVENED BY THE REFORMED DOCTRINE -1800-1850

However, the Reformed doctrine of the universal invisible church began to take root among both British and American Baptists. This is especially true among those Baptist leaders who had been trained in Protestant Seminaries both here and abroad or who came out of Reformed congregations.

Just a little after the beginning of the 19th century the consequences of the Reformed view of the church began to appear among American Baptists. **Some were (1) inviting Pedobaptist ministers into their pulpits, (2) accepting alien immersion (immersion from Pedobaptist congregations) and (3) practicing open communion.** These things were part of a new development among Baptists in America. At this critical time of transition from the older to new form of ecclesiology is when the “Landmark” movement arose (1851-1905) to call Baptists back to the older form of ecclesiology.

However, it is important to understand that within this “Landmark” movement were those who still embraced the future “glory” church, but presently denied any kind of church except the visible body of baptized believers. For example, Dr. J.M. Pendleton, as well as Dr. B.H. Carroll, both prominent Landmark Baptists, believed that the future glory church, when presented to Christ, will consist of “*the redeemed in aggregate.*”¹³³

However, like many of their Baptist forefathers, they did not believe this glory church presently existed, nor did they believe in any kind of present universal invisible church composed of all the elect in all denominations worldwide. An article written by J.N. Hall in *An Old Landmark Reset*, originally edited by James Pendleton says:

*But in my judgment the positions taken by bros. **Pendleton, Graves and Taylor**, in the body of this book, and by Bro. Moody in the introduction, are Scriptural, logical and charitable.... **For our part we deny this whole “invisible, universal church” idea. There is but one sort of a church in the New Testament and that is a local and visible church.**—J.M. Pendleton, **An Old Landmark Reset**, (Truth Pub, West Virginia), pp. 73,75 - emphasis mine*

Although Hall admitted they believed “*all the saved,*” when collectively assembled **after the coming of Christ**, will make up the future glory church, he denied this church presently existed.

*The aggregate of the saved is considered as being collected in one meeting, and they thus constitute a church. But there is not a passage in the Bible where the word “church” is so used as to embrace all the saved, in their divided, scattered, uncollected dispersion. When all the saved are included they are considered as assembled together. When they are scattered they are never spoken of as a church. There is, therefore no such thing known in the Bible as an “invisible, universal church.”—**Ibid.**, pp. 75-76*

Many universal church historians confuse the early Baptist use of “church” in aggregate (Mount Zion) and their belief in a yet future glory church

¹³³ ¹³⁴J.M. Pendleton, **Christian Doctrines**, (Judson Press, Valley Forge PA.

consisting of all the elect with the Protestant universal invisible church theory among early American Baptists. However, as previously shown, many Landmark Baptists (B.H. 1971), p. 329. B.H. Carroll, **Ecclesia, The Church**, (The Baptist Standard Bearer, Paris, AK, reprint 2004) pp. 59–61, Carroll, J.M.

However, prior to 1644, the historic Anabaptist movement rejected the idea that Roman Catholics and other heretics who perverted the gospel and persecuted them would be part of that future glory church. Moreover, other Landmark Baptists rejected the “glory” church would include all the saved but believed those outside the Lord’s congregations *now* would be found outside the New Jerusalem upon the new earth *then* (Rev. 21:24).

Nevertheless, the rise of the universal invisible church theory within the ranks of Baptists did occur. Among some kind of Baptists, it occurred more quickly than among other kind of Baptists.

The leavening of Baptists by this doctrine was precisely in character with Paul’s prediction in Acts 20:29–30. It occurred in three ways. **(1)** It was brought into Baptist congregations by those ministers trained in Protestant Seminaries. For example, many of the early professors in the first Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky had been educated in Presbyterian or Reformed Seminaries. **(2)** It was brought into Baptist congregations by those ministers who were converted from the Reformed Paedobaptists position without conversion to the Baptist ecclesiology position. **(3)** It was propagated by “Baptists” who departed from the historic Baptist ecclesiology—producing apostate Baptist congregations who characteristically exchanged pulpits with Paedobaptists, received alien immersion and practiced open communion.

These three trademarks of apostate Baptist ecclesiology characterize apostate Baptist congregations. They are not apostates in regard to soteriology, but with regard to ecclesiology, and thus, non-congregations, or unauthorized and unbaptized believers.

Among Southern Baptists, the majority of their congregations apostatized between 1888 and 1979. Complete liberalism dominated their Seminaries and leadership. In 1979 Judge Paul Pressler, Dr. Paige Patterson and Dr. W.A. Criswell led in the “resurgence” within the Southern Baptist Convention to counteract the rampant liberalism with more traditional Baptist teachings. In the 1990’s the control by liberals in teaching and leadership positions was overcome, but the damage by liberalism still infects

the Southern Baptist Convention in many ways, including ecclesiology.

Conclusion: From the most ancient times Anabaptists consistently defended the local visible nature of the *ekklesia* of Christ consisting only of baptized believers. They denied any kind of sacramental institution to be a church of Christ. They denied the existence of any kind of present universal invisible congregation but consistently claimed that a church made up of all the saints was a yet an unrealized future reality after the coming of Christ.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How does John Calvin define the term “field” in the parable of the tares?
2. Can the Universal Invisible Church theory be found in Anabaptist Confessions?
3. Can the Universal Invisible Church theory be found in English Baptist Confessions up to 1653?
4. What Confession is the London Baptist Confession of 1689 (Philadelphia Baptist Confession in America) patterned after?
5. Does the first section in the Baptist Confession describe the universal invisible church theory of all Christians in all denominations on earth baptized into one body OR does it describe the glory church consisting of all the elect in all ages?
6. How does sections 2-4 demonstrate they repudiated the Protestant universal invisible church theory?
7. What kind of church on earth worships God according to His will according to Sections 5-15 of the Baptist Confession?
8. Do sections 2-15 in the London Baptist Confession of 1689 repudiate the Universal Invisible Church theory?
9. How does early English associational Baptist use the phrase “Mount Sion”?
10. How did Dr. James Pendleton and Dr. J.M. Carroll use the term “church”?
11. How did the Georgia Baptist Association use the term “Zion”?
12. During what years did the practical consequences of embracing the theory of the universal invisible church become prominent?

13. What were the three practical consequences for embracing this theory during 1800-1900 in America?
14. Congregations that practice these three things embrace what church theory?



PAGETURNER
P R E S S & M E D I A

WEEK 9

LESSON 1–Great Commission–
Part 6–The Bride of Christ

LESSON 2 - Great Commission–
Part 7–Authorized vs. Direct

LESSON 3 - Great Commission–
Part 8–Authorized vs. Direct

WEEK 9 LESSON 1

Great Commission—Part 6— The Bride of Christ

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to properly understand the metaphors of “bride” and “chaste virgin” in contexts of salvation versus contexts of sanctification and, (2) to distinguish between a faithful bride concept versus an all-inclusive elect church bride concept.

INTRODUCTION: When a New Testament congregation claims it is the true congregation and bride of Christ, many due to their own theological mixture of salvation with the congregation, are forced to think that such a claim denies salvation to all outside Baptist type congregations. However, that is not the position of New Testament congregations as nothing could be further from their belief and practice. New Testament congregations demand one must first profess a Biblical experience of new birth before they are even considered for membership into their congregations. The whole issue of confusion lies in the definition of the term “church.” We define it as a visible body of baptized believers whereas, the rest of the world defines it as inseparable from salvation, thus inclusive of all the saved living in the world. The Biblical doctrine of the “bride” is another issue of confusion for the very same reasons—confusing initial salvation with progressive sanctification.

I. THE METAPHORICAL BRIDE OF CHRIST

The free gift of eternal life and entrance into heaven is obtained at the very moment you embrace the gospel by faith. However, the entire rest of your life is all about serving God **acceptably**. Not all worship, or all

service is acceptable to God. There is worship and service that is outright disobedience to God's revealed will (e.g. idolatrous worship, vain worship, will worship, indecent and disorderly worship, etc.—recommend reading my book **“Worship: Personal and Public”**). The church is God's designated institution through which we are to glorify Christ (Eph. 3:21). That is why it is very difficult to find any Christians during the New Testament era that were not members of the Lord's congregations. The church is the way of service and the place of designated worship (*“when ye come together in the church”* - 1 Cor. 11:18).

To the Jew who had been trained in the Pentateuch (first five books of Moses), the very words *“house of God”* conveyed acceptable public worship because that house conformed to a precise divine pattern revealed by God to Moses. Such acceptable public worship consisted of a qualified public ministry who administered qualified public ordinances in a specified public place where everything was done decently and in order as defined by the revealed will of God (Deut. 12:5-13). Such officers and ordinances had to convey in ceremonial form the truth of the redemptive Person and work of Christ. Paul described the church at Ephesus where Timothy pastored as *“the house of God”* (1 Tim. 1:3; 3:15-16). Both Timothy and Paul had been trained in the Old Testament Scriptures and therefore, the phrase *“the house of God”* could convey nothing less than a designated place for public worship where a properly qualified ministry administered properly qualified ordinances. Note the context consists of a pattern of qualifications for public ministry in the congregation (1 Tim. 3:1-13).

Peter also was trained in the Old Testament Scriptures and realized that such a *“house”* was all about *“acceptable”* sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5) in public worship as opposed to what the Old Testament referred to as *“high places”* or *“houses”* of unacceptable public worship (called *“harlots”* in New Testament—Rev. 17:5).

Why should it be a surprise that the Lord would have a special reward for those who serve faithfully in New Testament congregations (Rev. 2-3) versus those who do not (Rev. 18:4)? Why should it be a surprise if the metaphors *“chaste virgin”* and *“bride”* should convey the idea of faithfulness and purity with regard to acceptable service and in keeping with responsible obedience to the Great Commission? It should come as no surprise that the metaphor *“chaste virgin”* or *“bride”* should be used to describe the institutional

church that is faithful to “*the faith once delivered*” especially during an age that is characterized by apostasy.

II. THE METAPHOR APPLIED TO THE CONCRETE CHURCH

When the Apostle Paul established the church at Corinth it had been sound in the faith. However, since that time errors had crept in which left unchecked would have “corrupted” its “chaste” beginning. Paul predicted the increasing apostasy in last days within professing Christendom he warned about its impact upon the congregations of Christ. Writing to the church at Corinth the Apostle Paul said:

*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a **chaste virgin** to Christ.—2 Cor. 11:2 - emphasis mine*

Paul described this faithful congregation of Christ as a metaphorically “chaste” virgin.¹³⁴ Although it was his anticipated hope for all such congregations to maintain purity in doctrine and practice, he realized, and immediately went on to warn, that they could be “*corrupted*” from that faithful condition and thus fail to be presented as “chaste” virgins:

*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be **corrupted** from the simplicity that is in Christ. - 2 Cor. 11:3 - emphasis mine*

A “*corrupted*” virgin is an impure and unfaithful woman or a metaphorical “*whore*” or “*harlot*.” Paul goes on to describe how such “chaste” congregations could be “*corrupted*” by doctrinal prostitution:

¹³⁴ *It is interesting to note that according to the Jewish Mishnah, a priest must marry a bride whose line of descent can be traced back in succession from mother to mother in a priestly line, “If a man would marry a woman of priestly stock, he must trace her family back through four mothers, which are, indeed, eight, her mother, her mother’s mother, and mother’s father’s mother, and this one’s mother, also her father’s mother and this one’s mother, her father’s mother, and this one’s mother.” Herbert Darby trans. **The Mishnah**, (Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 327. Baptist church succession conveys the same concept as each New Testament Church comes from a line of previous mother congregations.*

*For if he that cometh preacheth **another Jesus**, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive **another spirit**, which ye have not received, or **another gospel**, which ye have not accepted...*

- 2 Cor. 11:4 - emphasis mine¹³⁶

As you can see, Paul is not referring to minor errors, but corruption of essential doctrine so that what results is “another” kind of church.¹³⁵ Paul claimed by prophetic foresight that he knew for certain that many true congregations would be corrupted and explained the very mechanics that would cause it:

*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves **enter in among you**, not sparing the flock. Also, **of your own selves shall men arise**, speaking perverse things, **to draw away disciples after them**. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. - Acts 20:29-31 - emphasis mine*

All congregations in the New Testament were of the same kind – apostolic – and thus like faith and order. However, the above text is the Biblical explanation how competing denominations would enter into history and that perfectly describes what we see in secular church history. The instrument used by Satan to create an apostate denomination would be false teachers. The false teacher would either work from outside the church, penetrating it, and transforming it into another kind of church, or he would work from the inside, drawing disciples out of the church to form another competing kind of church. Here is the Biblical prediction, and description of how different denominations would come into existence, in opposition to the congregations found in the New Testament.

Moreover, the Apostles (Paul and John) revealed there was a deeper source of such corruption, and the Holy Spirit pressed them to reveal unto the congregations what that deeper source of corruption is:

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing spirits**, and **doctrines of devils**.-1 Tim. 4:1 - emphasis mine*

¹³⁵ The difference between a “virgin” and “harlot” is a change in **kind**. Some congregations in Revelation 2-3 were in danger of embracing errors or forsaking truths that would cause Christ to remove the candlestick or disclaim them as His congregations.

*Beloved, believe not every **spirit**, but try **the spirits** whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.—I Jn. 4:1 - emphasis mine*

Such corrupt doctrines originate with demons that use people to spread them. They also knew, as the end of the age drew closer (“*in the latter times*”) that such apostasy would also dramatically increase:

*This know also, that **in the last days** perilous times shall come... But evil men and seducers shall **wax worse and worse**, deceiving, and being deceived.—2 Tim. 3:1, 13 - emphasis mine*

Although the Apostle Paul implied that “*chaste virgin*” congregations could be “*corrupted*” (which implied they could become metaphorical “*harlots*”), it is the Apostle John that carried this metaphorical inference unto its consistent conclusion. John chose to describe the aggregate of both true and false congregations, both **now** and in their final state at the end of this age, under two types of women, and two types of cities. John described the true congregations metaphorically as “*the bride*” (Rev. 19:6- 7; 22:16-17), while he described false congregations metaphorically as “*the Great Whore*” (Rev. 17:5). A corrupted and earthly city characterized the Great whore (Rev. 17:18), while the heavenly city characterized the Bride (Rev. 21).

Hence, here is the Biblical contrast between institutionalized apostolic (“*virgin*”) and apostate (“*harlot*”) Christianity. True New Testament congregations are included under the figure of “*the bride*” while predicted apostate congregations are included under the figure of a “*harlot*.”

III. THE PRESENT COLLECTIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL BRIDE

In the final chapter of the book of Revelation “*the bride*” in her *unglorified* state is described as presently existent and active in this world in ministry with the Holy Spirit:

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things **in the congregations**. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride **say**, Come....—Rev. 22:16-17 - emphasis mine*

The present tense verb “say” demonstrates the active presence of “the bride” here and now in relationship with the Holy Spirit. The “congregations” in verse 16 are clearly the antecedent of this metaphor. John had already established a present working relationship between the “congregations” and the Holy Spirit:

*John to the seven congregations...from the seven Spirits
which are before his throne -Rev. 1:4*

*...he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith
unto the congregations - Rev. 2:7*

The metaphorical “bride” in Revelation 22:17 are the collective¹³⁶ unglorified “congregations” (Rev. 22:16) that work jointly with the Holy Spirit, here and now, in making disciples for Christ. **Here is absolute proof this is not merely a future “glory” bride, but is a present metaphorical bride made up of the Lord’s “congregations.” Early American Baptists referred to these congregations collectively as “mount Zion.”**

Paul’s application of this metaphor to the concrete church at Corinth confirms the present-day status of the Bride of Christ in this world:

*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have
espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste
virgin to Christ. - 2 Cor. 11:2*

The same anticipated presentation of this individual congregation to Christ is the same anticipation Paul had for all true congregations of Christ collectively, and so, to the congregation at Ephesus he writes of that future collective presentation:

*That he **might present it** to himself a glorious church, not
having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be
holy and without blemish.-Eph. 5:27 - emphasis mine*

¹³⁶ The numerical significance of “seven” congregations in the book of Revelation is the collective fullness or completeness of all true congregations then existing. In other words, what is said to these “seven” is applicable to all other true congregations existing in that generation as well as in all generations to come. It is these “congregations” that John describes metaphorically and collectively as “the bride” in Revelation 22:16-17.

This demands a present reality with regard to progressive sanctification (“*washing by the word*”) rather than a yet future promise due to initial salvation (which is the prerequisite for church membership prior to progressive sanctification by the Word).

In direct contrast to the present unglorified bride are the corrupted “*harlot*” congregations which contain true children of God. Although “*harlot*” congregations did not exist at the time John wrote, such apostasy is anticipated by the Scriptures (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; Mt. 24:24-25; etc.) and in John’s prophecy of the Great Harlot describes her existence until the second coming of Christ. During this period God calls His people to come out of these corrupt congregations:

*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people**, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.—Rev. 18:4 - emphasis mine*

Present day saints cannot exist in both a “chaste virgin” and “harlots” at one and the same time. They are presently either in one or the other. Here is absolute proof that some true children of God are not in the present metaphorical bride of Christ but in the metaphorical “harlot.” Furthermore, those who are saved, but continue in the collective “*harlot*” will be outside the future glorified “*bride*” in the new heaven and earth.

*And the nations of them **which are saved** shall walk in the **light of it**: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour **into it**.—Rev. 21:24 - emphasis mine*

Although they have access to the New Jerusalem, they do not dwell in it, but they are “*of the earth*” and it is their kings that bring their glory “*into*” it. Although they have access to the tree of life in the New Jerusalem, their part is the “*leaves*” not the fruit (Rev. 22:2) as the fruit is reserved for those within the bride who dwell inside New Jerusalem:

*In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare **twelve manner of fruits**, and yielded her fruit every month: and **the leaves** of the tree were for the healing of the nations.—Rev. 22:2 - emphasis mine*

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the congregations; To him that overcometh will I give to **eat of the tree of life**, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.—Rev. 2:7 - emphasis mine*

They have their part of the tree of life, which are the leaves (Rev. 22:3) while those who are overcomers have right to “eat” of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7). The significance in this tree of life distinction is revealing. When Adam was in the garden, while he obeyed the Lord he had the right to “eat” of any tree in the garden. However, when he sinned, he chose the “LEAVES” to cover his shame. He was expelled from the garden to live outside the garden, but he found salvation OUTSIDE the garden. Likewise, those that compose “the saved nations” have right to the “leaves” signifying the cause (unfaithfulness) for their being expunged from the city registrar and having to live OUTSIDE the city but nevertheless are still “saved.”

The difference between the “saved” living in the city and outside the city on the new earth is the difference now between those saved serving God through his acceptable way of service - the N.T. congregations and outside that acceptable way of service “harlots.” Either way, all are still “saved” and all are in the new heaven and earth and all have access to the city and to the tree of life, but those expunged from the city to live outside is due to “idios” (doing their own thing) instead of serving God his way.

There are at minimum three distinctly different books of the life in the Bible.

1. The book of PHYSICAL living. This book is distinguished from the rest by the phrase “from under the heavens” - Deut. 9:14; 25:19; 29:20; 2 Kngs. 14:27.
2. The book of SPIRITUAL living - Philip. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; Lk. 10:20 - these cannot be blotted out.
3. The book of CITY living - Rev. 3:4-5; 22:19 - these names can be blotted out.

W.M. Ramsay the famous Christian Archeologists who explored many of the ancient cities in Palestine said:

As in all Greek and Roman cities of that time there was kept a list of citizens, according to their class or tribe or deme,

*in which new citizens were entered and from which degraded citizens were expunged, so the writer of this letter figuratively mentions the Book of life - W.M. Ramsay, **The Letters to the Seven Congregations.** (Baker Book House, 1963), p. 385*

Interestingly, all citizens in a given city were responsible for taking turns doing their civil duty. When a citizen was hindered from performing their civil duty they would write “*idios*” beside their name in the book of the living citizens in that city. If a citizen wrote “*idios*” too many times they were expunged from their city and blotted out of the book of the living or book of names of the citizens of that city. The Greek term “*idios*” originally meant “one’s own” or “doing my own thing.” However, eventually it came to mean one who is turned in on himself and thus an “idiot.”

Many saved people are expunged from Jerusalem’s book of the living due to unfaithfulness. They live outside of the city upon the new earth, and constitute “*the saved nations*” (Rev. 21:24). They have access to the city but do not dwell there because of their “*idios*” or idiotically perverting God’s ordained way of service by being turned in on their own things rather than serving God in the way of the Lord.

Hence, there is a careful distinction made in the new heaven and earth between the saved “*of the earth*” (Rev. 21:24) and the saved within the city (Rev. 22:3). To be **outside** the present collective/institutional unglorified bride now is to be **outside** the future collective/institutional glorified bride then. To be **inside** the present bride now is to dwell **inside** the New Jerusalem then. Salvation is not the issue here as both those on the new earth and those inside the New Jerusalem are equally saved. Where you are right now in relationship to the Lord’s congregations determines where you will dwell then.

Right now, God’s appointed public way of acceptable service is in New Testament kind of congregations.

*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, **acceptable to God** by Jesus Christ.—1 Pet. 2:5 - emphasis mine*

Satan cannot rob a true child of God of his salvation, but he can rob him of the privilege of acceptable service, truth and future reward. This is why Satan has produced denominationalism, in order to confuse and divide

the people of God and rob them of present blessings and a future home in the New Jerusalem.

Therefore, there are over 30,000 different existing denominations and five new ones being formed every week which is in perfect harmony with what the Bible predicts will characterize the last days. Understandably, this creates massive confusion in the minds of most people and makes it more difficult to discern between the decreasing number of true congregations of Christ (“*the bride*”) and the increasing number of diverse false congregations (“*harlots*”) in these last days. Of course, that kind of confusion is exactly what Satan has in mind. This course was written, in part, to enable the reader to distinguish Christ’s congregation from those that are corrupted. This course offers some Biblical principles that can help easily distinguish between the two. The important question for the student to ask himself or herself is: *Am I in one of the Lord’s congregations, or am I in one that is corrupt or what the Bible describes as a metaphorical harlot?*

IV. THE OVERCOMERS IN REVELATION 2-3

Universal church advocates ignore the context of Revelation 2-3 and interpret the promises to overcomers as salvational promises.

Consider a few of the contextual factors:

1. Each letter is addressed to a concrete congregation rather than to the “saints” or “elect.”
2. The major focus of each letter is “*thy works*” not their individual salvation. This is repeated in every letter.
3. Many of the issues to overcome are only possible by the majority of a congregation working together rather than by individual action.
4. All the promises have to do with things obtained yet future in heaven with regard to the New Jerusalem and the new earth rather than obtaining entrance.
5. All the letters are concluded by application to those already saved (“*he that hath an ear to hear*”) and as members of New Testament congregations (“*let him hear what the Spirit saith to the congregations*”).
6. So, it is true believers who are being exhorted to overcome.

Probably the favorite example used by universal church advocates is

Christ's assurance to the overcomers at Smyrna that they will not suffer the "second death." They claim this promise demands perseverance in the face of persecution in order to avoid the "second death."

However, Christ had already confirmed that these were saved people "rich" in grace and so any doubts about their ultimate salvation is not in view. What is in view is overcoming "fear" of death as a consequence for remaining faithful. He is telling them that in their particular case, they will suffer ten days of severe persecution that will end in death if they remain faithful. He cannot promise they will escape death, but he can promise if they are faithful in giving up their life in this world, that in the life to come they will obtain the ultimate reward, "the crown of life" (which is the New Jerusalem as their home). He cannot promise they will not face death, but he can provide his own example of facing physical death and having overcome it. He cannot promise they will not suffer greatly before dying, but he can promise that physical death is the greatest extent of death they will suffer.

If we take the universal invisible church interpretation, then all who fail to remain faithful in the face of torment and death due to "fear" are lost professors or have lost their salvation. In other words, martyrdom is essential to salvation when facing death for being faithful according to this theory. Therefore, if Peter had immediately died after his rejection of Christ at the cross due to fear, then according to this theory he must be regarded as a false believer or one who lost his salvation.

V. THE SANCTIFICATION VERSUS SALVATION CONTEXT OF METAPHORS

The student should realize that the very same metaphor can be used for something entirely different depending on the context. For example, Christ is said to be the "lion" of the tribe of Judah. However, Satan is also described as a "lion" seeking whom he may devour. So, the very same metaphor can be used to describe things entirely different depending on the context.

Likewise, the marriage metaphor can be used for things entirely different depending on its context. In the context of sanctification, the marriage metaphors are used for the institutional congregation. However, in the context of salvation the marriage metaphor is used for individual spiritual union with Christ (Rom. 7:1-5). Furthermore, when it is used in a

salvation context it describes a completed or already consummated marriage along with metaphorical children or “*fruits*” of marriage (Rom. 7:5). On the other hand, when it is used of the congregation in sanctification contexts it does not describe a completed marriage, but rather anticipates a yet future presentation after the resurrection and after the judgment for rewards.

VI. OLD TESTAMENT TYPES OF CHRIST’S BRIDE

There are a variety of Old Testament types of the Bride of Christ. Some of them are Eve, the wife of Isaac, the Levites, and the Shulamite bride of Solomon; etc. There are Old Testament passages that prophetically describe the Bride of Christ (Psa. 45; Song of Solomon, etc.).

Most of these are easily applied to the institutional congregation without much difficulty. A few are more difficult due to the universal church influence. Probably the most disputed one by universal church advocates is the Adam and Eve typology (Eph. 5:30). However, it must be remembered that Eve was not the only one that originated from the body of Adam. All of Adam’s family originated from his body as well (Rom.5:12-19) and therefore, Eve is to be distinguished from the children of Adam. Likewise, the congregation as the metaphorical bride of Christ is to be distinguished from the rest of God’s children.

This metaphorical distinction between the Bride and other family members can be easily seen in the bridal psalm (Psa. 45) and in the story of Isaac, and in the Song of Solomon, and in the tribe of Levi versus the children of Israel, etc.

VII. BAPTIST BRIDER?

Dr. Tom Cassidy states the question about being a “Baptist Brider” clearly:

WAIT A MINUTE!!! It sounds to me like the writer of this article is a “Baptist Brider.” That depends on what you think a “Baptist Brider” is.

If the average Christian is asked for a definition of the “Baptist Bride” position, he would be hard pressed to give an intelligible answer. Some would say the “Baptist Bride” position means “Only Baptists are going to Heaven.” Others would say, “Only Baptists will be raptured.” Others would say only, “I don’t know.” If the Baptist Bride position means only Baptists are going to heaven, then I’m not a Baptist Brider. If the Baptist Bride position means only Baptists will be raptured (partial rapture theory), then I’m not a Baptist Brider (nowhere does the Bible ever teach the “rapture of the Church”, but it does teach the rapture of the saints, all of them: Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, church members, and non-church members, all will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air). But if you believe the Baptist Bride position means the Bride of Christ will be made up of those who have been faithful to the true New Testament church of Jesus Christ, then, yep, I’m a Baptist Brider! I have to be. You see, I believe the Bible – all of it! The Bible says the Bride is the Church. It also says the Church is local and visible. If you have a local, visible church, then you must also have a local visible Bride, for the Bible teaches they are one and the same thing. If you have a universal Bride, you must also have a universal church, for they are still one and the same thing!—Tom Cassidy, **The Bible, The Baptists and the Bride of Christ**¹³⁷

The bride is made up of faithful members of true New Testament congregations in all generations regardless of what title they placed over their front door or what title others may have given them.

However, the idea of “the Priesthood of the church” is wholly rejected. Some have perpetuated the idea that since the Holy Spirit indwells the New Testament congregation in a special sense that he does not also indwell the individual believer. That is false! He indwells both the institutional congregation (1 Cor. 3:5-16) as well as the individual believer (1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Jn. 4:4, 14, 16; Rom. 8:9).

¹³⁷ <http://www.beaconmbc.com/articles/thebaptistandthebride.htm> (5/12/2017)

VIII. HOW TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN HARLOT AND VIRGIN CONGREGATIONS?

How can one know they are in a true New Testament “*virgin*” congregation or in an apostate “*harlot*” congregation? If a person does not want to be confused or led into error, he needs to know how to differentiate between the true and the false. Before attempting to provide more comprehensive answers to this question, there are some preliminary questions that should be asked and answered.

QUESTION #1: Do false congregations contain **only** lost people?

ANSWER: The answer is **no**. The Bible repeatedly warns God’s people about being deceived and led away into error:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.—Ac 20:29-30 - emphasis mine

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. - 2 Thess. 3:6

False doctrine and deception are no doubt the fundamental causes behind the explosion of contradictory denominationalism and the current confusion within Christendom. Does the Lord want His people within such false congregations? No, the Lord commands them to come out of polluted forms of Christianity:

*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.***—Rev. 18:4 - emphasis mine

Therefore, false congregations can and do contain true Christians; but just because they contain true Christians does not mean they are true congregations, nor does it mean that God wants His people to remain in such.

QUESTION #2: Are true congregations perfect congregations?

ANSWER: The answer is “no”. Not even the first congregation was perfect as it had a Judas, and the best of members are men at best. Hence, the difference between a true and false congregation is not that true congregations are perfect or that false congregations are without true Christians in them.

QUESTION #3: What then is the difference?

ANSWER: The difference between a false and a true congregation are essential characteristics that belong exclusively to true congregations which are not found in false congregations. Just as there are essential characteristics that distinguish between true and false Christians, there are essential characteristics that distinguish between true and false congregations. There are Biblical characteristics that make a congregation a true congregation. Some of these characteristics have been spelled out in our lessons on the Great Commission. Others will be stated in the last lesson where “*the faith once delivered*” is also defined.

IX. A PLEA TO EVANGELICALS

Many would object to the position presented in this course because it would place them in a small minority of Christians. They would argue that we cannot seriously believe that such a small handful of congregations in this world are the true institutional church and bride of Christ.¹³⁸

As an Evangelical (gospel of grace believer) you already accept the position of this course in at least a partial way. Let’s demonstrate that point. Please take a clean sheet of paper and draw a target on it like the following example:

Let’s assume that the actual bull’s-eye represents New Testament Congregations.

¹³⁸ *Although the church is the only institution authorized to preach the gospel in the world, it is not the only authorized proclaimer of the gospel as that is the duty of every child of God (Rev. 21:17). So, evangelism is not restricted to the church institution but making disciples is restricted to the church institution. God uses His word irrespective of the person or institution handling it. If he can use Balaam’s ass to rebuke a prophet, he can use anyone to proclaim his word.*



Now, ask this question: “Do you think all world religions and their sacred temples or shrines are acceptable to God? Does the Hindu and the Moslem serve God in a way acceptable and are they going to heaven?”

Jesus answers this question for you in John 14:6 - “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me.” Peter answers this question for you in Acts 4:12 - “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

Therefore, the majority of the religious world is lost and is not serving God acceptably. Both salvation and service are limited to “Christ” and thus, Biblical “Christianity.” Place “WR” (world religions) on the outer circle of your target.

The 1998 Almanac lists a total of 3,848,891,000 (almost 4 billion out of nearly 6 billion world population) people on planet earth that belong to non-Christian religions. **Therefore, like it or not, as a Christian you are in the minority.**

Let’s ask a second question: “Would you accept every Christian denomination as an acceptable way to serve God?” If you are honest with yourself, I think you will have to answer “no”.¹³⁹ Now don’t misunderstand. I am not saying that all who are members within non-Baptist denominations are lost. I am not saying that. I am simply considering whether the following **institutions** are Biblical ways for saved people to serve God acceptably. Can such institutions keep the espousal terms (found in the Great Commission)?

¹³⁹ If you don’t know or if your answer is yes at this point of your life then please examine the following Scriptures - Acts 20:29-30; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Jn. 9-11; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Jn. 4:1; God certainly instructs you not to accept all professing Christian preachers and believers as acceptable to Him.

For example, would you accept New Age Christianity as an acceptable way to serve God (Christian Science, Scientology, etc.)? They say you are god and everyone is a little “god”? If you believe these are not “acceptable” professed Christian congregations, then, on the second most outer circle in the target place “NAC” (New Age Congregations). Like it or not, with this limitation you are eliminating many institutions that claim to be “Christian” and you are becoming part of a decreasing minority.

Let’s ask a third question: “*Would you accept cultic Congregations as acceptable to God (Jehovah’s Witnesses, World Wide Church of God, Mormons, etc.)?*” Perhaps they possess more Biblical characteristics and at least use the Bible more than the previous group? However, no evangelical Christian would dare consider such congregations as “Christian” for a moment. Place these on the third most outer circle “CC” (Cultic Congregations). **Your view of a real Christian church is getting narrower.** You are becoming part of a decreasing minority.

Let’s proceed to the fourth question: “*Would you accept sacramental congregations as acceptable to God – meaning congregations that demand that salvation is found in ceremonies and ordinances and church membership (Roman Catholic Church, Congregations of Christ, Lutherans, Methodists, etc.)?*”

Now again, let me remind you that we are not denying that sincere, but misled Christians, may be part of these institutions. We are only determining if this kind of institution may be considered an “acceptable” Christian congregation according to the Scriptures? Can an institution apply the ordinances to unregenerate infants and thus constitute the congregational membership with the unregenerate from the time of infancy and be recognized as a New Testament congregation? Can you find any congregation in the New Testament that administered the ordinances to the unregenerate and/or viewed the ordinances as salvational to the unregenerate and/or the membership was composed of unregenerate?

As an evangelical Christian, you know that these congregations deny the very heart of the gospel of Christ and as **institutions** they publicly preach *another gospel* other than grace because they teach sacramental salvation. If you have doubt about whether they are acceptable to God then read what Paul says about those who preach a gospel of works which is “*another gospel*”

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another (another different kind) gospel. Which is not another (of the same kind); but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, LET HIM BE ACCURSED. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, LET HIM BE ACCURSED. - Gal. 1:6-9

Unless you can bless what God has said cursed, then place these congregations on the fourth circle.¹⁴⁰ Label these congregations “SC” (Sacramental Congregations). **Your view of what constitutes a real New Testament congregation is shrinking rapidly. You have just made one gigantic leap into an ever-decreasing minority**

Let’s pause a moment and consider the four categories you have eliminated thus far. Actually, all four categories above are essentially one type of religion. They all teach that salvation is by faith in God PLUS your good works. Their bottom-line message is that ultimately good works or bad works determine salvation. When it comes to salvation, the Hindu, Moslem, Methodist, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Assembly of God, Roman Catholic, etc., are alike when it comes to the bottom-line principle of salvation.

Jesus separated all religious people into two distinct classes or ways (Mt. 7:13-14). Those described above fit into what Jesus called the “*broad way*.” The Apostles identified these two ways by name in their epistles as the ways of “*works*” versus “*grace*.” Among professing Christianity, the way of works is the way of **good works** plus **Christ** IN ORDER TO BE saved.

This type of Christianity is what Jesus describes in Matthew 7:21-23. It is the kind that professed “*Lord, Lord...*” with the additional profession of “*have we not done...*” They attempt to mix their own imperfect works of righteousness with the perfect righteousness of Christ as the basis for acceptance into heaven. Christ’s response to this type of believer is “*I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity...*”

¹⁴⁰ Paul is condemning those who change the CONTENT of the gospel by preaching **Christ** plus **works** for salvation. Just because professions of salvation occur in congregations that proclaim salvation by works does not mean that the gospel of grace had been preached. It simply means that God was able to overrule the false preaching and use whatever Scripture was read or spoken to save some in spite of the preacher and his message of works.

These are the type of congregations and preachers that we are repeatedly warned about in the Scriptures to avoid (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes. 3:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Jn. 9-11; Rev. 18:4). These are the type of congregations that true believers are commanded to “*come out of*” (Rev. 18:4) and to “*mark*” and “*avoid*” (Rom. 16:17) and withdraw from (2 Thes. 3:6).

The minority way (“*few there be*”) is the way of grace, as it is the way of complete denial of self, and thus, a complete reliance upon Christ and his merits to be saved. Only those in this way will populate the new heaven and earth, as only those will be saved. The Bible clearly says, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God, NOT OF WORKS lest any man should boast. For we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus UNTO good works...*” - Eph. 2:8-10.

Now again, let me reiterate that there are no doubt many really saved people within many of these “works for salvation” **institutions** in spite of what they have been led to believe after their salvation. However, what we are considering here is what is an acceptable public Christian way of service (“*church*”) rather than challenging one’s personal salvation.

Do you honestly believe that congregations which deny the gospel of grace and pervert the ordinances are acceptable ways or institutions to serve God in and through? If so, then listen to the Apostle Paul:

*Now we command you brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you withdraw yourselves from **every brother** that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received from us - 2 Thes. 3:6*

Even if such congregations are recognized as consisting of all true brethren, then such brethren are to be separated from by true New Testament congregations and such cannot be recognized as true New Testament congregations.

According to the 1998 World Almanac there are 1,955,229,000 professing Christians in this world. 981,465,000 belong to the Roman Catholic Church (50%). Another 218,350,000 belongs to the Greek Orthodox Catholic Church (11%). Hence, a total of 1,199,815,000 (**61%**) belong to sacramental Catholic congregations. Another 404,088,136 (**20%**) belong to Protestant sacramental (baby baptizers) congregations (Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed, etc.). Now, add all the cult congregations (Christian

and New Age) and non-church attendees to the above figures (7%) and you have approximately 251,334,000 evangelical Christians that are members of evangelical congregations worldwide. Dear friend, this means that only 12% of professing Christendom belongs to evangelical Christian congregations. Are you getting the picture? Look at the chart below. As an evangelical Christian in an evangelical church you are already in the 12% minority as opposed to 88% of professing Christendom.



Now since you have located yourself in the very “narrow” 12% margin of Christian congregations, let’s consider the next question.

Let’s ask the Fifth Question: What evangelical congregations practice the ordinances in harmony with the gospel? There are some congregations that proclaim the right gospel from the pulpit but preach the wrong gospel by how they observe the ordinances. For example, there are congregations that claim to preach salvation by grace without works but then administer baptism to infants (Presbyterians, Reformed Congregationalists, Grace Lutheran’s, etc.). Hence, the membership of their congregation is being composed of unregenerate. Is that the “pillar and ground of the truth” or the kind of congregation found in the New Testament? This is like fresh water (grace) and salt water (works) flowing from the same fountain—self-contradiction. Grace cannot be mixed with works and works cannot be mixed with grace (Rom. 11:6). Again, this does not deny that many within these congregations are truly saved. That is not the issue. The issue is whether or not such administration of the ordinances and such a mixed membership can be called a true New Testament congregation? Some may object and claim that even the first congregation had lost members (Jn. 6:64) and so a congregation can have lost members and still be a true New Testament congregation. However, it is one thing for a true New Testament congregation to contain false professors but quite another thing for a

congregation to intentionally, and doctrinally receive into membership those who have no profession of faith and are known to be unregenerate. Can you find such a congregation in the New Testament? Such congregations cannot be recognized as true congregations of Christ. Place “MC” on the fifth circle in the target. Now, the only ones left to consider are those congregations which preach the gospel consistently with their ordinances. **You are now in an even decreasing minority of less than 9% of total Christianity with regard to what is and what are not true New Testament congregations.**

Now we come to the final question. *“The question is what evangelical denomination(s) fit within the exact bull’s eye?”* Since we have eliminated all congregations but those that preach the right gospel, then the next step of elimination is very simple. Since salvation has to do with the right gospel, then the issue of the “church” cannot be part of salvation and must be restricted to progressive sanctification or right service.

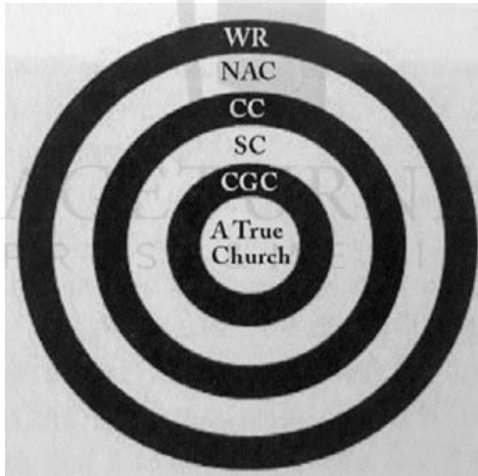
If a group of people call themselves a “church” but don’t even understand the Biblical nature of the true church, but confuse it with salvation, then how can they be a New Testament church? Those congregations who embrace the universal visible or invisible church confuse salvation with the church and don’t know the true nature of the church in the New Testament and therefore cannot possibly be a true New Testament congregation.

Is there a Biblical standard that we can measure and define what is and what is not the ordained way of acceptable service, or a true church? Yes, there is. It is the Great Commission. The Great Commission sets forth the four terms of the espousal covenant to Christ or the terms of a faithful and pure bride. The true congregations of Christ must be: **(1)** The kind that preaches the same gospel Christ preached (Jn. 3:1-16), **(2)** that administer the same baptism Christ administered (Jn. 4:1; Lk. 7:29-30) to believers only, and **(3)** teach the same faith and order that Christ commanded (Acts 2:41-42; 2 Thes.3:6). **(4)** Moreover, the “*clean*” cannot come out of an “*unclean*” and neither can such congregations self-originate but they are reproduced by previous existing congregations of like faith and order. The Great Commission is a cycle of reproduction of like faith and order.

It is true that such congregations would be a small minority among professing Christendom today. However, as an evangelical, you should not join any congregation that does not consistently administer the ordinances

consistent with the gospel of Grace. That position alone on the gospel restricts you to the small 9% minority of existing Christian denominations. Jesus predicts that before His return that those standing for “*the faith*” will be extremely few (Lk. 18:8). Why not take the next step and take a stand for the right way of service? The Bible says that the New Testament congregation is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (I Tim. 3:15).

The Bible says that “*God is not the author of Confusion*” (I Cor. 14:33). Doesn't even common sense indicate to you that God cannot be the author of all the denominational confusion in our world today? How would you eliminate the true from the false? Doesn't it make sense that the true kind of congregations will be united on the right gospel and thus define the purpose of the church to be the right way of service whereas all false congregations will fail to measure up to one, or both of these simple standards? Does it not make sense that true congregations know what is the true nature of the New Testament congregation, its true form of government, officers, membership, discipline and mission?



WR = World Religions

NAC = New Age Christianity

CC = Cultic Christianity

SC = Sacramental Christianity

CGC = Contradictory Gospel Christianity

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. In which of the following contexts do we find these metaphors applied to the church?
 - a. Initial salvation context
 - b. Progressive sanctification context
 - c. both
 - d. None of the above.
2. Does Scripture apply such metaphors to a concrete church?
3. What is the **repeated** and central focus of Christ with regard to the seven congregations of Asia in each and every letter?
 - a. Questioning personal salvation
 - b. “I know thy works”
4. What two passages in Scripture provide proof for a present tense application of these metaphors?
5. Agreeing with what central doctrine places you in a 12% minority among professing Christendom?
6. Does Christ place true believers in the majority (“many”) or in the minority (“few”) within the professing kingdom?
7. How does Christ anticipate the number of faithful at his return according to Lk.18:8?
8. How does Paul anticipate the increase of apostasy according to 2 Tim. 3:13?

REQUIRED READING:

Some Non-Prophet Organizations by Mark W. Fenison, pp. 28-46

WEEK 9 LESSON 2

Great Commission—Part 7— Authorized vs. Direct

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to define the differences between Authorized Church Constitution (ACC) and Direct Authority (DA) and, (2) to defend the ACC position by the Scriptures and, (3) to confirm the ACC position as the true historical Landmark position.

INTRODUCTION: The issue has been crafted abstractly around the distinction between two words (1) *Direct versus* (2) *Horizontal or instrumental* authority with regard to the origin and constitution of New Testament churches. Direct authority advocates claim that any “two or three” previously church baptized believers who assemble with the intent to become a church by nature of that very agreed upon intent obtain such authority directly from Christ. They base this claim strictly upon their interpretation of Matthew 18:20 and denial that any church authorized the organization of churches found in Acts 8-18. With regard to Matthew 18:20, they ignore the immediate context is describing an already existent church and that Matthew 18:19-35 is a continuation of how a church is authorized to deal with unruly members. With regard to Acts 8-18 they ignore the fact that even they must admit that the baptisms preceding church organization had to have been administered by a church authorized representative for the baptisms to be valid. Hence, the same church authority that is present for baptismal administration is present for gathering the baptized into teaching/observing assemblies. Moreover, post-Biblical Baptist history of church organizations confirms that over 99.9% of recorded organizations either occurred directly due to a preexisting church lettering such members out for the purpose of organizing a new church or that such churches

were organized by a church authorized and ordained representative. The rare occurrences of self-organized Baptist churches is either treated as an anomaly and disorderly by those recorded the event or there is insufficient information and self-authorization is merely an assumption.

In direct contrast to the “direct” authority view is the “horizontal” or “instrumental” view which restricts church constitution within the boundaries of the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:18-20. Matthew 28:18-20 demands the preexistence of an instrumental agency (“ye”) that is being authorized to evangelize, then baptize, and then gather them into a teaching/observing assembly. Those designated by the pronouns “them...them” have no authority to gather themselves into a teaching/observing assembly any more than they have authority to evangelize or baptize themselves. Hence, Matthew 28:18-20 is authority given to the church alone to bring baptized believers either into an already existing teaching/observing assembly as in Acts 2:40-41 or gather them into a teaching/observing assembly on the mission field as in Acts 13-18. The rule is that where there is church authorized administration of baptism there is church authority to gather the baptized into a teaching/observing assembly.

Both views believe those being formed into a new church freely choose to organize themselves into such a church. The issue revolves around whether or not they must have church authority either directly or indirectly through an ordained representative to self-organize into a New Testament church. The DA view believes that such already have authority from Christ to organize themselves into a church due to their previously church authorized and church administered baptism. However, the horizontal view believes this willing formation into a church state must be either directly authorized by an existing church or indirectly through a church ordained representative on the mission field.

Significantly, both sides fully admit that Matthew 28:19-20 is given solely to the New Testament Church institution. Indeed, this is the indisputable conclusion of the historic definition of Landmarkism, that it is the church alone, which is authorized to administer every aspect of the Great Commission.

The argument is that scriptural authority emanates under God, from a gospel church.—William Cathcart, The

Baptist Encyclopedia, “Landmarkism” Vol. 2, pp. 731-732, The Electronic Edition of Baptist History, Ver. 1.0

The historic definition of “Landmarkism” is that such authority “emanates” under God, but not “from” individual members or even two or three unchurched or unbaptized or baptized believers (Mt. 18:16), but “*from a gospel church.*”

Therefore, both the Biblical text and the historic definition of Landmarkism demand the Great Commission was given to those (“*ye... you*”) already existing in a disciplined gathered state as a congregational administrative body (Mathew 18:17 and Acts 1:21-22 prove they already existed as a baptized assembly prior to Matthew 28:18-20).

Moreover, both sides fully admit that the issue must be decided by Scripture alone and that anyone living in the post-biblical period that dissented from the scriptures on this point, even if his name is James R. Graves, must be regarded as in error as scripture is final in authority for faith and practice.

A. THE POINT OF DEBATE IS MATTHEW 28:20

So, the actual point of debate between advocates of Authorized Church Constitution (ACC) and Direct Authority (DA) is the correct interpretation of Matthew 28:20. Two issues must be resolved concerning this passage of Scripture. The first issue is, whether or not, Matthew 28:20 is authority to bring baptized believers, existing outside of church capacity (v. 19 “*them*”), into a teaching/observing assembly committed to the “all things” of Christ (v. 20; Acts 2:40-41)? The second issue is, if that is so, then who is authorized to do that? Does that authority reside with “*ye*” or “*them*” in this commission? Moreover, if it resides in “*ye*” as a New Testament church, does it reside with each member of that church, or in any two or three baptized churched or unchurched believers, or only in the congregational administrative body baptized (“*ye*”), as defined by historic Landmarkism? Remember, the historic definition of Landmarkism repudiates any other authorized administrator of the Great Commission but “*the church*” and no individual member, or two or three members can be called the “church” as Matthew 18:16-17 repudiates that concept of “church.” In Matthew 18:17 there are more than

two or three members assembled together and yet they are told to go “tell the church” proves that the church is the entire administrative body or institution. Matthew 28:20 proves that he is referring to the church body as an institution as no individual member or even an individual congregation is promised Christ’s presence unto the end of the age. He is speaking of the church as an institutional body.

Direct Authority advocates are forced to deny what is self-evident in Matthew 28:19-20. They are forced to deny that Matthew 28:19-20 establishes any horizontal/instrumental administrative authority (“ye...you”) to evangelize, baptize and bring such baptized believers (“them...them”) into a teaching/observing assembly.

B. THE BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR CONSTITUTION

Both sides agree that no *unqualified* group of people should be recognized as a *true* church. Both sides agree that the proper qualified candidates for church constitution are professed believers previously baptized by the sole authority of a *preexisting* New Testament church, and who are united in the same faith and order with previous New Testament congregations. To deny this, is to claim disciplined or apostate members have authority from Christ to organize into a New Testament church. Hence, the argument is about such qualified materials (doctrinally sound baptized believers) who find themselves separated from an existing church and how they can be organized into a church state.

Such a separated state may be either due to church discipline or due to their church disbanding or a split or by moving from the geographical vicinity of their church. Simply moving away from the church wherein the membership consists does not remove them from the authority of that church until that church dismisses them or disbands. However, in regard to the three former states (under discipline, disbanded, or split), from whence do they obtain authority to organize into a church? It should be obvious if they were properly disciplined they have no such authority. If their discipline is questioned by other churches of like faith and order then that might qualify them for church organization. However, if churches of like faith and order agree the discipline was proper than even if they did self-organize, they

should not be recognized as a true New Testament church.

DA advocates argue that seeking church authority to self-organize usurps the authority of that organizing church! However, that is a straw man argument as both sides agree that previous to the act of church constitution those baptized believers are not a church and never should be recognized as a church until the act of church constitution is completed. You cannot usurp “church” authority if no church exists and no church exists until church constitution occurs. Church authority belongs to an existing church rather than to a non-church or unchurched baptized believers. Therefore, authorizing a group of unchurched baptized believers to organize into a church does not usurp church authority.

The real issue is from whence do unchurched baptized believers obtain authority to meet for the purpose to become a church.

DA advocates argue that authority to meet and organize into a church consists by virtue of scriptural baptism. In other words, they believe that authority to carry out all aspects of the Great Commission is conveyed in the act of scriptural baptism rather than given to the church institution as an administrative body. However, if that were the case, then the Great Commission would have been given to baptized individual(s) rather than to the church institution. Moreover, church authority is not invested in two or three baptized church “members” as Matthew 18:17-18 clearly proves, as the two or three members that meet with the offender and offended must take the additional step “tell it to the church” if they cannot reconcile the dispute.

William Cathcart in his “Baptist Encyclopedia” under “Landmarkism” gives the following fuller definition of historic Landmarkism which denies the Great Commission was given to baptized members apart from church capacity:

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—emphasis mine

Indeed, even Direct Authority advocates admit that it is an existing New Testament church that is authorized to administer baptism. The word “church” cannot be synonymous with “member” as the term “church” denies individual authority. Nor can the church be synonymous with part of its members as Matthew 18:16-17 denies that possibility.

Hence, the DA position is a self-contradiction as it argues that the Great Commission authorizes only the church to administer baptism, but at the same time asserts that something less than the church is authorized to carry out the Great Commission. Both assertions cannot be true! Moreover, it denies any instrumental distinction between “*ye*” and “*them*” in Matthew 28:19-20. Such a denial permits self-baptism as much as self-church organization. That is not only contrary to the self-evident distinction found in the text, but contrary to the historical definition of Landmarkism.

Either Matthew 28:19-20 authorizes the church to administer baptism or it does not. Historic Landmarkism clearly and emphatically demands that Matthew 28:18-20 refers to the church alone and its authority to administer all aspects of the Great Commission. The very historic definition of “landmarkism” as previously quoted is based entirely upon this view of Matthew 28:19-20. There is no way the term “church” can be defined to refer to anything less than a plurality (“*ye*”) of baptized believers gathered as an administrative body in “*one place*” (Acts 2:1; 1 Cor 11:17-20).

1. **An Authorized administrator**—Those authorized to administer the Great Commission are identified by the plural pronoun “*ye*” in Matthew 28:19-20. This is a horizontal and instrumental administrator that is placed between Christ and “*them*” (baptized believers) in the Great Commission. This is the irrefutable grammar.
2. **An authorized orderly process** for the preparation of properly qualified materials for constitution of a church. **First**, they must be gospel converts (v. 19a). **Second**, they must be scripturally baptized (v. 19b). **Third**, they must be gathered by a second party (“*ye*”) into a

covenant commitment assembly to teach and observe the same faith and order of Jesus Christ (v. 20).

This orderly process is what earlier Baptists referred to, as *gospel church order* or *regular church order*, as this *order* begins with the gospel and concludes with bringing “*them*” (baptized believers) together into a teaching/observing assembled relationship with Christ. It is called *regular* order because it is the only practice followed by all true congregations of Christ. Hence, the authority to gather baptized believers into a teaching/observing assembly is given in Matthew 28:20.

As you can see, both sides agree that becoming a church must first begin with proper qualified materials (baptized believers). Both sides agree that it is only a preexisting church that is authorized to prepare material (baptism) for church constitution. In the Great Commission that administrator is identified as “*ye*.” Significantly, it is this same administrative authority (“*ye*”) which administers baptism that also is authorized by Christ to gather “*them*” into a teaching/observing covenant keeping relationship with Christ. That threefold process is by definition the authorized process for church constitution.

Therefore, baptized believers (“*them*”) existing outside of church capacity have never been authorized by Christ to administer any aspect of this commission, including the last aspect which is gathering baptized believers (“*them*”) into a teaching/observing covenant keeping relationship with Christ.

However, the Direct Authority position denies, and reverses the order given in the Great Commission. They deny that Christ has established any second party as a horizontal and/or instrumental administrative authority (“*ye*”) existing in church capacity to bring baptized believers (“*them*”) into regular church relationship with Christ. They demand that those identified as “*them*” (baptized believers—v. 19) in the Great Commission (who are in non-church capacity) have direct authority from Christ to bring themselves into this relationship with Christ in spite of the fact that Christ plainly restricts authority to baptize “*them*” to those identified as “*ye*.” The pronoun “*ye*” denies any kind of self-evangelism, self-baptism or self-constitution by “*them*.” Yet, DA denounces the first two (self-evangelism and self-baptism) while promoting the third (self-constitution) while Matthew 28:19-20 grammatically repudiates all three.

C. THE AUTHORIZED CUSTODIAN OF THE KEYS

The contextual basis for interpreting “*ye*” in Matthew 28:19–20 as the *existing* church of Jesus Christ, is the necessary inference that making disciples, as described in Matthew 28:19–20, has already been previously conferred upon the church body by Christ (Mt. 18:17–18) and not upon individual members nor upon two or three members (Mt. 18:16–17). The Authorized Church Constitution position is based upon the Biblical premise that only the New Testament congregation (“*ye*” in Mathew 28:19–20) is entrusted with *the keys of the kingdom*, rather than just any individual member or even two or three baptized believers (“*them*” in Matthew 28:19–20) in non-church capacity.

The keys of the kingdom symbolize the administrative authority to further the full work of God’s kingdom on earth, as summarized in the Great Commission (Mt. 18:17; 28:19–20). No other entity has been given authority to administer the keys of the kingdom. The plurality of the “keys” involves other aspects than mere discipline but includes all aspects of making disciples (Mt. 23:2–3, 13, 15).

The “keys of the kingdom” symbolize the complete ecclesiastical authority given to the “house of God” as an institution (1 Tim. 3:15). This kingdom authority is not only inclusive of preaching the gospel to all nations, and baptizing believers (Mt. 28:19), but gathering them together into a covenant relationship for the express purpose to observe all things Christ commanded (Mat. 28:20). Matthew 19:20 is the act of gathering baptized believers into a covenant commitment to observe “*all things*” Christ commanded.

The essence of church constitution is baptized believers brought together (united) into a covenant relationship with Christ to both teach and observe all things Christ commanded. Hence, church constitution is the ultimate aim that is inherently found in this three process Great Commission command.

D. THE VARIOUS WAYS OF CHURCH ASSIMILATION

As previously shown, Matthew 28:20 is authority to gather unchurched baptized believers (“*them*”) together into a covenant observing congregational relationship with Christ.

Baptized believers are brought into this relationship by a variety of ways. However, the authorized administrator remains the same in all these various expressions. Ultimately all of these ways originate with explicit, or implicit, or assumed church authority. All of these ways include public examination and acceptance of a person's gospel profession and baptism (Acts 2:41; 9:26-27) for assimilation into church membership.

For example, baptized believers may be brought into an *existing* assembly, as in Acts 2:40-41, or it may occur by church authorized representatives assimilating baptized believers into *new* assemblies, as in Acts 14:1-23. The former adds ("added") baptized believers into an existing church through the same three step Great Commission process. The latter is where missionaries following the very same three-step Great Commission process gather baptized believers together with them as a teaching/observing assembly. Either way, what is described in Matthew 28:20 is not completed until such baptized believers are gathered together into a teaching/observing covenant keeping assembly.

In the case of removal of membership from one existing church into membership of another existing church, baptized believers are dismissed and received by letter and/or statement of faith from their covenant union in the former congregation into covenant union with the latter congregation, all by the authority of an existing congregation, as no other entity has congregational authority.

Transferring from one assembly to another in connection with a letter of recommendation has clear Biblical inference (Acts 18:27; 2 Cor. 3:1-2). The Biblical based inference of letters for dismissal and reception has also been the customary procedure for *directly* dismissing members from an existing congregation for the express purpose to form a new congregation. Not only is there clear Biblical inference for dismissal in connection with letters of commendation, but there are clear Biblical principles to support that practice. For example, the Scriptures command that congregations are to do all things decently and in order (1 Cor.14:40). Congregational members are accountable for their actions to the congregation wherein their membership resides. They are not free lancers who can move from congregation to congregation without due order and accountability. They are under the disciplinary watch care and authority of the congregation where their membership resides until they are received in an orderly manner into the covenant relationship of another congregation.

The only believers outside the membership of a true congregation are those never received through baptism or those who were excluded from a congregation. All others are members and remain under their covenant obligation until they are received into some other congregation.

This is a primary problem for Direct Authority advocates, as they seem to think that baptized believers can exist in a non-membership vacuum/limbo without responsibility to any existing congregation, and thus, are free to act without accountability to any congregation whatsoever. However, historic Landmark congregational policy has consistently confirmed that baptized believers remain under the authority and watch care of the congregation of their current membership until they are orderly received into covenant union of another congregation.

With regard to the formation of a new congregation in the mission field, the congregation has already pre-authorized the formation of such congregations by sending forth a missionary to obtain that very goal. The congregation is not *transferring* its authority to the missionary, but is administering its authority *through* its ordained member, just as it does in the administration of baptism by one of its ordained missionaries. The New Testament provides clear examples of churches sending out church authorized representatives on the mission field to act in their behalf under their authority (Acts 11:22; Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-27; 18:22). Paul and Barnabas were still members of the church of Antioch and that is proven by the fact when they returned, the same sending church met in business meeting and sent them as their representatives to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:2-3). Only members are subject to such church action. In the non-technical sense both Paul and Barnabas are called “apostles” in Acts 14:4, 14 which conveys they were church authorized representatives on the mission field.

E. THE BIBLICAL PATTERN FOR CONSTITUTION

The Scriptures also provide an explicit pattern for the constitutional service of new congregations. The pattern directly set forth in Scripture for constitution of congregations is entrance into marriage by covenant arrangement.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.—Eph. 5:31-32

The authorized means for bringing baptized believers into this marriage covenant with Christ is represented in Scriptures under the Jewish espousal covenant arrangement by an authorized agent of the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:29; 2Cor. 11:2). John the Baptist was this authorized agent in regard to the formation of the first congregation. However, the Great Commission identifies this authorized agent to be the Lord's congregation (Mt. 18:17-18; 28:19-20) through its ordained representatives (Acts 13:1-4; 14:1-23): Paul describes his missionary authority by this same metaphor:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.—2 Cor. 11:2

Therefore, congregations simply do not self-originate apart from a scriptural process and authority. They are not products of self-evolution or self-organization, but are built, framed and erected by a third party, or a congregational sent authorized “*masterbuilder*.”

*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, **as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation**, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*—1 Cor. 3:10

The “*foundation*” of congregational existence which Paul alludes to, is the administrating process of the Great Commission in the lives of people. Proper materials are first prepared by preaching the gospel and baptizing them. They are then gathered together into a teaching/observing covenant keeping assembly under Paul. This bringing “together” by the “*masterbuilder*” is the erecting, framing, building and uniting baptized believers together as one body in regular congregational order.

The Great Commission contains four elements in this foundation of Christ. (1) Delegated authority to “*ye*”—the congregation; (2) His gospel preached “*go preach the gospel*”; (3) His baptism—“*baptizing them*”; (4) His doctrine—“*teaching them*.” It is impossible for any aspect of this foundation to be self-laid. The only “self” aspect of this constitutional process is the free

choice of the recipients (“*them*”) to submit to the administrator of these four elements of congregational constitution.

Scriptures clearly set forth congregational constitution as an act, which is initiated and completed through the instrumental means of a third party, which is selectively authorized by the groom to bring the bride into covenant agreement (espousal). This authorized third party is the “*ye*” of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). Since marriage is the Biblical background (Eph. 5:31-32) for congregational constitution, Baptists have followed the marriage service as a pattern for congregational constitution services.

That service usually consists in sending out invitations to family (spiritual brothers and sisters) and calling for the assistance of surrounding congregations and their ministers to officiate over the covenant union between these baptized believers and Christ (like an officiating minister at a wedding). The details involved in this public service vary from congregation to congregation, but essentially include the examination of their commitments to Christ manifested by their articles of faith and congregational covenant, as well as, examining and reading the letter for dismissal of these baptized believers from their congregation for this stated purpose (as expressions that follow after the idea of parents giving away the bride to enter covenant union with Christ—Eph. 5:31). The constitution service includes a charge given them, as is the case in most marriage services. It concludes by the prospective spouse freely voting themselves into church constitution, or as pictured in a wedding ceremony as the “I do” finalization.

F. THE POINT OF CONSTITUTION IN THE BIBLICAL PATTERN

Regardless of third parties involved in marriage or church constitution, only the bride and groom can actually take part in the vows.

There is no marriage or congregational constitution prior to entering into covenant union. This covenant vow is expressed by baptized believers freely consenting to enter into covenant union with Christ to be their only authority, in submissive observance to all things He has commanded.

The congregation and/or its ordained representatives officiating over the constitution service usurps the authority of the new congregation, no more or less than the authority of an officiating minister usurps the authority of

a new marriage. Neither the officiating authority force or take part in the covenant vows that bring a new congregation or marriage into existence. In the case of congregational constitution, the third-party acts as the authorized agent of the Bridegroom in bringing the bride into this covenant union.

Direct Authority advocates have no Biblical basis or right to usurp Christ's authorized agent ("ye") for bringing the bride into covenant union with Christ.

Only after they enter into covenant agreement are they declared to be a New Testament congregation by those who officiate over the covenant ceremony (just as in the marriage of a man and woman).

As in the marriage ceremony, all the inherent rights of a New Testament congregation are possessed at the very point they are declared to be an organized New Testament congregation in covenant union with Christ, rather than at any time before they enter into covenant vows.

Therefore, their autonomy as a congregation is not infringed upon by Christ's authorized agent (previous existing congregation or its authorized representatives) because there is no congregation formed, until the precise point they enter into that declared organized covenant union "*under God from a gospel church*" (just as in a marriage ceremony).

The authority of the previous congregation is directed toward that very point, just as the authority of an officiating minister in the marriage ceremony is directed toward that point. It is at that point these baptized believers come directly under the authority of their new husband (Christ), just as it is at that precise point a woman comes under the authority of her husband.

Until baptized believers enter into that declared covenant with Christ, as His espoused wife, they remain under the authority of their parents (existing church). This is acknowledged by many Baptist church manuals:

*A regular proceeding like this is needful because in ordinary cases the persons wishing to form themselves into a new church are already members of an existing church, **which have a right** to watch over them **till** they have been regularly dismissed to some regularly constituted church.*—William Crowell, **The Church Member's Manual**, Boston, 1847 "Manner of forming a church" p. 182—emphasis mine

*It was voted, that we cordially grant them letters of dismissal for that purpose, and when regularly constituted as a church, shall cease to regard them as under our watch care.—J. Newton Brown, **A Baptist Church Manual**, Judson Press, thirty-sixth printing, 1981—emphasis mine*

No congregational authority is being passed from one congregation to another congregation, nor is one congregation being built upon another congregation. To accuse Authorized Church Constitution advocates of such things is either due to a lack of understanding of our position, or an attempt to intentionally distort our position. Instead, church authority grants baptized believers the right to assemble in an orderly manner in order to achieve that specific goal through their own free vote (“I do”).

G. THE GREAT COMMISSION IS AUTHORITY FOR CONSTITUTION

The right of the congregation to act in this capacity, as Christ’s authorized agent, in bringing the bride into covenant agreement with Christ, is established by Christ in the Great Commission.

The historic definition of “Landmarkism” summarizes this Great Commission authority in the expression “*scriptural authority emanates under God from a gospel church*” in carrying out the Great Commission.

Dr. J.R. Graves asks,

*Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting tide of opinion? If a preacher should first organize a church, then baptize its members, then proceed to disciple them, is his course as lawful, or no more unlawful, than one directly the reverse?..... Is it not contained in the commission? If not, Where?..... - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815, 816—emphasis mine*

Notice he uses for his illustration the order given in the Great Commission and questions whether a preacher should follow that order or reverse it by organizing them first and then secondly baptizing them? Or does the order of Christ in that commission require baptism prior to church organization? Even anti-Landmarkers unwittingly admit that the Great Commission is inclusive of authority to organize congregations:

*In this simple analysis of the commission is presented the very process by which Baptists are now made, **constituted into congregations**, and governed. That it was **the process** by which the first preachers made converts, and **constituted congregations is beyond question.**—T.G. Jones, **The Baptists, their Origin, Continuity, Principles, Spirit, Policy, Position, and Influence, A Vindication.** (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society) p. 27—emphasis mine*

The authorized administrator (represented by the plural “ye” in Matthew 28:19-20) stands between Christ and those identified as “them.” Christ does not directly administer the Great Commission to those identified as “them,” but administers it through His authorized instrumental agent identified as “ye” in Matthew 28:19-20.

He previously made clear that such authority resides solely in His congregation (Mt. 18:17-18) rather than in the ordained ministry. His customary manner for addressing His congregations is through its ordained representatives (Rev. 2-3). So, it is not either/or but both! Christ authorizes the congregation to administer the ordinances and constitute congregations through its ordained ministry, as the ordained ministry is part and parcel with the church body and by the very design of their offices to act in behalf of that body.

H. SUMMARY CONCLUSION

Our position is simple. Matthew 28:19-20 is under the sole administration of an existing New Testament congregation and establishes the congregation as Christ’s only authorized agent for bringing baptized believers into church relationship with Christ.

The Great Commission provides the authority and qualifications for bridal materials, while the Biblical pattern of marriage provides the ceremonial procedure by which persons are brought into covenant

relationship with Christ as an authorized congregation.

Matthew 28:20 resides solely under the authority of baptized believers existing and acting in church capacity (“*ye*”). Direct Authority Baptists say it resides under the sole authority of any two or three baptized believers outside of church capacity (“*them*”).

V. WHAT MATTHEW 18:20 REALLY TEACHES

Direct Authority advocates claim that Matthew 18:20 is direct authority from Christ to authorize congregational constitution of any two or three properly baptized believers.

No one can dispute that Matthew 18:20 is found in a congregational context (Mt. 18:15-20). Even Direct Authority advocates admit that Matthew 18:15-20 is a congregational context, as they insist it refers to the constitution of a congregation.

Neither does anyone dispute that this text sets forth the minimum number necessary to be an assembly. One person cannot be an assembly, nor can one member claim authority only given to the church as a body.

What makes Matthew 18:17-20 particularly interesting is the use of the very same “*ye*” and “*you*” as found in Matthew 28:19-20 in regard to the very same subject of authority.

*17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto **the church**: but if he neglect to hear **the church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

*18 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.*

*19 Again **I say unto you**, That if two of **you** shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

However, Matthew 18:15-20 explicitly mentions “*the church*” in direct

connection with the contextual “*ye*” and “*you*” with church administration of the keys of the kingdom.

The issue is whether Matthew 18:19-20 simply continues the discussion about final authority for congregational discipline begun in Matthew 18:15-18 or has the Lord changed subjects between verse 18 and verse 19?

A. THE CONTEXTUAL EVIDENCE FOR CONTINUATION

Evidence that this is a continued development of the same subject is confirmed by three facts.

First, there is continuation of the very same “*ye*” and “*you*” addressed in Matthew 18:18, as in Matthew 18:19-20. So, whoever is being addressed in Matthew 18:18, is still being addressed in Matthew 18:19-20.

Second, the word “*again*” in Matthew 18:19 demonstrates continuation of the same subject in Matthew 18:18 as in Matthew 18:19-20.

*Verily I say unto you... Again, I say unto you—Mt. 18:18,
19—emphasis mine.*

The introductory term “*Again*” demands continuation rather than introduction of another subject. It is the subject of administrative church authority, or church administration of the keys of the kingdom by the existing church in Matthew 18:17.

Third, there is development of thought. The very issue in Matthew 18:15-16 is one of disagreement. The issue is brought before the congregation in order to settle this internal conflict between members (v. 17). The congregation has the authority to make a final judgment (vv. 17-18). However, authority requires both wisdom and unity for its proper administration. Matthew 18:19-20 provides the practical directions for the congregation to obtain the necessary wisdom in resolving such internal conflicts:

Dr. A.T. Robertson says of verse 19:

Shall agree (sumfwnhswsiv). Our word “symphony” is this very root. It is no longer looked at as a concord of voices, a chorus in harmony, though that would be very appropriate in a church meeting rather than the rasping discord sometimes heard

even between two brethren or sisters.—A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures** on Matthew 18:20

This is especially true when cases of dispute are brought before the assembly, as characterized in verses 15-17. The assembly needs to be unified under the leadership of Christ to settle such disputes. This comes by seeking the presence and leadership of Christ (vv. 18-20) to discern and apply what Christ has authorized them to do in verse 17-18.

B. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR CONTINUATION

There are examples in church history where this understanding of the text is clearly expressed by small congregations seeking to come to a unified agreement in the exercise of authority.

One example is found among the early English Baptists during 1644-1722:

*On the thirteenth day of the fifth month, it being appointed to be observed, by prayer and fasting, for the election and ordination of a deacon in the church, the elders of the church being together at Eltisly, where the meeting was appointed, and very few of the brethren being present, it did so discourage those that were assembled, that they knew not what to do. But at length remembering the words of the Lord, saying, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them, it was resolved to proceed. Whereupon, much time being spent in prayer, bewailing our negligence, and craving forgiveness and assistance from the Lord, we then went about to choose one. But our company being so small, it was questioned by some whether it was meet for us to proceed to choose any that day. Whereupon we again sought the Lord for direction.”—E.B. Underhill, **Records of the Congregations of Christ Gathered at Ferstanton, Warboys, and Hexsham, 1644-1720**, p. 177—The Baptist Collection of History, Version 1.0*

The Orthodox Creed presented by Baptists to Charles II in 1678 also gives Matthew 18:20 as a reference for disciplinary authority as an existing church in article 39. It is also found in article 41 for regular public worship

(W.J. McGlothlin, **Baptist Confessions of Faith**, pp. 120, 121—The Baptist Collection of History, Version 1.0).

As previously demonstrated, when Dr. Graves was defending the authority of an existing congregation, he applied this text for that purpose. He admitted that it “may” more properly apply to the administration of congregational discipline:

*To sustain. See 2 and 4, see Matt xviii 20 To be gathered together in the name of Christ may mean in the capacity of a Church. See 1 Cor. 5 4 which undoubtedly means in Church capacity - J.R. Graves, **The Great Iron Wheel; or Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed.** “Church Constitution,” Southwest Publishing Company, New York, 1860, p. 553—emphasis mine*

Even one the most prominent universal invisible church Reformed Baptist exegetes, and commentator John F. MacArthur admits this when he says:

18:20; two or three. *Jewish tradition requires at least ten men (a minyan) to constitute a synagogue or even hold public prayer. Here Christ promises to be present in the midst of even a smaller flock—“two or three witnesses” gathered in His name for the purpose of discipline (see note on verse 15).—John F. MacArthur, **MacArthur Bible Commentary**, “Matthew” (Thomas Nelson, 2005) p 1158*

So, we have the same persons, and same subject being thoughtfully developed throughout Matthew 18:18-20.

C. THE CONTEXTUAL IDENTITY OF “YE” AND “YOU”

Now, just who are those being addressed as “ye” and “you” in Matthew 18:18-20? The answer to that is a matter of grammar and context.

To find out who is being represented by these pronouns, one must trace the pronouns to its nearest contextual antecedent. The identity of the pronouns in Matthew 18:18-20 is revealed by its nearest antecedent to be

“*the church*” in Matthew 18:17. The term “*church*” is a collective noun inclusive of a plurality. Hence, “*ye*” and “*you*” refer to the very same already existing church described in Matthew 18:15-17.¹⁴¹ Biblical writers frequently address the church by the plural “*you*” (e.g. 1 Thes. 1:1-2) as the church is a collective singular noun which consists of plural disciples.

Furthermore, what is declared to be congregational authority in Matthew 18:17-18, is later formally granted, or commissioned to the church in Matthew 28:19-20. The administration of the keys of the kingdom can be summed up in “making disciples” through *instructive*, *corrective*, and if necessary, *purgative* discipline. All of these are aspects of congregational discipline which are inherent in teaching disciples how to observe all things commanded.

Indeed, the historic definition of Landmarkism demands that Matthew 28:18-20 refers to congregational administrative authority in all areas listed. Matthew 18:17-18 declares the assembly is final in its use of administrative authority.

*And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it unto the church:** but if he neglect to **hear the church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

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

¹⁴¹ Some attempt to argue that “*ye*” and “*you*” do not have “*the church*” for its contextual antecedent but have “*the disciples*” in Matthew 18:1 as its antecedent, which they further define as either the office of apostle or the ordained office. This is the very same argument used by those who deny church authority in Matthew 28:19-20. In Matthew 28:19-20 they argue that the “*ye*” and “*you*” does not refer to the church but rather to “*the eleven disciples*” in Matthew 28:16 or the apostolic office and/or the ordained. There are several problems with this line of thinking and interpretation for Landmarkers. First, this would be an outright denial of the historic definition of Landmarkism which is based upon the interpretation that Matthew 18:17-18 and Matthew 28:19-20 falls under the authority of the congregation in contradistinction to elder rule or ministerial authority over the congregation. Second, Christ does not say “*if they hear not the elders*” as the final administrator of the keys. No, the final authority is “*the church*” and the reason it is final is because the keys of the kingdom have been given to the congregation (v. 18). Also, Matthew 18:17-18 proves that Jesus had initially promised the keys to Peter only as a representative type of the material used by Christ to build His congregation. This is precisely how Peter interpreted it (1 Pet. 2:5).

D. THE PROPER USE OF THE KEYS

However, it is *delegated* authority, and with all *delegated* authority comes guidelines for its proper use. Matthew 18:18 uses the future perfect tense, but the King James Version translates it by the simple future tense “*shall be bound*” and “*shall be loosed*.” Literally translated it would read “*shall have been bound*” and “*shall have been loosed*” already in heaven. In other words, the congregation is only given authority to administer what God has already determined should be bound or loosed in keeping with His revealed will. This particular wording sets forth the administrative boundaries for the proper administration of the keys in keeping with God’s revealed will.

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.—
Psa.119:89

How is the church to discern what God has already bound and loosed in heaven? At this point in history when Jesus spoke these words there was no New Testament Scriptures. They only had the Old Testament Scriptures. Hence, seeking to administer God’s will in cases of New Testament congregational policy was by seeking principles set forth in Old Testament Scriptures with prayerful guidance by the Holy Spirit. Finally, the ultimate aim of church discipline is restoration of the member and Matthew 18:21-35 deals with restoring repentant believers to the fellowship of believers. To meet “in my name” is simply to meet as previously instructed and in obedience with those instructions.

Conclusion: Therefore, the congregation is declared to be the final administrative authority on earth to settle all matters of discipline. Matthew 18:18 qualifies this authority by asserting that the assembly must exercise that authority in keeping with God’s will.

WEEK 9 LESSON 3

Great Commission—Part 8— Authorized vs. Direct

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to demonstrate how historic Landmark Baptists interpreted Matthew 28:18-20 with regard to the congregation and, (2) to vindicate the Authorized Church Constitution (ACC) view as the historical view of Baptists and, (3) to vindicate well known modern Baptists who have been accused of being Direct Authority (DA) advocates.

INTRODUCTION: The DA position is the feeding ground for all kinds of heresies. It gives encouragement for any two or three disgruntled members to leave and start their own congregation. Worse yet, it provides the basis for disciplined members to originate a congregation. I pastored a church in the South who had a tobacco smoking chewing missionary who despised the idea of witnessing to the lost as he believed God would save His elect regardless if the gospel had been shared or not. He openly treated both Pastor and the authorizing congregation with total disrespect when confronted with his unholy lifestyle. When the congregation placed him under discipline, he simply called on some congregations that were advocates of DA and they organized his work into a congregation without even consulting the congregation that disciplined him.

Many of the Direct Authority advocates claim that Matthew 18:17-20 and Matthew 28:18-20 refer to the ordained class rather than the congregation. However, that idea is destructive to their major argument that any two or three baptized believers are given such authority.

VI. THE HISTORIC BAPTIST INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 28:19-20

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.—Mt. 28:19-20

How does historic Landmarkism interpret “ye...you”? Does historic Landmarkism interpret them as representing the congregation, or the ministerial hierarchy and/or two or three baptized believers, or the individual member as do the Direct Authority advocates?

*The administration of baptism is an official act, done by the authority of the church.... They were addressed as the representatives of the congregations.... To the Congregations, therefore, the commission says, Go ye and preach my gospel to all nations, baptizing them &c....—A.C. Dayton, **Paedobaptist & Campbellite Immersions**, (Louisville, KY: Baptist Concern, 1903) pp. 212, 218, 219*

*The authority to administer baptism was not conferred upon the apostles or first church members as individuals, but upon the church to administer baptism, through her official servants.—D.B. Ray, **Baptist Succession: A Handbook of Baptist History**, (Cincinnati: Geo & Stevens Co. 1871), p. 47*

Historic Landmarkism interprets the “ye...you” of Matthew 28:19-20 to be the church body administering it through their authorized representatives rather than any individualized aspect of the church body.

Indeed, this is the very essence of the historical definition of Landmarkism based on Matthew 28:19-20 that scriptural authority “*emanates under God, from a gospel church.*”

The immediate context, demands that “*ye... you*” represents an age long entity. Christ promises to be with “*you*” until the end of the age. Only the congregation viewed as an institutional body is promised this kind of continuance by Christ (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 3:21).

However, the Direct Authority interpretation actually demand eldership authority, and thus, promotes an “Episcopal idea.”

VII. THE DIRECT AUTHORITY POSITION IS PRO-EPISCOPAL

The “Direct Authority” position is, at its very heart an anti- Landmark pro-Episcopal–Reformed Baptist position.

Some DA advocates deny that Matthew 18:18 and 28:19-20 were given to the congregation, but rather they believe such were given to the ministerial office in the church. Moreover, all Direct Authority advocates interpret the Great Commission actions in Acts 8-18 to be ministerial actions by direct/vertical authority under God without any connection with congregational authority. In other words, the DA application of the Great Commission in the book of Acts repudiates the historical definition of Landmarkism that such administrations “*emanate under God, FROM A GOSPEL CHURCH.*”

On one hand, they demand that proper material for congregational constitution must consist of congregational administered baptized believers, while on the other hand they deny it is the congregation being authorized in the commission to administer baptism, and they deny that congregational authorized representatives are administering baptism in Acts 8-11. So, which is it? did those congregations in Acts 8-11 consist of persons without congregational authorized baptism or were they baptized and constituted by congregational authorized representatives? DA advocates cannot have their pie and eat it too!

The fact is that every example of baptism in the New Testament (and in Acts 8-11) is administered by an individual. Either that administrator of baptism acted under the authority of a preexisting congregation or he did not. So, at what point in Scripture do DA advocates forsake this non-congregational method of baptismal administration (Acts 8-11) and defend their own doctrine that proper materials for congregational constitution must originate with baptism by a previous existing congregation? It is

either one or the other but it cannot be both! Neither can they argue that “church” authority equals “individual member” authority as the term “church” repudiates individualism.

DA advocates admit that authority is given to the church to administer baptism, and since the church consists of individual members then every individual member is authorized to administer baptism by virtue of being a church member. Hence, they transition from “church” authority to “every member” authority as though “church” and “member” are interchangeable when it comes to church authority. However, Matthew 18:15-17 repudiates such an idea as no individual member (v. 15) or even three or four members (v. 16) possess church authority (v. 17).

Why do they attempt to transition from “church” authority to individual “member” authority? They must, because all the baptisms recorded in Acts 8-20 must be administered by “church” authorized administrators or else they are invalid administrations by their own admission that historic Landmarkism demands only church administered baptism to be valid baptism. Their problem is that they deny every administrator of baptism in Acts 8-20 was church authorized but rather the administrators acted under direct authority of Christ. If they admit that such administrators acted under church authority then they also acted as church authorized representatives in the gathering together those baptized believers into a teaching/observing assembly.

Every instance of baptism in Acts 8-11 is administered by a male member of the congregation at Jerusalem. Philip is an ordained member (Acts 6, 8). Peter is an ordained member (Acts 10-11). Those in Acts 11:19 are male members in the congregation at Jerusalem. Barnabas is an ordained congregational authorized member at Jerusalem (Acts 11:22). Tradition claims that Ananias was the first pastor of the congregation in Damascus or could have been one of the 70 ordained by Christ in the first congregation at Jerusalem.

Dr. Graves believed Matthew 28:19-20 is scriptural authority “*under God, from a gospel church*” and interpreted the Great Commission actions in Acts 8-18 to be consistent with that central tenet of Landmarkism:

I do most cheerfully endorse it as a rule that the baptized belong to the same organization with the officer baptizing

until that relation is changed by subsequent action. Paul was baptized into the fellowship with the church at Damascus and the Eunuch and the Samaritans into that of Jerusalem until he was united to some other church and they were constituted into a church at Samaria. James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate,** “*The Church of Christ*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 941

Why did Graves believe that? Because he interpreted baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 to be water baptism and therefore baptismal administrators under the leadership of the Spirit baptized such into the church body as members.

However, is that how DA advocates interpret and expound these very same passages in Acts??? No!

For example, Bro. Settlemoir interprets the authority to administer the Great Commission by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:5-18:22 to be “vertical authority” alone without any authorized connection “*from a gospel church.*”

*The Holy Spirit specially called these men and announced their call for a specific work and said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” **This was vertical authority.**... He did not say: I have appeared unto the Church at Antioch so that you can be a mother church and I authorize you to start other congregations....*—J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical,** (Ditzler OH: J.C. Settlemoir) p. 8—emphasis mine

According to his interpretation of Acts 13:1-4, their administration of Great Commission in Acts 13:5-14:23 was ministered directly under God, rather than “*authority that emanates under God, from a gospel church.*” So, who is really guilty of being pro-episcopal in their application of Matthew 28:19-20?

We ask Bro. Settlemoir the same question Dr. Graves asked his opponent -

Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting tide of opinion? If a preacher should first organize

*a church, then baptize its members, and then proceed to disciple them, is his course as lawful or no more unlawful, then one directly the reverse? How can it be lawful and not contrary to the law? If Christ has given a law, what is the law? ...**Is it not contained in the commission? If not, Where?.....** - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate, "The Lord's Supper" The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815, 816—emphasis mine*

Graves is using the word "constitution" in the sense of the initial organization of a church as he explicitly gives an example of what he means by "constitution" by his use of the term "organize" and asks whether organization of a church by a preacher should precede or follow baptism of its membership? He argues on the basis of the order found in the Great Commission that church baptism should precede church organization because that is the lawful order set forth by Christ in this commission. Moreover, he admits that the same Great Commission law/order that authorizes a preacher to administer baptism authorizes him to bring the baptized into regular church order. Graves believed the Great Commission was given solely to the church but that the church administered it through its ordained ministry. The truth is that it is impossible for the entire church to administer baptism to anyone. The only possible way the congregation can administer baptism is through individual authorized representatives.

Every example of baptism in Scripture is administered by individuals. Therefore, if that is a problem in Acts 8-11, it is a problem in every other example as well.

However, Matthew 18:17-18 clearly and unambiguously establishes that the congregation alone has the authority to administer the "keys of the kingdom" and does through its ordained representatives.

The doctrine of Direct Authority is not historic Landmarkism but is the Reformed "eldership rule" doctrine.

VIII. MT. 28:19-20 AND “REGULAR CHURCH ORDER”?

Dr. Graves, when speaking explicitly of Matthew 28:19-20, acknowledged that the precise order given in the Great Commission must be followed as positive law.

*It must be granted, because true, that the **order** in which **positive laws** are given, is as important, and as inviolable, as the law itself. It may not be violated with impunity. It is openly and palpably violating the law itself and confounds and nullifies its intent. The Divine Lawgiver had a wise design in the arrangement of that order of His laws. To invert them is to **pervert and subvert them**. He did not say go and baptize the sinner then teach and then disciple, but, **per contra**. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815-816—emphasis mine*

Dr. Graves used this line of argument to prove that gospel conversion precedes baptism in Matthew 28:19 and baptism precedes church organization, just as church membership precedes observance of the Lord’s Supper in Matthew 28:20. Therefore, he believed that Matthew 28:20 is authority to gather baptized believers into a teaching/observing assembly prior to observance of the Lord’s Supper and considered Matthew 28:19-20 to be positive law. As will be seen, this “order” was not first concocted by Graves but has a long history among previous Baptists which was the basis for what they called “gospel order.”

A. THOMAS PATIENT CONFIRMS THIS IN 1654

However, long before Dr. Graves, in the year 1654, Thomas Patient used the same line of logic to prove that church organization through its ministers in Matthew 28:19-20 preceded observance of the Lord’s Supper:

*It is clear that the Ordinance of the Supper is committed to a Church, yea, **a ministerial assembly gathered according to Christ’s commission**, Matt. 28:19-20.*

*Here I understand the **ORDER** binding is this:*

First the ministers should teach the nations, or make them disciples by teaching;

Then the command is, baptizing **them, what them?**

Such that are made disciples by teaching.

Thirdly, the Command is to teach them to observe “whatsoever I have commanded you.” And I will be will you to the end of the world, that is, He will be with a people, first converted, secondly baptized, thirdly walking in the practical observation of all other administrations of God’s house, as these eleven did, and those they converted. I say His promise is to be with His people to the end of the world.

This is the **BINDING GOSPEL ORDER** which involves the Lord’s Supper.

THIS ORDER IS BINDING, as a minister is commanded to baptize one who is made a disciple and not any other, so he is commanded to put them upon the practical observation of all Christ’s Laws and His only. Until they are baptized, they are not, nor cannot be admitted into a visible church, to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

The Apostles followed this **BINDING GOSPEL ORDER**.

That this is the true meaning of Christ in the commission appears by his Apostles’ ministry and practice, who, by the infallible gifts of the Holy Ghost were guided unailing thus to preach and practice, Acts 2:37,38 with verses 41 and 42.

First, he teaches them the doctrine of Jesus Christ, they, upon hearing that, were pricked at the heart, and inquiring of Peter and the rest of the Apostles what they

should do, he says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you.” See how he presses the **SAME ORDER** here as Christ does in the Commission, and afterwards in the 41 verses where it is said, “So many as gladly received the word of God, were baptized, and the same day there was added to the Church about three thousand souls,” by faith and baptism, “and they continued in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayer.”—Thomas Patient, **The Doctrine of Baptism**, (London, Printed by Henry Hills, and are to be sold at his house at Sir John Oldcastles in Py-corner 1654) - emphasis mine

Consider this lengthy quote carefully. All the constituent elements and applications of Matthew 28:18-20 expounded in this book are either stated or necessarily implied in this singular quote by Patient. This repudiates the charge by Settlemoir that our exposition of Matthew 28:18-20 is novel or new among Baptists. The very fact that both Graves and Patient argued that a “preacher” or “ministerial assembly” or “a minister is commanded” to administer baptism and organize the baptized into a New Testament church establishes authorized instrumentality in the administration of the Great Commission.

Patient distinguishes between “*ye*” and “*them*” exactly as is found in this course application. He demands there is a specific order that concludes with church constitution just as is found in this course application. He claims this is a “Binding Gospel Order” that demands incorporation of baptized believers into regular church order, just as is found in this course application.

How can anyone miss Patient’s repetitive description of this commission as “gospel order” that is “binding” positive law? Here is a Pre-J.R. Graves historical root of the phrase “gospel order” or “regular church order.”

The very same rule of law used by Graves and Patient to prove gospel conversion must occur before baptism, and to prove church constitution must occur before observance of the Lord’s Supper, is the very same rule of law followed by this course exposition, and applications of Matthew 28:19-20. Thus, the position in this course has a historical basis prior to Dr. J. R. Graves.

B. JOHN SPILSBURY CONFIRMS THIS ORDER IN 1652

Particular English Baptist John Spilsbury acknowledged that the Great Commission was given to the assembly, and its content expressed a particular order that was essential to the constitution of any true congregation.

Faith and Baptism are Constitutional Ordinances for a Gospel Church

Secondly, the ordinance of baptism instituted by Christ is so essential to the constitution of the Church under the New Testament that none can be true in her constitution without it.

..... For the ground and pillar that bears up the truth, and that truth so born up, stands and falls together, as I Tim. 3:15. So that where there is not a true constituted Church, there is no true constituted Church-ordinance; and where there is a true Church ordinance in its constitution, there is at least presupposed a true Church also.....

Christ Left His Rule and Order for The Constitution of His Church, Faith and Baptism

*And lastly, I dare not go from that rule and order which Christ left in his last testament, **for the constituting of his church**, and taking members into the same, which is by faith and baptism. - John Spilsbury, **A Treatise Concerning the Lawful Subject of Baptism**, (London, Printed and are to be sold by Henry Hills in Fleet-Yard over against the Prison, 1652)—emphasis mine*

Spilsbury was speaking explicitly of Matthew 28:19-20 as “*that rule and order*” for the constitution of congregations. Although, Spilsbury denied one must have proof of historical succession from the time of the apostles in order to validate their churches had the right to administer the Great Commission (Their Presbyterian opponents demanded that Baptist produce a historical line of succession to support their claim they were apostolic in

origin) he joined with Daniel King in a pamphlet entitled “A Way to Sion” Sought out and Found for Believers to Walk in” that the scriptures taught such a succession. Spilsbury simply denied that any other proof outside of the Scriptures was necessary to declare succession from the apostles.

C. OBADIAH HOLMES CONFIRMS THIS ORDER - 1682 THE LAST WILL AND TESTIMONY OF OBADIAH HOLMES

28. I believe that none is to go forth but by commission, and carefully to observe the same according as Christ gave it forth, without adding or diminishing: first, to preach Christ (that is, to make disciples), and then, to baptize them—but not to baptize them before they believe; and, then, to teach them what Christ commanded them, for as the Father had his order in the former dispensation and administration, so has the Son (in former times, the Lord spoke in divers way and manners, but now has He spoken by His Son).

29. I believe that as God prepared a begetting ministry, even so does He also prepare a feeding ministry in the church, who are a people called out of the world by the word and Spirit of the Lord, assembling themselves together in a holy brotherhood, continuing in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, breaking bread and prayer. Edwin S. Gaustad, Baptist Piety, the last Will and Testimony of Obadiah Holmes, Christian University Press; Grand Rapids: 1978, pages 89–91.

Congregational Pastors are identified by Holmes as the “feeding ministry” whereas congregational sent missionaries are identified as the “begetting ministry.”

D. A.C. DAYTON CONFIRMS THIS ORDER

Not only can this very same line of reasoning be seen in the preceding statements by Graves, Patient and Spilsbury, but it can be seen in the following words by A.C. Dayton.

This commission was given to somebody. It conferred authority on somebody. It required this specific duty of baptizing believers to be performed by somebody. And that even to the end of the world. Now who was it?

*Not the infidel and the scoffer. Not the thoughtless and impenitent. This no one ever claimed. But did it not authorize all believers to baptize all other believers?..... But those to whom the commission was addressed were something more than pious penitent believers. Here is the proof. **Such people were recognized by the commission as the subjects to be baptized but not as the persons to administer baptism.** "Repent and be baptized. He that believeth and is baptized." **They were not the "Ye" who were to baptize them.** Something more was needful to a baptizer. What was it? Could it be less than that he should himself have been baptized? Must he not first obey the command believe and be baptized before he could set himself up as a preacher of faith and a baptizer of others? It may have been more, but less than this it could not have been, and no man who is destitute of this qualification can ever claim to be a valid baptizer under this commission on the ground that he has repented and believed, or in other words is a truly converted and pious man. - A.C. Dayton, **Pedo-Baptist and Campbellite Immersions**, 1858, pp. 243,244—emphasis mine*

Dayton believed the Great Commission was given to "ye" as representatives of the New Testament assembly.

*And thus, also have I made plain from the words of the commission itself, that **the Congregations of Christ must, as the executors of this commission,** limit the administration within the same bounds... **They were addressed as the representatives of the Congregations** which they should establish and the successors of those Congregations to the end of the world. To the Congregations therefore the commission says "Go ye and preach my Gospel to all nations baptizing them, &c - A.C. Dayton, **Pedo-Baptist and Campbellite Immersions**, 1858, p. 246, 247*

Dayton admitted that the same line of reasoning he used for baptism in Matthew 28:19 was equally applicable to congregational constitution:

*We fully agree with him when he says, in the answer to Wayland, quoted above, "The last commission of our Lord was certainly designed to be executed by someone. It was not a mere blank. It was not composed of mere words of empty sound. **It was addressed to somebody.**" He is speaking of it as a commission to preach, but it is equally a commission to baptize. If, as a commission to preach, it was addressed to somebody, and was designed to designate somebody by divine appointment to the duty of preaching, it must equally have designated someone to the duty of baptizing. The two were united. And what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. **He [Waller] is talking of church organization but every word is just as true of church ordinances as it is of organization-** A.C. Dayton, **Pedo-Baptist and Campbellite Immersions**, 1858, pp. 131-132, 133—emphasis mine.*

In the underlined portion of this quotation, Dayton is referring to his opponent - Elder Waller. He admits that Waller is not speaking about baptism but sending forth preachers to organize congregations. However, concerning the Great Commission, Dayton draws the conclusion that "***every word is just as true of church ordinances as it is of organization***"

Do DA advocates believe what is true of congregational ordinances, is equally true of the organization of the assembly? No, they absolutely deny that! Indeed, that is the very point of this controversy. Matthew 28:19-20 is under congregational administration, and congregational constitution is inherent in verse 20.

E. J.B. MOODY CONFIRMS THIS ORDER:

Christ Took to Water Before He Took to Service. And that was for our example. And then, by all authority in heaven and upon earth, he gave us his commanding precept as well as example. "Make disciples baptizing them and teaching them

*all things whatsoever I have commanded.” The baptizing and teaching **are in the process of discipling**. Disciple first to Christ for salvation, then disciple into His doctrine for service, and baptism stands between as the solemn profession of the first and the solemn dedication to the other. So, **the gospel order** for all men in all the age is Salvation, Baptism, Service.—J. B. Moody, My Church.—(Louisville, KY: Baptist Book Concern, 1908) - emphasis mine*

*The mission of this church constitutes another divine mark. Her work is—make disciples—immerse them— teach them all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. There is only one body observing this order, and doing this work, and **the work can not be done except in order**.—J. B. Moody, My Church, (Louisville, KY: Baptist Book Concern, 1908) - emphasis mine*

F. THE SAME ARGUMENT BY OLD ENGLISH BAPTISTS:

I also provided the reference from the minutes of the Particular Baptist association in England in my former book.

*Answer: 1 That it is in **the power of the church** to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, Acts 13:2f. Secondly, that **this person sent forth** to the world and **GATHERING CONGREGATIONS**, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them. Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5—B. R. White, Ed., **Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660. (Association Records of the West Country, 1654)** p. 56—emphasis mine.*

My exposition and application of Matthew 28:19-20 said nothing different. My exposition and applications simply expanded all of these historical summary statements.

Bro. Settlemoir asks who else shares my interpretation of Matthew 28:19-20, and why didn't I list any references to show that my interpretation was not something new and of my own making?

*When one makes a novel interpretation of Scripture, (and no one can deny that this is one of the most unique treatments of a text ever conceived!) he usually brings forth considerable evidence that others have taught the same thing. Yet in thirty-nine pages Bro. Fenison gave not one other man who ever held this position unless it was Bro. Cockrell (p. 17) and I believe the reason is obvious.... The proverb is true, "If it is true, it is not new, and if it is new, it is not true!" But Bro. Fenison's theory is new—very new! So new that no one before our own times ever heard of it!—J. C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, pp. 11,12*

I will let the readers' judge if I provided sufficient references that demonstrate other Baptists before me understood and applied Matthew 28:19-20 to congregational authorized, congregational ordained, and congregational sent representatives to evangelize, baptize and gather "them" into regular congregational order. Is not that the essence of this exposition and applications?

Conclusion: My applications are not only rooted in careful exegesis and exposition of Matthew 28:19-20, but they are consistent with that exegesis and exposition. The Great Commission is the foundation for congregational constitution, and it is to be administered under the authority of an existing New Testament congregation. Congregational administration of the Great Commission is the historic Baptist position.

99.9% of all recorded Baptist history agree with the position presented and defended in these lessons. In nearly every record of church organization found in Baptist history books either declare that an already preexisting church in a called business meeting directly issued letters for that very purpose or that a church authorized representative on the mission field is who "gathered" such and such a church or such an ordained man was present in such a church organization. Self-gathered congregations without any of these three elements are extremely rare to find and when found they are treated as an anomaly and disorderly example.

*First, That Baptism is a thing of public cognizance and commission. Secondly, That as of old since the Apostles times, so now, and always till Christ come, **the Church is the dispenser of such commissions and administrations.**—Henry Lawrence, **Of Baptism; A Vindication of the Scriptures and the Ordinances; and Of our Communion and War with Angels.** Amsterdam, 1659—emphasis mine.*

G. MATTHEW 28:19-20 IS “LAW” AND “ORDER”

Dr. J.R. Graves claimed this “process” was a prescribed “order” according to positive “law” to be followed:

*3. In his commission he placed baptism first and commanded it to be observed in this **order** – can it be denied that the order of the commission is **Law**? – James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate, “The Lord’s Supper”** The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815-81*

Dr. Graves was speaking explicitly of Matthew 28:19-20 when he claimed that no one had the right to change or reverse this “order” provided by Christ, because it is positive law.

*It must be granted, because true, that the **order** in which **positive laws** are given, is as important, and as inviolable, as the law itself. It may not be violated with impunity. It is openly and palpably violating the law itself and confounds and nullifies its intent. The Divine Lawgiver had a wise design in the arrangement of that order of His laws. To invert them is to **pervert and subvert them**. He did not say go and baptize the sinner then teach and then disciple, but, **per contra**. – James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate, “The Lord’s Supper”** The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815-816—emphasis mine*

Again, he is speaking in context of church “constitution” in the sense of whether a church should be organized by a preacher before or after the members have been baptized by that same preacher. It should be easy for the readers to see how this Great Commission “order” beginning with the preaching of the gospel and concluding with assimilating baptized believers into a teaching/observing assembly was called “regular gospel order” in regard to congregational constitution!¹⁴² Surely, the reader can easily see that Matthew 28:19–20 is essential to congregational constitution, as it provides the foundation upon which all true congregations are constituted. The essence of congregational constitution is baptized believers ministerially gathered into a covenant observing/ teaching assembly.

IX. MATTHEW 28:19-20 AN ORGANIC CHURCH SUCCESSION

Baptists do not believe in “Apostolic Succession,” for that means a succession of apostles; but we believe in the succession of congregations. Christ did not promise a perpetuity of men, nor to their office, but He did promise perpetuity to His congregations.—
 J.N. Hall, **The Peerless Defender of the Baptist Faith**,
 (Fulton, KY: Baptist Flag Print, 1907) p. 131

Elder Milburn Cockrell called Direct Authority advocates “*apostate Landmarkers*” (Milburn Cockrell, **Scriptural Church Organization**, Revised edition, p. 44), and pointed out that the doctrine of Direct Authority is opposed to the doctrine of chain link Baptist Succession. That should be obvious, just look at any chain and the very nature of a chain is that every link inherently is interlocked and thus connected to the previous link.

This is precisely why Bro. Settlemoir denies that early Landmarkers believed in link chain church succession, and that is why he attacked the “links” in the histories provided by **The Missionary Baptist Church** of Oakland, California and **Twelve-Ryan Baptist Church** of Warren, Michigan. One cannot consistently believe in Direct Authority and also embrace chain link Baptist Church Succession.

¹⁴² It is true that Matthew 28:20 and the phrase “all things commanded” are also referred to as “gospel order” in regard to anything Christ commanded in the gospel accounts.

Significantly, attacking link chain Baptist Church Succession is the consistent position for all opponents of Landmarkism (Protestantism). Whether in oral or written debates, the enemies of Landmarkism always focused upon the repudiation of organic chain link church succession. Thus, Direct Authority advocates are bedfellows with all universal invisible church opponents to Landmarkism in their opposition and ridicule of chain link church succession.

However, organic chain link succession is inherent in the Great Commission.

A. THE GREAT COMMISSION IS AN ORGANIC COMMISSION.

They had no telecommunications, computers; TV's and telephones in those days. Obedience to this commission requires actual organic contact in every aspect. They must actually "go" to the nations with the gospel. It required actual organic contact to baptize "*them*." It required actual organic assembling with "*them*" to teach "*them*" how to observe all things.

Therefore, the Great Commission is impossible to observe apart from direct organic contact between the administrator ("*ye*") and the recipients ("*them*") in all three aspects of the commission.

B. THE GREAT COMMISSION IS REPRODUCTIVE BY NATURE.

The very command to "make disciples" is the act of reproducing like faith and order. A "disciple" by definition is a *follower* of their Master rather than an innovator of their own faith and practice. Those who attempt to serve Christ outside the membership of a New Testament congregation are not *following* Christ, and therefore cannot be regarded as *observing* disciples of Christ. This is a commission to reproduce *observing* disciples (Mt. 28:20) because those commissioned are observing whatsoever commanded. *Observing* disciples cannot be made by anyone preaching "*another gospel*" or administering *another* baptism or teaching *another* faith and order than what Christ actually commissioned. Indeed, to do so produces heretics and

apostasy. Hence, by definition this is a commission to organically reproduce after their own kind.

C. THE GREAT COMMISSION IS CYCLICAL BY NATURE.

They are commanded **first** to go preach the gospel, **second**, baptize them, and **third**, assimilate them into an observing assembly which has the goal of teaching them to repeat this very same process all over again. Therefore, it is by nature an organic reproductive cycle.

D. THE GREAT COMMISSION IS SUCCESSFUL BY PROMISE.

This cyclic reproductive process is guaranteed success by Christ's promised presence in its administration "*all the days until the end of the age*" (Lit. translation). Not "**some** of the days" but "**all** the days." No breaks in this chain link of time terminology.

The Reformed Commentator Dr. Hendriksen says this phrase would be more properly translated "*day in and day out until the end of the age*" (William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary**, *Matthew*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., p. 1003).

E. THE GREAT COMMISSION DEMANDS CHAIN LINK ORGANIC CHURCH SUCCESSION

Even Direct Authority "Landmarkers" must admit that such organic succession must exist, as their own position requires it. They believe that no congregation can be constituted without baptism received from a previous existing congregation, which in turn, could not be constituted without baptism administered from a previous existing congregation and so on, etc. That is chain link church succession through baptism. They also admit the assembly alone is authorized to administer baptism and carry out the Great Commission. Hence, they admit to organic chain link baptisms through congregations from the apostolic days to the present. Hence, the links in their chain between congregations is baptism.

Therefore, they believe authority to constitute congregations is conveyed through baptism rather than through congregational administration of the commission including baptism.

Graves, Dayton, Ray, Grimes and Moody believed in linear link chain Baptist Church Succession without breaks in the chain. D.B. Ray in response to opponents of Landmarkism said,

*They point to Roger Williams with an air of triumph; and say, "Here your **chain of succession is broken**. . . . In following up the Baptist succession, it has been fully shown that their **historic chain** has neither been disturbed by the succession of the "Hard Shell" Baptists, nor the apostasy of the Campbellites; and it has been abundantly shown that the Roger Williams affair has not even produced a ripple upon the flowing stream of Baptist succession. The Atlantic cable of Baptist succession connecting the Baptists of Europe and America is composed of **numerous cords**."—D.B. Ray, **Baptist Succession**, 1912—emphasis mine.*

The idea of a "chain link" succession is made clear in the debate between Dr. Graves and Dr. Ditzler. Their debate over "succession" must be carefully considered. This argument began in their debate over infant baptism and concluded in their discussion over the Church of Christ. Ditzler argued that earlier Baptist historians such as Backus and Benedict paid no attention to "*linear. . . succession*" but rather believed that any two or three believers assembled composed a church, and he argued that early American and English Baptists, such as John Smyth, Knollys, Holmes, Olney, Roger Williams and John Clark practiced it. Dr. Ditzler says:

*By Dr. Graves rules, Dr. Ford, Waller, Orchard and all the authorities here, these editors, unless the baptizer is in the regular line of so-called Apostolic Succession, has his baptism in regular order handed down **linearly by regular succession** from John the Harbinger, he is not baptized and cannot administer the ordinance validly. But what **a wild speculation** is this.*

To the credit of all the early Baptists in England, Wales and America, this wild and unsubstantial shadow was never

*dreamed of. Backus, Benedict, Roger Williams, Clark, Knollys, Holmes and Olney, **all paid no attention to it; did not believe it.** They knew it was wholly untrue and unscriptural. But as our Baptist friends, led on by Dr. Graves, make absolutely essential, and all conscience hangs here, let us examine it.*
No chain is stronger than its weakest link. But here four most essential links part in sunder at once under Baptist hands - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 826-827, 829—emphasis mine.

Indeed, Dr. Ditzler claimed that such Baptists sided with him against Dr. Graves and Landmarkers who followed Graves up to this point in time.

*See how they come down crushing all Dr. Graves ideas of succession. This is exactly our position all through this debate. Thus, have these Baptists all with us against Dr. Graves - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Church of Christ*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 923*

However, Dr. Ditzler misunderstood Dr. Graves’s position. Dr. Graves did not believe in “Apostolic” succession but in “church” succession.

*We repudiate **Apostolic** succession, a doctrine so dear to the Episcopacy, for the Apostles never had successors, **but we do, and have a right to claim church succession;** - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 844—emphasis mine*

Instead of refuting Dr. Ditzler’s claim that all previous Baptists “*paid no attention to*” chain link succession, Dr. Graves asserted that these Baptists did acknowledge, and did provide historical evidence to prove there was a history of Baptist congregations continuing from the apostolic days to the present:

i.e., that in the language of these historians, ours is the only Christian community that has stood since the days of

*the Apostles, and has during all these ages preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel until this day. **This is what we do claim, a continuity of congregations, and if our claim is not good, history nor the Bible itself can be credited.***—Ibid., p. 844—
emphasis mine

Now Bro. Settlemoir will attempt to claim that the above words also repudiate chain link church succession and claim that Dr. Graves only believed in an unconnected continuity of congregations. However, Dr. Graves defends “***the chain of Baptist Church Succession,***” and denies it is a “*wild speculation*” as claimed by Dr. Ditzler, any more than the historical undocumented claim there is a Northwest Passage:

*Now I put this question to you all, would it not have been becoming in him, who stands here as the professed and champion and defender of Methodism to have fairly, and honorably, answered this question and the defence of his Society and Discipline than to spent his time attempting to pick some flaw **in one of links of the chain of Baptist Church Succession,** a matter that has no more to do with this question ***than the question whether there be or not a northwest passage?*** ***Though it has been sought for three hundred years in vain it has not been proven that there is none,*** but as every new explorer has penetrated farther than the last, so it has been with Baptist history – ***the more thoroughly it is studied the clearer their claims*** – but one thing is manifest, Baptist Congregations antedate any other existing religious organizations, and if they have not stood continuously since the ascension of Christ, then no Christian Congregations have been on earth during all this period – but, another thing follows, if Christ has had witnessing Congregations during all these ages, as he declared he would have, then Baptist Congregations are those bodies – and ***to my mind*** the intensity, persistency and malignity with which Baptists are opposed and hated, and their distinctive principles have been and still are assailed by both Catholics and Protestants, as they were by Judaizing and Ritualizing teachers in the days of the Apostles, ***is to my mind an additional and a****

convincing proof of their claims. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Church of Christ*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 1054-1055—emphasis mine.

Dr. Graves’s view of “chain of Baptist Church Succession” is illustrated by things that demand organic continuity:

1. The Atlantic Cable stretching from Europe to America.
2. The River running under ground.
3. The use of the terms “chain” and “link.”
4. The requirement of an existing church to administer baptism for those being constituted.
5. The human cycle of reproduction after its own kind.

Do you think the advocates of Direct Authority would ever use these types of illustrations????? Would Bro. Settlemoir use the illustration of the human reproductive cycle after its own kind to illustrate his view of Baptist Church Perpetuity????? Not a chance!

This last illustration demands organic link by link church succession in the strongest language possible. Do human babies “self-originate”?

Does W.A. Jarrell use any of these illustrations to defend his view of Baptist Church Perpetuity????? W.A. Jarrell refuses to use the words “Church Succession”:

...the phrase “Church Perpetuity” is preferable to the phrase “Church Succession.”—W.A. Jarrell, **Baptist Church Perpetuity**. “What is Baptist Church Perpetuity?” (Ashland, KY: reprinted by Calvary Baptist Book Store)

However, the information he provides in his book demonstrates the reasonability of historical church succession.

More than anyone else during that time, Dr. J. B. Moody provides extensive definitions of “continuity” versus “perpetuity” versus “succession” in his book **My Church**. He recognized the differences in these terms. He claimed to believe in church “succession.” Not “apostolic” succession, but “church” succession. Not succession in the sense that any single church continues to the present day. Not succession in the sense that when one church dies, another is built upon top of it and takes its place, as in succession

of kings. He believed in church succession in the sense of reproduction after its own kind. Not because he could prove it by secular history, but because the Scriptures taught it, and because that principle of reproduction after its own kind could be seen “*in operation now.*”

*Continuity is not far from the true idea, as these congregations were a continuation and extension of the first church. **So out of continuity there came perpetuity**, as in human history. **These other congregations did not spring out of the ground, but came from the first church.**... This is true of our own species. I know I am in the succession, **not because I can trace it**, but because God originated the race with **this law of self-propagation**—a law we see in operation now, and so far as history testifies, it **has thus ever operated**; hence the proof and conclusion are irresistible. You may tell me I can't trace it. You may urge variety of complexion and countenance, and customs, as unfavorable to one origin.... **I claim to be in the succession.** Men may challenge the historical proof, and it may never be furnished, yet the proof, the right kind of proof, is abundant, and **the succession is true.**—J.B. Moody, **My Church**, pp. 133,160,161.—emphasis mine.*

The law of “self-propagation” refers to the instrumental means of a mother and father of like kind as the source for a new human being.

Landmarker T.T. Eaton recognized Baptist Succession was inseparable from some kind of organic contact between congregations. Moody quoting Eaton says:

*If Baptist succession be the bad thing some brethren say, then certainly it ought to be given up. There should be no more of it. The congregations now in existence ought to have no succession. **When a new church is organized, it should have no sort of connection with other congregations, or relations with them. Let congregations be organized anywhere, anyhow, by anybody.** Just let people be believers and let them baptize each other and start a church. **This does away with Baptist Succession. And if it is a bad thing that is charged,***

it ought to be done away with at the earliest minute. Those who oppose Baptist Succession have no logical ground to stand on in organizing a church out of material furnished by other congregations, and with those baptized by regularly ordained Baptist ministers.—J. B. Moody, **My Church**.—emphasis mine

What was it that Eaton claimed did “*away with Baptist Succession*”? He said church succession is done away with “*When a new church is organized it should have no sort of connection with other congregations.*” However, he denied that was the actual case as he did not believe it was Biblically correct to “*just let people be believers and let them baptize each other and start a church*” as one of these aspects is consistent with each of these aspects.

D.B. Ray believed that Baptist church succession is directly related to church organization:

*But again, we are told that there is no importance whatever attached to the doctrine of succession; that it makes no difference whether we are in the succession or not, if we hold the Bible doctrine at the present time! **But no man can hold the Bible doctrine of church organization who denies the succession.***
 — D.B. Ray, **Baptist Succession**—*Electronic copy, p. 17—emphasis mine*

Graves, Dayton and J. B. Moody clearly and unmistakably believed in link by link Baptist Church Succession in the manner of human reproduction after its own kind, even though they freely admitted they could not prove it by secular church history, and nor did they think they needed to prove it, because it was the self-evident principle at work in every denomination once that denomination was originated. So, it would be equally true with the denomination Christ originated in his own ministry especially as he promised such continuation “*always, until the end of the world.*”

Their logic is best expressed after this manner; if it looked like a duck, acted like a duck, walked like a duck, quacked like a duck, it is a duck, and all ducks are begotten by ducks. The present operation of this cycle from mother church to daughter church is sufficient evidence.

*So, when we find a church holding the doctrines of Christ, and “walking in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless,” **constituted to all appearances upon a heavenly model**, we are justified in taking it for granted that it is a true church, until someone can, and does show evidences to the contrary.... **If it looks like a true church, believes like a true church, and acts like a true church, to me, it is....**—A.C. Dayton, Alien Immersion. pp. 126,227—emphasis mine.*

Remember, that Dr. J.R. Graves defined the “*heavenly model*” for constitution to be the congregations “*organized by the Apostles*” (rather than by self-organization) according to the Great Commission.

*The apostolic congregations, organized by the apostles, are the authoritative models for the formation of congregations for all future time:—J.R. Graves, **The Great Iron Wheel; or Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed.** “*Primitive Church Constitution*,” (Southwest Publishing Company, New York, 1860), p. 547*

However, did not Dr. Graves and those who followed his Matthew 18:20 theory argue just as vehemently that it was not necessary for any church, presbytery or minister to be present to help organize a New Testament church? Yes! The reasons behind this obvious inconsistency are dealt with in my book referenced below at the end of this chapter.

F. FINAL DA ARGUMENT

The Direct Authority advocates argue that the plural “*ye.....you*” in Matthew 28:19-20 represent the church in the distributive sense as in “each of you”—thus individualized member authority. They ask “which disciple is not authorized by Christ to administer the commission. By this argument they transition from church authority to individual member authority.

However, the distributive sense of “each of you” is repudiated by Christ in verse 20. In verse 20 Christ promises “*I will be with YOU until the end of the world.*” According to their argument he is promising “*I will be with **each of you** until the end of the world.*” However, no individual disciple lives until

the end of the world. The pronouns “ye...you” represent the church as an institutional body and it is the church that continues to the end of the world not individual members.

Furthermore, the very same “you...ye” are identified as the administrators of that authority in Matthew 18:18. However, the context makes it impossible for “you....ye” to be understood in the distributive sense or “each of you” or individualized member authority. How so? Matthew 18:15 denies individualized authority to administer the keys. Matthew 18:16 denies even four or more members authority to administer the keys. The pronouns “ye...you” administer the keys in the corporate sense or represent the institutional church as the administrator of the keys.

Moreover, demanding the distributive sense of “ye...you” or “every member” or “each of you” or individualized authority in Matthew 28:19-20 would be authorizing women and children equal authority with every other member to be preachers, administrators of baptism and teachers of adults. However, the scriptures clearly condemn that conclusion (1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 14:33-36; 1 Tim. 3:1-11; Isa. 11:11; etc.).

Finally, the very Greek term *ekklesia* translated church repudiates the distributive sense of “ye....you” as an *ekklesia* has no existence or authority in the individual, but its existence requires at minimum two or more in an assembled state. The pronouns “ye...you” in Matthew 28:19-20 are representative of the *ekklesia* as an institutional body which Christ’s promises to be with until the end of the age.

G. ACTS 8-22:

Direct authority advocates argue that no mother church authority can be found in connection with the organization of churches within these chapters and, therefore, they argue they must have been self-constituted by direct authority from Christ. However, even the Direct Authority position requires that for baptism to be scriptural that it must be administered under the authority of an existing New Testament church. Therefore, if the administrators of baptism found throughout these same chapters had church authority to administer baptism, it is that same authority that authorized them to gather the newly baptized into teaching/observing congregations. On the other hand, if such baptisms had no church authority then even

the DA position would regard them as unbaptized and, thus, unlawful constitutions. It is obvious that Luke regarded them as scriptural assemblies, and therefore, the administrator of their baptism must have been a church authorized representative, and thus, the same authority behind their baptisms was the same authority behind their organization.

Conclusion: Regardless of what you think these earlier Landmarkers might have believed or did not believe does not change the fact, that Matthew 28:20 is authority to bring baptized believers into church order. Neither does it change the fact that Matthew 28:19-20 cannot be observed apart from organic reproduction after its own kind. Organic chain link church succession is inherent in the Great Commission.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What single passage drives a stake in the heart of the DA position?
2. How do the pronouns “ye...you” in Mt. 28:19-20 completely repudiate the DA position?
3. How do historic Landmarkers define the “ye...you” of Matthew 28:19-20? The church or the ordained office?
4. Which position promotes Eldership authority rather than church authority? Which position does the historic definition of Landmarkism found in the words “*that emanates under God, from a gospel church*” support? DA or ACC?
5. Name a few Baptists prior to 1800 who interpreted Matthew 28:19-20 as regular church order.
6. Is “church succession” or “baptism succession” the position of historic Landmarkers?
7. Does the very nature of the Great Commission promote and promise church succession?
8. List the five ways that J.R. Graves illustrated church succession.

REQUIRED READING:

Authorized Church Constitution by Mark Fenison, pp. 106-157

WEEK 10

LESSON 1–Worship–Part 1–Biblical Worship

LESSON 2–Worship–Part 2–Personal Worship

LESSON 3–Worship–Part 3–Public Worship

PAGE TURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 10 LESSON 1

Worship—Part 1—Biblical Worship

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson and the next four Lessons are (1) to determine the true meaning of worship and, (2) to define what it means to worship God “*in spirit and in truth*”; and, (3) to distinguish between personal and public worship.

INTRODUCTION: In 1 Chronicles 13:1-8 we have an account of what many would consider true public worship. By the time of David, the tabernacle coverings had rotted and the worship of Israel centered on the Ark of the Covenant. David was bringing the ark up to Jerusalem where his son would build a temple to house it. As all Israel were bringing the ark up to Jerusalem, spontaneous worship characterized the whole procession. There was singing and praising God accompanied by all sorts musical instruments. Without question there was a right motive and attitude behind this act of public worship, including, without doubt joyful and wonderful feelings invoked by the unity and spontaneity of the worship in their attempt to accomplish this for the glory of God. However, in 1 Chronicle 13:9-11 we find that God rejected their worship. Why? He rejected this worship because true public worship requires more than sincerity, spontaneity, praise, music, good feelings, and right intent to glorify God. All of these things are involved in true public worship but all these things must be based upon obedience to God’s revealed will (1 Chron. 15:13-16) or it ceases to be “*acceptable*” worship. Hence, acceptable worship must be “in spirit” but it also must be “in truth.” Ponder Ponder this carefully with regard to what many consider to be “*spiritual*” public worship today. The appearance, feeling and experience by men do not necessarily mean God approves or views it the same way. The only way to determine how God views worship is to evaluate it by His revealed will—the Scriptures.

I. THE PRIMARY TERMS TRANSLATED “WORSHIP”

In the Septuagint and Greek New Testament, the most commonly used word translated “worship” is *proskeuneu*. This term is composed of a preposition *pros* (toward) and the noun *kuneo* (to kiss). This term literally means to kiss the hand of (toward) someone in token of reverence, and among the Orientals, it meant to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence. Hence, in the New Testament it primarily describes the body in kneeling or in prostration as an act of homage or making obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication.

In the Old Testament it is used to translate the Hebrew word *shawkah* which describes a position or action of the body (prostrating, falling down, bowing, etc.). It is translated in our KJV Bibles as “worship” (99 times), “bow” (31 times), “bow down” (18 times), “obeisance” (9 times), and “reverence” (5 times). These two words account for more than 80% of the appearances of the word “worship” in our English Bible. The intent of the Old Testament term is that the body is supposed to be giving a visible expression of the state of the soul in God’s presence. Of course, one can go through the visible motions without showing the true condition of the soul and that is hypocrisy. However, the intent is to visibly show submission and servitude toward a person, object, or that which is revered to be God.

Another Greek term that describes worship is *latreuo* and the most popular instance of it is found in Romans 12:1. This term has to do with service through ceremonial sacrificial worship. Much will be said of this term later in this lesson.

Another Greek term translated “worship” is the term *sebomsai*. This term conveys the idea of reverence, awe and devotion (Mt. 15:9; Mk 77; Acts 16:14).

All of the terms used in Scripture to describe worship convey the same basic idea found in the English term “worship” which is to give worth, honor, and submission to the object of worship.

II. WHAT IS WORSHIP?

A man once married a farmer's daughter and their first anniversary was nearly upon them. He thought to himself, what would be the ideal anniversary gift for his wife? Considering her farming background, he came upon the ideal gift. He bought her a "water gauge." He envisioned her delight in measuring the water precipitation in the back yard and congratulated himself upon such a wise choice.

Finally, the day arrived and he eagerly anticipated the imagined delight of his wife as she opened his gift. She opened and looked at the gift with utter amazement and said, "*A rain gauge! You bought me a rain gauge?*" His wife was not impressed, and now it has been a family joke for several years. However, it serves well to illustrate, what may delight the giver does not always delight the receiver. We are commanded to "*give*" the kind of worship that God delights in;

***Give** unto the LORD the glory **due unto his name**; worship
the LORD in **the beauty of holiness**.—Psa. 29:2*

The English term "*worship*" means *to give worth or give honor*. True worship is that which gives honor to God rather than dishonor, "*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name*." The only kind of worship that gives glory to God is worship that which is in keeping with His revealed will, that is what it means to worship in "*the beauty of holiness*." That is what the phrase "*due unto his name*" means. His name represents His character and will as expressed in Scriptures. All worship that contradicts His character or revealed will is "rain gauge" type of worship.

"*The beauty of holiness*" describes true worship as revealed in Scripture. The term "*holiness*" means to "set apart." The Scripture reveals what pleases and displeases God. Jesus prayed, "*Sanctify them by thy word, thy word is truth*" (Jn. 17:17). As our lives are "set apart" by keeping His revealed will, we are offering worship in "*the beauty of holiness*" as the product. Only when public worship is "set apart" as characterized by God's word is it "*the beauty of holiness*" as David found out the hard way.

III. SOME RAIN GAUGE TYPES OF WORSHIP

The Scriptures identify and define specific types of “rain gauge” worship that does not honor God, but rather displeases Him greatly.

1. Will Worship
2. Idolatrous Worship
3. Vain Worship
4. Disorderly Worship
5. Ignorant Worship

All five types of worship listed above dishonor God and are regarded as sin by God rather than true worship, no matter how sincere the worshipper may be or how spiritual the worship may appear to men.

A. WILL WORSHIP

...after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.—Col. 2:22-23

1. The Essence of Will Worship:

Have you ever heard someone say, “*I know the Bible teaches that, but **I think this...**, **I believe that...**”?*

Will worship is elevation of the human will over the will of God as final authority for faith and practice. Will worship is characterized as worship “*after the commandments and doctrines of men.*”

There are only two types of people on planet earth regardless of how they classify themselves. There are those who elevate and honor their own will above the revealed will of God and say “**I think...I believe...I will**” and there are those who say with Jesus:

.... Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.—Lk. 22:42

I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me.—Jn. 5:30

That is the essential difference between carnality and spirituality. Listen to how people talk and you can know what is really their final authority for their belief and practice. If the emphasis is “*I think/believe*” rather than “*It is written*”, than that is a clear indicator of will worship.

2. The Expression of Will Worship

What is “*will worship*”? Will worship is exaltation and giving preeminence of the will of the creature over the will of the Creator. It is expressed verbally by opposition to God’s revealed will. Paul describes it as religious worship “*after the commandments and doctrines of men.*” It is expressed doctrinally by exalting and honoring traditions or the wisdom of man, and “*falsely so-called science*” over God’s will as revealed in Scriptures.

In the context, Paul had revealed the will of God in the matter of the Old Covenant system of worship (Col. 2:14-16). The Old Covenant system of worship had been abolished and replaced by the New Covenant system of worship. However, there were many in Paul’s day and in our day, who assert their own will in this matter over the revealed will of God. They attempt to continue Old Covenant aspects under New Covenant worship. Many professed Christian denominations (SDA, Messianic Jews; Catholic, etc.) embrace the same error today.

Ultimately, it comes down to whose will is the final authority for faith and practice. Will worship replaces or usurps the revealed will of God by man’s will as final authority.

3. The Entrance of Will Worship

This issue began in the Garden of Eden with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. From the Garden of Eden, the issue has always been, and still is, whose will should be recognized as final authority? God asserted His will as final authority in defining the knowledge of “*good*” versus “*evil*” in the Garden of Eden. He said it was good for man to eat of all herbs in the garden. He said it was “*evil*” to partake of one particular tree. In making this distinction, God claimed to be the final law giver in determining right from wrong. Thus, the one tree that was asserted by God to be wrong to eat was called the tree “*of the knowledge of good and evil,*” as it served to test man’s submission to God’s revealed knowledge of good and evil.

Satan correctly told Eve that they would be “*as gods*” if they partook of the tree. By partaking of what God denied them, they usurped the right of God as final lawgiver over them, and asserted equality with God to determine good and evil for themselves. Will worship declares “*I am the captain of my own ship and ruler of my own destiny, and I will do as I please*” However, are you really capable of being the captain of your own ship and the ruler of your own destiny? Do you have that right or power? Did you create yourself and can you really rule over circumstances in order to make them conform to your own will?

Violation of God’s revealed will is called “*sin*” in the Bible (1 Jn. 3:6). Sin is exalting your will not merely over God, but over all others around you. The consequences of self-preeminence are divorce, murder, prisons, wars, and all other conflicts between individual’s and nations.

Many today are doing exactly what Adam and Eve did in the Garden. They are exalting and honoring their own will above the revealed will of God. They are denying the moral absolutes of Scripture and replacing them with relative absolutes of their own choosing. They have usurped God’s revealed will as final authority over their life and have exalted their own will above God and that is the essence of “will worship”.

4. Examples of Will Worship

For example, there are those who claim they can “*worship God at home or on a mountain top just as good as in church.*” However, is that the revealed will of God, or is this the exaltation of the human will over God?

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.—Heb. 10:25

Certainly, one can worship God at home or on the mountain top or wherever they may find themselves, but that cannot replace church worship. The Scriptures clearly teach us how to view those who pit their will against God’s will:

*To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because **there is no light in them.**—Isa. 8:20*

One of the most atrocious errors that has crept into professing Christianity is elevating uninspired “sacred tradition” and/or supernatural experiences above the Scriptures, as final authority for determining truth from error. Another serious error is interpreting the word of God by personal feelings, supernatural experiences and traditions instead of interpreting such things by the Word of God (Isa. 8:19-20). This is the predominating error found in Catholicism, Mormonism, Pentecostalism and Watchtowerism.

Another form of “will worship” is pragmatism—the end justifies the means. Pragmatism is the doctrine of doing whatever obtains the desired results even at the expense of obedience to God’s revealed will. For example, oxen and a cart are pragmatically much better than certain priests carrying the ark on their shoulders (1 Chron. 12). Much modern worship and evangelism today has ox cart mentality as its final authority.

B. IDOLATROUS WORSHIP

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; - Ex. 20:4-5

Nothing is more prevalent than idolatrous worship in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as today. Moreover, nothing is more misunderstood and distorted than idolatrous worship.

1. Idolatry is first an Internal State of mind

Most believe that idolatrous worship is merely making and bowing down to an external object. It is certainly that, but much more. The Biblical understanding of idolatry goes much deeper and broader than mere homage to visible external objects. Those who manufactured the idols realized they were making them with their own hands. The idols were merely visible expressions of invisible and internal ideas or conceptions of deities found

within the mind of the idol makers and worshippers. Paul says they are results of “*vain...imagination.*”

*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but **became vain in their imaginations**, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And **changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image** made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.—Rom. 1:21-23*

The idol only gives visible expression to “*vain...imagination*” or the mental concept of a god already conceived in the mind. The idol merely represents what they conceive in their own minds as god.

For example, Israel knew that the two golden calves made right before their eyes in the wilderness were not the *literal* gods who brought upon Egypt the ten plagues or opened the Red Sea and performed miracles in their midst. They saw the fire by night and the cloud by day long before they saw these idols being made right before their own eyes. They simply accepted these calves as visible expressions of that God or visible mediums to worship that God. This is precisely what the second and third commandments expressly prohibit, because no visible form of God can provide an accurate visible expression of the invisible image of God (Col. 1:15). Any visible expression will always distort God, as it will always come short in providing full representation of His attributes.

Indeed, the attempt to make a *visible* expression of God is the essence of idolatry:

*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image **made like** to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.—Rom. 1:22-23*

The gods conceived by Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Mormonism, United Pentecostalism and New Age Christianity are all idolatrous gods. Why? All of these mental concepts of God contradict the nature of God revealed in Scriptures.

For example, Paul writing to the Corinthians speaks of “*another Jesus*”

and “*another Spirit*” (2 Cor. 11:4). Paul did not actually believe “*another*” of any of these actually existed except as distorted concepts (doctrines) in the minds of heretics. It was their false mental perceptions that originated “*another*” Jesus, Spirit, and gospel. It was man’s distorted perception of God that moved him to make visible representations of God in the form of men and beasts (Rom. 1:19-22). Paul believed these distorted mental perceptions or doctrines originated with demons (1 Tim. 4:10) and those who participated in idolatrous worship were fellowshiping with demons (1 Cor. 10:19-21).

True Biblical salvation involves the revelation of the true Biblical God (Jn. 17:3), as revealed in the Scriptures. It is the spirit of the “*antichrist*” which perverts the doctrine of God (1 Jn. 4:2-5; 2 Jn. 9-11).

2. Idolatry is worship through visible forms

Another misunderstanding about idolatry is that Exodus 20:4-5 does not condemn making visible forms, as a means, or medium to represent and worship the true God. For example, some would cite the making of the brazen serpent by Moses in order to support their own practice for using visible images in worship of God.

However, this idea is wrong for several reasons. First, God never commanded the brazen serpent to be made for a visible medium to worship God. No one bowed down before it or prayed before it. He never said it should be used as a visible medium through which prayer or worship should be directed toward God. Instead, it was designed to test man’s allegiance to God’s revealed will. God had said that all who merely looked upon it would be healed of their serpent bites. If they believed God’s Word, they would look and God would heal them. However, if they did not believe God’s Word, they refused to look. Hence, it was a visible object designed to manifest their faith in the Word of God. It was designed, along with many other ceremonial forms to serve as a type of Christ (Jn. 3:14-15). Second, the command was to “*look*” at it, not to pray or worship God through it. It was provided to test their faith in God’s Word or command. Significantly, it was later destroyed in order to keep people from making it a visible object of adoration and/or a means to worship God.

*He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: **for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it:** and he called it Nehushtan.—2 Kings 18:4*

In other words, it was destroyed when the ancient Israelites began to treat it exactly as the Roman Catholic Church treats their visible images. Those who direct their prayers or adoration toward God through visible images or other beings are guilty of replacing Jesus Christ as the only mediator between God and man. We are commanded to pray individually and directly unto the Father under the leadership of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ:

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.—Eph. 2:18

Third, the New Covenant provides no command to make any kind of visible image for use in worship of God.

3. Idolatry is anything that replaces God as preeminent

Anything that takes preeminence over God in your life is an idol.

An idol can be your car or your spouse. It is anything that replaces His position or becomes the supreme object of devotion in your life. An idol is anything in your mind that you recognize as God but is contrary to God as revealed in Scripture.

C. VAIN WORSHIP

*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But **in vain they do worship me,** teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.—Mt. 15:7-9*

The word “vain” means a “fruitless” or “useless” thing or exercise. In context, the spiritual leadership of Israel was claiming to serve and worship God according to God’s Word, but their *final* source of authority for proper

service and worship was contradictory to God's Word.

During the period between Malachi and the arrival of John the Baptist famous scribes had provided oral traditions that were designed to provide interpretations of the Scriptures. These oral traditions were later written down in a book called "The Mishnah." The intent of these traditional oral interpretations was to prevent violation of God's Word. However, they misinterpreted Scriptures and led to disobedience of Scripture. These oral traditions became the final authority for faith and practice in the place of the Scriptures. These traditions are what Christ refers to in the Sermon on the Mount when he says, "*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time*" (Mt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43).

1. Vain Worship adds to and replaces God's Word with "Sacred Tradition" as final authority for faith and practice

This is the essence of Roman Catholic worship, as they clearly claim that the papal decrees, church counsels and so called "Sacred Tradition" are the authorized means to interpret God's Word, when in fact, such human sources contradict the teachings of God's Word. For example, where in God's Word can we find a "pope" or "cardinals" or "archbishops" or a host of many other things Roman Catholicism teaches and requires?

This is equally the essence of the Watch Tower Society that replaces the Word of God with its body of ruling elders as the mouth piece of God and/or with its books as essential to interpreting God's Word. The same can be said for the Seventh Day Adventists and the writings of Ellen G. White. Indeed, every denomination whose prophet(s) has failed the Biblical tests of a prophet (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Mt. 7:14-20; 1 Cor. 14:37-38; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; etc.), but whose prophecies are regarded as necessary to properly interpret Scriptures, or are added to, or treated as God's Word in their worship is vain worship (Mormons, SDA, Catholics, etc.).

2. Vain worship is Hypocritical Worship

Moreover, vain worship is more than mere replacement of God's Word as final authority. It is also the contradiction between what you claim and

what you practice. The spiritual leadership of Israel claimed they were serving and worshipping God with mouth, but in fact were violating God's will with their practice. Vain worship is hypocritical worship.

***Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**—Mt. 15:7-9*

For example, when the words of your mouth do not match the condition of your heart and/or the doctrine embraced in your heart does not match the teachings of Scripture that is hypocrisy and vain worship. Either way, the consequence is the same in God's sight—hypocritical vain worship.

3. The Natural Man is a religious Hypocrite

Anthropology proves that man is religious by nature. Every culture and every generation provide evidence for this conclusion.

However, all worship by the natural man is hypocritical, and therefore, vain by its very nature. Jesus repeatedly told his followers that a bad tree (heart) cannot bring forth good fruit (good works), in spite of the profession, or recognition by men that what they are doing is the “good” works of God.

*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, **neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.**—Mt. 7:17-18*

*Either make¹⁴³ the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, **how can ye, being evil, speak good things?** for out of the abundance **of the heart** the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure **of the***

¹⁴³ He is not asserting that fallen man can “make” his own heart good. He is calling upon his listeners to admit that either the heart is good or bad, but cannot be both. Thus, either “make” it a good or an evil heart because there is no middle ground.

***heart** bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.—Mt. 12:33-35*

The heart is evil because its motives are evil. Therefore, no matter how good the “fruits” (expressed thoughts in words and actions) may appear to men, God looks upon the heart motive behind those words and actions.

*But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, **but the LORD looketh on the heart.**—1 Sam. 16:7*

*I the LORD **search the heart**, I try **the reins**, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.—Jer. 17:10*

The essence of sin is thinking, saying and doing things from the wrong motive. Hence, an evil heart is a heart with the wrong motive, and therefore all that springs from that heart is evil in God’s sight:

*For **out of the heart** proceed **evil thoughts**, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: – Mt. 15:19*

In direct contrast, a “good” heart is a heart that operates from the right motive. What is the right motive? The right motive is “*the glory of God*” in whatsoever you think, say and do:

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, **do all to the glory of God.**—1 Cor. 10:31*

*And whatsoever ye do, **do it heartily, as to the Lord**, and not unto men; – Col. 3:23*

True love has a right priority. Love the Lord thy God first, and secondly others as thyself. A right motive operates according to the priority of love. God’s glory is always the chief priority and anything we say or do that does not have that priority comes “short of the glory of God” and is sin. The natural heart does not have that priority. This is why God must first give

sinner a “*new heart*” (by the new birth) before they can think, say or do good in God’s sight:

*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*

***A new heart also will I give you,** and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and **cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.**—Ezek. 36:26-27*

God gives us a new heart by bringing our spirit into spiritual union with God’s spirit. That action is a creative act by God so that our spirit is “*created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) which changes the governing inclination of our heart, providing the right motive to glorify God in all that we think, say and do. Our spirit is where we merge with the spirit world and the kind of spirit we are in union with determines our moral condition and governing inclination of our hearts.

Only when our words and actions originate from a good heart, is true worship being expressed. When those heart intents are empowered by the indwelling Spirit of God then true worship is manifested. In all other cases it is “*vain*” worship, because it is hypocritical worship. The Holy Spirit is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). He does not give a person the right motive and then lead or empower them to perform actions contrary to His own Word (Philip. 2:13).

4. Hypocrisy between right words but unbiblical definitions

There is another form of hypocritical or vain worship. Vain worship also occurs when the use of right Biblical words and right Biblical forms are defined and executed according to unbiblical definitions or false doctrine.

For example, many religions use the same Biblical terms and administer the same Biblical ordinances but explain them with different meanings and

definitions other than what God's Word gives them. This is well illustrated in the historic ETC [Evangelicals Together with Catholics] compromise between evangelicals and Catholics. Their agreement was based upon mutual Biblical language but with radically different theological interpretations of that language. Hence, the language was Biblical, but the interpretation was unbiblical.

There are many denominations that conduct worship service using the same Biblical terms, along with the same appearance of Biblical ordinances, but with radical unbiblical understanding and interpretations of those things. Hence, the words and actions are inconsistent with the Biblical doctrine that defines them = hypocritical or vain worship.

The *truth* of the gospel must undergird any expression of true worship or else it is rejected by God as true worship. The truth of the gospel is expressed in Paul's doctrine of justification by faith which consists wholly of the substitutionary Person and works of Jesus Christ in behalf of the sinner.

The essential difference between "the truth" of the gospel and "another gospel" is the difference between what Christ completed IN HIS OWN PHYSICAL BODY for sinners versus what sinners do IN THEIR OWN BODIES for God. The former is the Biblical doctrine of justification while the latter is the Biblical doctrine of sanctification. If you mix the two together for ultimate justification you have "another gospel."

In essence, "*the truth*" of the gospel is that Jesus Christ in His own body completely satisfied all the righteous demands of God's Law against the elect for their complete justification, leaving nothing at all for the elect to complete or add to His finished work. The absolute proof for this finished work is that saints are resurrected in glorified bodies prior to standing before Christ to be judged. Hence, final judgment with regard to the "works" of the elect has nothing to do with determining heaven or hell, but determining rewards in heaven, as they stand in a sinless perfect condition before their works are judged for rewards in heaven.

What God did in and through the physical body of Christ FOR YOU obtains entrance into heaven. What God does in and through the physical body of the saint FOR HIM obtains present blessings and rewards in heaven.

What Paul condemns as "*another gospel*" is any gospel that denies the complete sufficiency of Christ's works and death performed in his own physical body for the full justification of God's elect, or to say it in a positive manner, it is any gospel that includes anything performed in, or through

the body of the sinner, by any means, as essential to complete ultimate justification before God.

The oldest form of this false gospel is that of sacramentalism. Sacramentalism is the doctrine that *demand*s that saving justifying grace is progressively imparted through obedience to divine ordinances. Of course, the human will in cooperation with the Holy Spirit is attributed to be the cause for this obedience. Paul repudiated this doctrine in Romans 4:9-11. Paul set forth Abraham as the model of justification by faith and declared that Abraham was justified by faith not merely “*without works*” (Rom. 4:5-6), but that he was already justified “*in uncircumcision*” prior to any obedience to divine ceremonies. Hence, he denied that justification was progressive in nature but completed at the point of faith in the gospel (Rom. 4:25-5:1).

Furthermore, that justifying faith was a gift of God’s grace (Rom. 4:16; 11:6; Eph. 2:10). Paul thereby repudiated any doctrine of justification that involved personal obedience to divine ordinances.

All who include their own works in their definition of “justification by faith” are involved in Christianized pagan worship (Catholicism, Seventh Day Adventism, Mormonism, Pentecostalism, Methodism, Lutheranism, etc.) whether it is personal or public worship. The truth of the gospel must be the basis for any acceptable act of worship (personal or public) or it is regarded as “vain worship” before God.

Reformed Calvinism requires “perseverance in faithfulness” in addition to perseverance in “*faith*” in order to be finally justified. This doctrine is also a denial of “*the truth*” of the gospel. Perseverance in faithfulness is certainly an evidence of salvation, and token of assurance of salvation before men, but it is not a *necessary* evidence for ultimate justification as proven in the case of Lot, and in the principle set forth by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

All worship that is based upon any confusion of sanctification with justification is “*vain worship*” as such is in reality a complete repudiation of the substitutionary sufficiency of the Person and works of Christ in his own physical body in behalf of the elect.

D. DISORDERLY WORSHIP

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all congregations of the saints. . . . Let all things be done decently and in order.—1 Cor. 14:33, 40

Paul is rebuking and correcting both the spirit and form of worship in the church at Corinth. Their public worship service had more in common with their past demonic heathen form of worship (1 Cor. 12:2) than it did with true Biblical worship. God was not the author of such confusion, and thus, what occurred, and what Paul was correcting, was the product of demonic leadership, confused and indecent worship (1 Cor. 12:2). God did not accept this disorderly worship but attributed it to its true source - demons.

Paul provides clear and easy Biblical principles for how true worship in God's congregations ought to be conducted so that it is done "*decently and in order*" and without "*confusion*" (1 Cor. 14:40).

1. Confusion is a sign of disorderly worship

The term "*confusion*" necessarily implies disorder, and confusion characterizes actions or speaking where there is inability to understand or comprehend what is being said or done.

The primary root of this confusion and disorder was their vocalizations in the assembly. They were speaking in such a manner that others could not understand what they were saying (1 Cor. 14:2-29). Not only were the members of the congregation confused, but so were the visitors (1 Cor. 14:23).

When those who claimed to be "*prophets*" are speaking contradictory to each other in the public worship service then confusion is the result. When people claiming to be speaking or acting under the power of the Holy Spirit lose control of their speech or bodily actions then indecency and impropriety are the result (1 Cor. 14:32-33).

Yet, in spite of this clear Biblical rebuke of such practices (confusion, lack of order, lack of control, indecencies) in the worship service, such practices characterize the Charismatic worship services today.¹⁴⁴ Paul denies that it is God who is leading in such worship, as God is not the "*author*" of such confusion.

2. Reversing Biblical Roles are a sign of disorderly worship

Also, the Scriptures provide scriptural "*order*" in regard to worship (1 Cor. 14:26-36).

¹⁴⁴ For a more complete analysis of the Charismatic form of worship go to: http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/Counterfeit_Revival_book.pdf

God established an order of authority in the home where the husband is the head over the wife (Ephes. 5:23-25) and the parents are over the children (Eph. 6:1-3). Yet there are congregations that violate that divine order and even reverse it in their worship assemblies (1 Cor. 14:34-36) where women are put in positions of authority over the men (1 Tim. 2:11) and even hold the office of Pastor (1 Tim. 3:1, 4-5) making God the “*author of confusion*” by establishing in the church exactly the reverse of what he condemns in the home. God’s order in the church is the same as in the home.

There are no greater schisms and confusion found within Christendom than is found within charismatic denominations, and the irony is that they, above all other denominations, claim to be more “spiritual” than others. Corinth had all the spiritual gifts and yet Paul said he could not speak unto them as “spiritual” but rather as “carnal” or “fleshly” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Disorder, confusion and disobedience to God’s Word are the clear advertisement that the “*author*” of such worship is due to demonic power and leadership.

E. IGNORANT WORSHIP

***Ye worship ye know not what:** we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.—Jn. 4:22*

*Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore **ye ignorantly worship**, him declare I unto you.—Acts 17:22-23*

At the time Jesus said these words, the Scriptures were very clear that the only temple that God approved and built was found in Jerusalem. The only priesthood and ordinances God approved were administered in that temple in Jerusalem.

However, the Samaritans had built their own temple, and had their own priesthood, and their own version of the Scriptures. This “alternative form of worship” had been established by Jeroboam in 2 Chronicles 12. However, God regarded such alternative worship as a “*high place*” or an

unauthorized place of public worship. Many such “*high places*” could be found after the time of Solomon where they worshipped only Jehovah, but in complete disobedience to God’s revealed will which demanded that such public worship was restricted to His approved house in Jerusalem. This was still the case in Samaria.

Jesus declared to the Samaritan woman “*ye worship ye know not what.*” He did not question their sincerity, but the knowledge upon which their form of worship was based. Their *public* form of worship was not recognized or received by God.

Athens had all kinds of temples including one ascribed to the “*unknown*” god to make sure they did not offend any deity. Paul said “*ye ignorantly worship.*” Paul did not question their sincerity, but the knowledge upon which their worship was based. Their worship was not recognized or received by God.

Many today believe, as long as they worship God sincerely from the heart, that God will accept their worship. Jesus makes it clear to the Samaritan woman that God will not accept mere sincerity void of truth. Acceptable worship “*must*” not only be performed in sincerity (“*in spirit*”) but “*in truth.*”

*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the **true** worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit **and** in truth: for the Father seeketh **such** to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship him in spirit **and** in truth.—Jn. 4:23-24*

Sincere, but ignorant worship is sin, just as worship that conforms outwardly to truth without sincerity is sin.

Therefore, it does matter what you believe and practice. It does matter how you’re baptized and who baptizes you! It does matter how you observe the Lord’s Supper and who administers it and with whom you observe it! It does matter what you believe about God, His church, salvation, etc. Your attitude does matter.

Many today are like Pilate, confused and genuinely ask “*what is truth?*” The answer is simple. Truth is everything that harmonizes with the nature/attributes of God and His will, as it is revealed in the Bible. For example, Jesus said “*I am the truth*” (Jn. 14:6) and “*thy word is truth*” (Jn. 17:17). Therefore, truth is defined by his person and by his word. The New Testament

church is defined by its faithfulness to His person and His word, and is therefore called, “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15). One of the qualifications for leadership in such a church are the selection of only those “*sound in doctrine*” (1 Tim. 3:1-14; Tit. 1:5-13) or those who teach what is consistent with his person and his word.

There is acceptable worship, and there is unacceptable worship and the difference is “*in spirit and in truth*” versus outside that spirit and/or outside His truth. Neither the Holy Spirit nor the Word of God receives disobedience as “*acceptable*” worship! Disobedience to God’s word is defined as, “sin” not worship.

So, does it matter what you believe and practice? Yes! Sincerity is not enough to be received as worship by God. David and all Israel were sincere in 1 Chronicles 13:8, but God rejected their worship because it was not “*according to due order*” as set forth in the Word of God (1 Chron. 15:13-15). Many saved persons are involved in perverted forms of public worship.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.—Rev. 18:4

Their public worship is rejected by God because their worship is in disobedience to His Word.

CONCLUSION: The primary idea behind the English term “worship” and all of the Hebrew and Greek terms translated “worship” is summarized by David words, *Give unto the LORD the glory **due unto his name**; worship the LORD in **the beauty of holiness**.*—Psa. 29:2. There are some forms of worship that do not glorify God and do not give him honor or glory. God’s Word reveals what honors and what dishonors the Lord. That which dishonors the Lord may be called “worship” by men but it is not received as worship by God.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Which text in Psalms properly describes the meaning of true worship?
2. What Greek term and its Hebrew synonym account for over 80% of all appearances of the word “*worship*” in Scripture?

3. Did the worship of Israel in 1 Chron. 13 have all the appearance of true worship?
4. How does the doctrine of pragmatism apply to 1 Chron. 13?
5. What lesson did David learn in 1 Chron. 15:13-15?
6. Name and give a summary description of five forms of worship that does not honor God.



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 10 LESSON 2

Worship—Part 2— Personal Worship

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to define the essential elements of personal worship and, (2) to define what it means to worship “*in spirit and in truth*” and, (3) to understand the Old Testament relationship of sacrificial worship to the personal condition of the person offering up the sacrifice.

INTRODUCTION: There is a vast difference of opinion with regard to what constitutes true worship. Many believe that “worship” is a matter of sincerity, and/or a certain order of actions (singing, praying, preaching, etc.). Some believe it consists of a spiritual experience or feeling. Many believe it is relative and therefore ultimately a matter of personal opinion and preference. However, in the following lesson the student will consider the Biblical definitions and principles that define true Biblical *personal* worship.

I. ESSENTIALS OF PERSONAL WORSHIP

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.—Psa. 29:2

In this lesson we deal with the essentials of **personal** worship. In the next lesson we will deal with the essentials of **public** worship.

However, as previously shown, David describes the essence of all true worship in Psalm 29:2. The English term “*worship*” literally means “to give worth” or to render what is deserved, or as David says—“*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*” or what will honor and glorify him. **Not**

everything offered as worship honors or glorifies him, as we have seen in the previous lesson.

As previously discussed, David says we are to “*worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*” Remember, the word “*holiness*” means *to set apart*. The Scriptures *set apart* or specify what pleases God and what glorifies God, as true worship (Jn. 17:17).

The beauty that sets apart true worship from all unacceptable worship is described by Jesus as, “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him IN spirit and IN truth*” (Jn. 4:24). To worship the Lord “*IN the beauty of holiness*” is to worship the Lord “*IN spirit and IN truth.*” This is the sphere of acceptable worship. The word “*must*” demand this is the only acceptable sphere of true worship.

II. PERSONAL WORSHIP MUST BE “IN” SPIRIT

God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit... - Jn. 4:24

The phrase “*God is spirit*” identifies his substance and sphere of existence. His substance is “*spirit*” rather than material.¹⁴⁵ Paul describes the “*image*” of God, as an “*invisible*” image (Col. 1:17). Although, man shares with animals a visible materialistic biological life form (body), only man shares with God a common image and capacity to fellowship and worship God. Genesis 2:7 uses the *plural* Hebrew form translated “*life.*” In other words, man was created with a plurality of lives (biological or body life, soul or psychological life, and spirit, or spiritual life).¹⁴⁶ Man is made in the triune image (spirit, soul, and body) as well as the moral (Eph.4:24; Col. 3:10) and positional image (to rule) of God (Gen. 1:26).

Like God, man’s immaterial nature can exist either in or apart from a materialistic form (Mt. 10:28; Heb. 12:23). Therefore, man’s nature is not

¹⁴⁵ Jesus contrasted “*spirit*” with the material substance of man (Lk. 24:39). The fact that he is omnipresent defies the idea his form is material in form or substance like man (Psa. 139). God also speaks of His “*soul*” in the terms of will, affections and mind.

¹⁴⁶ The instructor is a committed trichotomist. Since the Bible can and does distinguish between the human spirit and soul so should the Bible student distinguish between them (1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12).

merely materialistic and biological, consisting of flesh, blood and breath, as Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults teach.¹⁴⁷

However, to worship him "*in spirit*" refers to much more than to his immaterial nature. It also refers to the *capacity*, *capability*, and *character* which define the sphere of true worship.

The physical body provides the capacity for fellowship with the *outer* physical world. The soul provides personal *inner* world self-consciousness or awareness (thinking, feeling, and willing), but it is the spirit of man that provides *other* world consciousness or capacity to fellowship with the spirit world. This is true of both the lost and saved man. The lost man has the spirit of Satan working in him (Eph. 2:2-3), and that is why his spirit is "*dead*" or separated from God (Eph. 2:1 existent but separated from God—Eph. 4:18) and must be "*quickened*" or brought back into spiritual union with God. It is not the body of man that is born of the Spirit, but the spirit of man (Jn. 3:6). What is born of God or brought back into spiritual union with God, is created in "*righteousness and true holiness*" (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) and this new "*inward man*" (Rom. 7:22) delights in the law of God. The new birth restores the human spirit in the *moral* image of God. This is the cleansing of the internal sanctuary within man where the Spirit of God dwells (Rom. 8:14, 16), which cannot sin (1 Jn. 3:9). The regenerated spirit is completely sanctified ready for heaven as it is in spiritual union with God, but not so for his soul or body.

Worship must be conducted "*in*" spirit, but by a spirit that is compatible and in union with the Spirit of God. Therefore, to worship God "*in spirit*" requires three characteristics: (1) Spiritual Capacity; (2) Spiritual Capability; (3) Spiritual Character:

A. SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

The natural or lost man possesses a "*spirit*", but his spirit is separated from the Spirit of God and is in spiritual union with Satan. Thus, to be spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1) does not mean that the human spirit is nonexistent, inactive or non-functional, but merely existing and functioning in a condition that

¹⁴⁷ *Making God in the form of a man is idolatry, and therefore, the conception of God in such a material human form is idolatry—Rom. 1:23*

is not compatible with the Spirit of God due to being separated from God by sin. Thus, the unregenerate man is the natural born man whose earthly father is Adam and whose spiritual father is Satan (Jn. 8:44-45). This is true of all who are “*in Adam*” from Genesis to Revelation and this is why all who are “*in the flesh*” (due to having been born of the flesh) “*cannot please God*” (Rom. 8:8). Therefore, fallen man has no spiritual capacity to worship God due to the defilement of sin.

The spirit of fallen man is “*dead*” or existing in a state of spiritual separation from God. The only possible solution is to be brought into spiritual union with God, as God is life, God is light, God is holy and God is love. Thus, to be spiritually separated from God is to be spiritually dead, in spiritual darkness, spiritually depraved, and at enmity with God. Instead, the spirit that is not united to God is in spiritual union with Satan, who is the “*strong man*” that dominates the human spirit. To be spiritually dead means there is no union, and thus no fellowship between the human spirit and the Spirit of God. To be spiritually alive means there is union with God or the opposite of spiritual separation (death). This union is life, light and holiness because union is with God, who is life, light and holiness.

In direct contrast, the removal of the strong man (Mt. 12:29 - Satan) along with his moral defilements from the spirit of man (Tit. 3:5) is by a creative act (Eph. 2:10) that brings the human spirit into spiritual union with God, thus restoring the moral “*image*” of God (Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10). That creative act is called the new birth (Eph. 2:1, 5, 10; Jn. 3:6). The new birth is uniting your spirit with the Spirit of God, and that union between the human spirit and God’s Spirit is indwelling (Rom. 8:8-9) and is the “*seal*” of God.

Apart from spiritual union with the Spirit of God (new birth) there is no spiritual capacity to “*see*” or “*enter*” the present spiritual kingdom, and ultimately the coming physical kingdom (realm) of God. **Spiritually dead (separated) people cannot worship God, because worship must be “*in spirit*”, and they are without the Spirit of God, and are separated or “*alienated*” (Eph. 4:18) from God.** All who are in this condition are “*in the flesh*” (Rom. 8:8a) or a state of natural birth and “*cannot please God*” (Rom. 8:8b). Such are “*none of his*” (Rom. 8:9).

Therefore, since true worship consists in doing what pleases God, the unregenerate condition has no capacity for worship “*in spirit*.” The new birth

provides that capacity. Therefore, a person's spirit "must" be born again (Jn. 3:6) or they cannot "see"¹⁴⁸ or "enter" the kingdom of God, much less worship God "in spirit." Thus worship "in Spirit" requires spiritual capacity provided only through the new birth.

B. B. SPIRITUAL CAPABILITY

Without me ye can do nothing—Jn. 15:5b

If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit.—Gal.

5:25

For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of

His good pleasure—Philip. 2:13

All three texts are addressing born again believers. If a born-again person cannot do anything in their own strength, how much more is that true of the unregenerate?

When the spirit of man is regenerated, the moral inclination of the soul (intellect, will and affections) is changed from rebellion against God unto willingness to obey God (Rom. 7:22). However, even though the law of indwelling sin has been removed from its dominance over the regenerated spirit of man, it has not been removed from the entire man. It has been removed unto the body and operates in the child of God warring against the soul through the natural appetites (cravings) of the body (Rom. 7:15-21). Neither the soul, nor the regenerate spirit is able to overcome the power of indwelling sin. In spite of the fact, that the ruling inclination of our soul delights in the Law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22 - born again spirit), the law of sin still dominates the soul (Rom. 7:18) at all times when

¹⁴⁸ *The term "see" means to perceive or understand spiritual things (Deut. 24:5; 1 Cor. 2:14). This does not mean they cannot understand the language of the Bible. If they can read English, they can understand the language they are reading. However, there is a distinction between understanding the language they are reading and comprehending and accepting the thoughts being conveyed by that language. Man's mind is much like a computer. The mind has received data and all new data is compared and either accepted or rejected according to how it fits the data already received as truth. The lost man's mind has been programmed according to the world's system of thinking, and therefore what God's Word teaches simply does not fit or make sense with the accepted data that forms his pattern of thinking. The new birth or moral renewal of the spirit is required to provide something that the teaching of Scripture can fit or harmonize with.*

the soul does not “*put on*” the inward new man *by the power of the indwelling Spirit* (Rom. 8:9-13). Why? The power to overcome sin is not found in our soul or the regenerated spirit, but in the indwelling Person of the Holy Spirit of Christ. Therefore, “*without me ye can do nothing.*” Hence, no man, unregenerate or regenerate between Genesis and Revelation has power to please God except through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God which occurs at the point of spiritual union with the Spirit of God by new birth. Therefore, the only man that pleases God is the one “*God worketh in.... both will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philip. 2:13).

This is precisely why Paul admonishes Christian readers, “*if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:25) because the power to please God, or the power for worship, or the power to overcome indwelling sin is not found in the soul (intellect, will and affections), or in our regenerated spirit, but in the indwelling Spirit of God alone. The moral image is found in our regenerated spirit but not the power to put on that moral image in our lives.

If this is true of the regenerate man (and it is), then how much more incapable is the unregenerate man? That is why all who are “*in the flesh, cannot please God*” (Rom. 8:8). Worship consists in pleasing God. That is why a person in addition to being “*born again*” (capacity) must “*walk in the Spirit*” (capability) in order to please, thus worship God.

Therefore, only as our soul (self-consciousness) determinately yields to the Holy Spirit can we live out the Christian life. Living out this Christian life by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God is the essence of true worship. Any person under the leadership of the Spirit will not offer unacceptable worship or false worship. If they are acting at any time in disobedience to the Word of God that is evidence they are not acting under the leadership of the Spirit.

So, it is not enough simply to be born again and have the *capacity* for worship, but one must be “*filled*” or under the leadership of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) in order to have the *capability* to please God.

As we will see later, whatsoever you do, if it is going to be done for the glory of God, requires not only the new birth which provides the right motive, but the power of God, which provides the capability. Therefore, to preach, sing, worship, pray, be a good father, mother, child, worker or “*whatsoever ye do*” must be done “*in the Spirit.*”

This has nothing to do with a second work of grace, or baptism in the Spirit, or speaking with tongues, but simply walking, as you received Christ in salvation:

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: - Col. 2:6

How did you receive him? You received him by the power of the Holy Spirit in a spirit of complete self-denial and submission (Rom. 4:21). We resist the world, the devil, and the flesh by simply submitting/yielding to the Spirit of God trusting him to empower us to perform His revealed will in our lives. Whatever He empowers or works out through us is the “*beauty of holiness*” and is a life offered up as a sweet savor unto God, and is an acceptable sacrifice. Our whole personal life is to be one continuous act of worship in all that we think, say and do. That is what it means to “pray without ceasing.” It means to be in a state of worship.

Right doctrine is not sufficient for true worship. There must be both spiritual capacity (new birth) and capability (empowerment by the indwelling Spirit) to live out that doctrine. To worship in spirit is simply to walk or live by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.¹⁴⁹ This is how you “*redeem the time*” (Eph. 5:17) or make your time count for the glory of God.

C. SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

How can we tell if a person is walking in the Spirit? The manifestation of walking in the Spirit is the (1) fruit of the Spirit; (2) and comprehensiveness or holistic character of the offering being offered.

1. The Fruit of the Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.—Gal. 5:22-25

¹⁴⁹ *Saints prior to the cross had the same problem of sin we do. They were born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:1-6) and could walk “in the Spirit” or walk after the flesh.*

It is impossible to walk in the Spirit without manifesting the “fruit” of the Spirit, as that “fruit” is **the evidence** of Spiritual control and power.

Love is the chief fruit of the Spirit. Love rejoices in truth but does not rejoice in iniquity (1 Cor. 13:5).

Where the “works of the flesh” are present, the empowering of the Spirit is not present, and worship ceases to exist. Some of the works of the flesh are these:

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, **strife, seditions, heresies**, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.—Gal. 5:19-21*

Recently, a young lady was fearful of going back to a certain church because the people had not been friendly. I told her if that were so, then she was going to the wrong church, and she should find one that would manifest the fruits of the Spirit toward her. Spirituality is not found in the gifts of the Spirit, but in the fruits of the Spirit. The church at Corinth had all the gifts of the Spirit but was still “carnal”:

*And I, brethren, **could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal**, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?—1 Cor. 3:1-3*

Moreover, supernatural gifts can have a demonic source (Mt. 24:24-25; 2 Thes. 2:9). Personal worship is offering up of your *daily* life through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, as an acceptable and sweet savor unto God. Jesus said that no man could be his disciple that did not take up his cross “daily” and follow him. Daily death to self is daily submission to the Spirit, and the evidence of that is the “fruit” of the Spirit.

2. The Old Testament Sacrifice Motif

In the Old Testament, worship is primarily identified with offering up sacrifices. The Greek term that denotes this kind of worship is *latrueo*. In the Old and New Testament these literal sacrifices are metaphorically used to describe the condition of the heart and its manifest actions by words and deeds.

For example, David says,

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.—Psa. 51:17

And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.—Psa. 107:22

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.—Psa. 4:5

Doing the will of God from an obedient heart was considered the ultimate sacrifice in the Old Testament:

And Samuel said, Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.—1 Sam. 15:22

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire; my ears have you opened: burnt offering and sin offering have you not required. Then said I, See, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God: yes, your law is within my heart.—Psa. 40:6-8

The sacrifices offered in the Old Testament were not acceptable to God if the heart and actions of the offeror are not right with God:¹⁵⁰

Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil on this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not listened

¹⁵⁰ *Hebrews 11:4 demonstrates that the first sacrifice offered by men was designed to give a visible witness of the righteous spiritual state of the offeror rather than to obtain literal remission of sins and righteousness thereby.*

to my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. To what purpose comes there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet to me.—Jer. 6:19-20

The same is true in the New Testament. For example, Jesus says,

And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.—Mk. 12:33

But go you and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.—Mt. 9:13

An obedient heart is essential for external actions/forms/ceremonies to be considered as acceptable acts of worship or as sacrificial offerings in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul says;

I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.—Rom. 12:1

But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.—Heb. 13:16

Yes, and if I be offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.—Philip. 2:17

But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.—Philip 4:18

God looks upon the heart and what comes forth from the heart (words and actions) as what determines external acts to be true worship or false worship. The whole life 24/7 is to be continual acts of acceptable sacrifices or worship.

The various Hebrew terms translated “*worship*” in the Old Testament all have to do with the use and position of the body. Why? The body is

the vehicle of expression for the soul, therefore, the state of the soul is to be expressed visibly through the body. Unfortunately, many have replaced the soul's condition with bodily expressions, thus going through the visible actions of worship but without true soul worship.

3. The Comprehensiveness of the Sacrifice offered

That brings us to the next aspect of the true spiritual character of personal worship, which is the comprehensiveness of the sacrifice offered. Personal worship is wholistic:

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.—1 Cor. 10:31

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.— Col. 3:17

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; - Col. 3:23

Many live a segmented and compartmentalized life. They speak of their *work life* in contrast to their *home life* or speak of their *church life* in contrast to the rest of their life. The truth is that God claims interest and ownership over your whole life. If your church life or *public* worship is not consistent with every other aspect of your life, then you are a hypocrite and both your *personal* and *public* worship are unacceptable unto God.

Your whole life is interrelated, and your whole life is to be a life of personal worship unto God. Your whole life is to be empowered by the Spirit of God manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in all that you think, say and do.

We have now come to the very crux of *personal* worship. The Scriptures teach that our whole life, seven days a week is to be a sacrifice offered up to the Lord, and the sacrifice was the center piece of true worship.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.—Rom. 12:1

Notice that you cannot present your body any way you please. It is to be presented unto God “*a living sacrifice, **holy and acceptable.***” He is speaking of your whole life, as you live out your whole life in and through your body. Your body is merely a vehicle to carry out your thoughts and will. Your body becomes a “*living sacrifice, holy and acceptable*” when it is carrying out, and used to express God’s thoughts and will (Philip. 2:13). That state is the life of the Spirit and life more abundantly.

The child of God is to live moment by moment in conscious submission to the leadership of the Spirit. This is what is meant by the command to “*pray without ceasing.*” It is living in a conscious state of dependence upon God, conscious of His presence manifested by submission to His revealed will. Prayer is an act of worship (submissive spirit), and we are to be living in a state of worship. Your life as a whole is the essence of personal worship and is the offering you bring to God daily. The things we say and do while under the leadership of the Spirit are described as “*offerings*” or “*sacrifices*”–

*But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with **such sacrifices** God is well pleased.*–Heb. 13:16

*Yea, and if I be offered upon **the sacrifice and service of your faith**, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*–Philip. 2:17

*But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, **an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.***–Philip. 4:18

Obedience to the revealed will of God is considered sweet smelling sacrifices of worship unto God. Therefore, worship in “*the beauty of holiness*” is when our life, at home, at work, at play and in the congregation, all conform to the word of God in the manifest character or fruit of the Spirit. That is the summation of “*the beauty of holiness*” before God.

Many live any way they like, but then come to the congregation on Sunday and go through the actions for a few hours, and then walk out the door and live like the devil the rest of the week.

Many are fighting and fussing all the way to the congregation and then enter into the assembly and sing “*O how I love Jesus.*” Such is not acceptable personal worship and must be confessed as sin and turned from before

worship can be manifested from your heart. Public worship has its validity in personal worship in the previous six days, without which, public worship is empty and void.

Complete worship does not require sinlessness, but it does require keeping your sins confessed, and walking in a right relationship with God daily (1 Jn. 1:7-10).

III. WORSHIP MUST BE IN TRUTH

*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and **in truth**: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and **in truth**.*—Jn. 4:23-24

True worship is everything that characterizes what you think, say and do under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never leads, or empowers anyone to violate His own inspired revealed word, as he is not the “*author of confusion*” but “*the Spirit of truth*” and leads into “*all truth*.” Hence, all who profess to be offering up true worship, or confess to be under the leadership of the Spirit but are expressing that which is contradictory to the truth are not really being led, empowered or worshipping by the Holy Spirit. They may be sincere but sincerely wrong.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.—Isa. 8:20

That brings us to the question, “*what is truth*”? Remember, that was the question Pilate asked Jesus. It is still being asked today. The answer is “***truth is everything consistent with the nature of God, and the will of God, as revealed in the word of God.***” This is clearly the definition given by Jesus Christ. In regard to His Own Person, he said—“***I am the . . . truth***” (Jn. 14:6). In regard to the Scriptures he said—“***thy word is truth***” (Jn. 17:17).¹⁵¹ Therefore, truth is everything consistent with the nature of God and the will of God, as revealed in the Word of God.

¹⁵¹ *All who oppose or deny the Scriptures as final authority for faith and practice are not true worshippers of God or friends of God.*

The Holy Spirit sanctifies or sets apart the children of God in keeping with the truth revealed in the Scriptures. “*Sanctify them by thy word for thy word is truth*” (Jn. 17:17).

Remember, that worship performed “*in the flesh*” is never acceptable worship before God. Many do not realize that the works of the flesh include “*strife, seditions*” and “*heresies*.”

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these. . . .
Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, **strife,
seditions, heresies**,—Gal. 5:19,20*

False doctrines (“heresies”) originate with the “*spirit of error*” or demonic influences:

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times
some shall depart from the faith, **giving heed to seducing
spirits, and doctrines of devils**; - 1 Tim. 4:1*

Unacceptable worship originates with the “*spirit of error*” and is manifested by “*doctrines of devils*” and disobedience to God’s will as revealed in God’s Word.

Hence, those who are really Spirit filled are also in submission to the will of the Holy Spirit. Obedience to the will of God, as revealed in Scriptures, is part and parcel with being spiritual. Disobedience to God’s Word is a spiritual problem. Any time disobedience to God’s word is being manifest, that is proof such a person is not being led by the Spirit. Any time a person is not being led by the Spirit, worship has ceased and sin is being manifested.¹⁵²

Therefore, all acceptable worship is an expression of obedience to God’s revealed will, just as all unacceptable worship (will worship, idolatrous worship, ignorant worship, etc.) is an expression of disobedience to the revealed will of God—His Word (Isa. 8:20).

So, it is not a choice between sincere or proper worship, but both are required for worship to be true worship. A person can be sincerely wrong.

¹⁵² Remember Satan appears as an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness. Those operating in the flesh can appear to have a good attitude or counterfeit fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is never manifested in open disobedience to God’s revealed will. Those practicing false doctrine with what appears to be a good attitude is nothing less than counterfeit fruit of the Spirit.

Sincerity does not always indicate spirituality. Those who practice witchcraft may be very sincere, but sincerely wrong. True worship must be “*spiritual*” and the Holy Spirit is the “*Spirit of truth*.” True personal worship ceases when the worshipper begins operating “*in the flesh*.”

A. TWO DOCTRINES THAT CHARACTERIZE ALL TRUE WORSHIP

Obviously, no individual Christian knows all truth. Every Christian is given a measure of grace, faith and understanding of God’s Word. True worship occurs when that Christian is operating **within** those perimeters of grace, faith and true Biblical understanding. Worship that leaves those perimeters of grace, faith and true Biblical understand is false worship whether it is performed sincerely or not.

In the previous chapter under “Worship in spirit” we have noted some *spiritual* characteristics that are essential for all true worship. However, there are some doctrinal truths that are essential to worship “*in truth*” that must be embraced and must characterize all true worshippers and true worship of God.

These two doctrinal essentials distinguish counterfeit Christians and counterfeit fruit of the Spirit from the genuine. These two essential truths are (1) the truth about God and, (2) the truth of salvation.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.—Jn. 17:3

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.—Gal. 1:8-9

Any person who worships any other kind of God is an idolater and any person who worships outside the truth of salvation is a lost person.

1. The Truth of God's Nature

Jesus says “*this is eternal life*” in knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.¹⁵³ Jesus is not denying He is God, or someone else in addition to God. Rather, the true character of God is only revealed to men by the Holy Spirit through the person and works of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). When Jesus was asked by his disciples to show them the Father, He responded that he that hath seen him has seen the Father (Jn. 14:7-11). Not that the Father has a visible form, or that Jesus **is** the Father. Jesus came to reveal what God is like in human flesh. To know Jesus Christ is to know God, as Jesus is God the Son veiled in human form (Philip. 2:6-7). To believe in Christ (Jn. 3:36) is to believe in God (Jn. 5:24) and to reject Jesus Christ is to reject God. This is why Jesus said,

*And this is life eternal, that they might **know thee** the only true God, **and** Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*—Jn. 17:3

That is why true salvation is the revelation of the true God in the person of Jesus Christ and by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Those who have eternal life (children of God) know who God really is, because in the act of salvation, God is revealed to them by the Holy Spirit through the person of Jesus Christ:

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, **to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***—2 Cor. 4:6

Jesus Christ can only be revealed by the Father through the Holy Spirit:

*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: **for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.***—Mt. 16:16-17

¹⁵³ Jesus is not denying that He is God. Christ was God in the flesh (Jn. 1:1). However, his humanity is not deified. He was fully man, and the human nature is not to be confused with the nature of God. The Son possessed all Divine attributes. Salvation is the revelation of the true God in the face of Jesus Christ in the heart (2 Cor. 4:6).

*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, **To reveal his Son in me**, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: - Ga. 1:15-16*

The Father never reveals the Son by the Holy Spirit contrary to the Biblical doctrine of Christ:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.—2 Jn. 9-11

In other words, the Holy Spirit never reveals Jesus Christ outside, or contrary to his true Biblical character or relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Triune Godhead is announced in the first step of obedience in the administration of baptism (Mt. 28:19). A new child of God may not understand “*the doctrine of Christ*” or be able to explain or defend it, but the Christ revealed in him by the Father through the Holy Spirit in connection with the Gospel is not contrary to the Biblical doctrine of Christ. He does not perceive Christ to be the Father or the Holy Spirit. Neither does he perceive him to be a created being or a mere man (Jn. 1:1)

He perceives him to be his Savior, but yet “*the Son of God*” in human form, and therefore, his LORD. Hence the truths about God and Salvation are inseparable truths and essential for true worship.

True worship “*must*” have for its object the one true Triune God. The true God is known by his attributes, as his attributes define who He is, and sets Him apart from His creation and from all false gods.¹⁵⁴

Neither is God the Son as the promised Christ a New Testament revelation. All the Old Testament prophets believed in Christ as their

¹⁵⁴ *There are two classifications of attributes belonging to God. There are those attributes that he alone possesses that cannot be communicated or transferred to creatures. These make God to be God (eternity, immutability, self-sufficiency, etc.). There are other attributes that He can communicate to creatures (morality, love, rationality, etc.). God in substance is “spirit” just like angels. However, it is the attributes that distinguish the spirit of God from the spirits of angels and men,*

redeemer for the remission of sins (Acts 10:43). David was a prophet (Acts 2:23) who believed in and recognized the Messiah (the Christ) as his “*Lord*” (Psa. 110:1; Mt. 22:32-37).

David was the primary author of the book of Psalms. The Psalms are lyrics set to music that were used in the house of God for public worship. Significantly, the attributes and the unique works of God due to those attributes are the subject matter of much of the Psalms. The attributes of God make God to be God. The many works of God for His people are the products of His marvelous attributes. Praising and thanking God for such works and magnifying His attributes that manifest such works gives him the honor which he deserves which is the essence of true worship.

It is a serious error to deny or pervert the attributes or nature of God.¹⁵⁵ This error is defined as idolatry by Scripture. Idolatry is first a mental perversion of God. This mental perversion is then manifested in either visible images (graven, painted, etc.) and/or verbal perversions (false doctrine).¹⁵⁶

No true worship can occur by any *professing* child of God who rejects or perverts the essential nature of God, as that is the essence of idolatry. No true salvation can occur while a person is still in a conscious state of rejecting the Biblical revelation of God.¹⁵⁷

2. The Truth of Salvation

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.—Jn. 17:3

Jesus makes it clear that eternal life is inseparable from knowing the true God, as he says “*this is life eternal, that they might know thee...*” Eternal life is experiential knowledge of God through direct revelation by God (Mt. 16:16-17). That experiential knowledge occurs when spiritually dead sinner

¹⁵⁵ *A person can be saved and be ignorant of the attributes of God. However, no person can be saved who at the time they profess to be saved is embracing a false or distorted belief of God (Jn. 17:3).*

¹⁵⁶ *Mormons, Roman Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, New Age Christianity, United Pentecostalism and Word of Faith Ministries, etc., all distort the true God of the Bible.*

¹⁵⁷ *To be ignorant of all that God is, is one thing, but to openly reject the true nature of God and/or openly reject any of the Triune Godhead, as God, makes salvation impossible, as the object of their faith is not the true God. That is person is an idolater.*

is brought into spiritual union with God, apart from which, there can be no spiritual capacity, capability or conduct for worship “*in spirit*.”

The unregenerated man is “*alienated from the life of God through ignorance through the blindness of heart*” (Eph. 4:18) whereas, salvation is the reversal of that heart “*ignorance*” and “*blindness of heart*.” That reversal is obtained through the creative power of God whereby he commands “*the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor. 4:6) to be revealed in the heart. This occurs when the gospel comes to a person “*not in word only*” but becomes the creative word of power (Eph. 2:1, 5, 10) by which the Holy Spirit reveals Christ within the heart of God’s elect.

*For our gospel came **not** unto you **in word only**, but also
in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as
ye know what manner of men we were among you for your
sake.—1 Thes. 1:5*

The doctrinal content that must be present in any true profession of faith is a confession that characterizes what God did to and for that person without their help or assistance that concluded in repentant faith in the gospel. This doctrinal content is found in the “truth” of the gospel. That “truth” is summarized in the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone without any works by the confessor. This truth can be summarized as faith in what Christ did FOR YOU in his own physical body as an all sufficient substitute in your behalf for everything God would have demanded in your entire life and death that obtains entrance into heaven. Anything that God does in and through you FOR HIM has nothing to do with entrance into heaven, but with present blessings, growth and rewards in heaven. The truth of these two statements is proven by the fact that you are raised absolutely sinlessly glorified BEFORE you stand before Christ to be judged “according to every man’s works.” This proves your works are not being judged for fitness to enter heaven but fitness for rewards IN heaven.

Unfortunately, there is “*another gospel*” as well as “*another Jesus*” preached among men, as another way of salvation that is “*accursed*” (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:4).

The professing kingdom of God is full of “*tares*” (Mt. 13), or false professors, and one significant indication of “*tares*” is their profession in

“*another gospel*” or “*another Jesus*” other than the gospel and Jesus clearly revealed in the Scriptures. God does not accept worship by lost religious people or by idolaters.

Conclusion

First, personal worship must be “*in spirit*.” It must be in the *capacity* of spirit—new birth. It must be in the *capability* of spirit—filling of the Spirit. It is manifested by the *character* of spirit—fruit of the Spirit. It must be *comprehensive* rather than compartmental or else your worship is hypocritical in nature. All worship conducted “*in the flesh*” is unacceptable worship.

Second, personal worship must be “*in truth*.” Open disobedience to the revealed will of God is unacceptable worship. In addition, there are at least two essential truths that must characterize all acceptable worship. (1) The one Triune God must be the sole object of Worship. (2) The true gospel must be the sole foundation for true acceptable worship.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What Old Testament Scripture best defines the true nature of worship?
2. What New Testament Scripture best defines the true nature of worship?
3. Explain what it means to have spiritual “capacity” to worship.
4. Explain what it means to have spiritual “capability” to worship.
5. Explain what it means to have spiritual “character” as evidence of true worship.
6. What does it mean to compartmentalize one’s life?
7. What two essential truths must characterize all true worship?

WEEK 10 LESSON 3

Worship—Part 3— Public Worship

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to investigate the essentials of Biblical public worship and, (2) to investigate the Old Testament pattern of public worship and, (3) to investigate the “*house of God*” motif as used in the New Testament for the New Testament congregation in connection with the Old Testament motif.

INTRODUCTION: In our previous lesson we looked at the essentials of *personal* worship but in this lesson, we are going to look at the essentials for *public* worship.

I. ESSENTIALS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know **how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—1 Tim. 3:15*

We will now deal with the common likenesses and yet vast differences between personal and public worship.

With regard to common likenesses, both share the same principles of worshipping God “*in spirit and in truth.*” However, public worship involves the assembling together of believers in a joint or corporate act of worship.

Public participation in worship is impossible to do on a continuing and habitual manner without first determining three basic areas of agreement. Continuing in a habitual manner requires (1) an appointed place to assemble,

(2) an appointed time to assemble and (3) an appointed manner of worship when assembled. If any of these three prerequisites are missing, then only disorder and confusion will be the results. These three things have always characterized public worship as instituted by God from Genesis to Revelation.

The earliest recorded event where two or more persons came unto a certain place, at a certain time to conduct a certain act of worship is found in Genesis chapter four with Cain and Abel. The reader should ask themselves, from whence did Cain and Abel get the concept that they should come together at a certain place and time and worship after a certain manner?

Why did they go to a certain place to do this? Either they were taught this by the example of their parents as they grew up, or God directly appointed and revealed to them the time, place and proper manner for public worship. To assume the latter and deny the former is to assume Adam and Eve were not involved in public worship of God.

Although, the Scriptures do not expressly state from whence they received this instruction, the Scriptures clearly infer the source of this instruction was found in Genesis 3:15-22. After Adam and Eve had sinned, and they were conscious of their nakedness, God preached to them the gospel (Gen. 3:15) followed by a clear illustration of the gospel in the killing of animals to supply “*coats*” of skins to cover the shame they felt due to sin. The internal exposure of their spiritual nakedness, or exposure of their sin by their conscience was manifested by their attempt to hide themselves and cover their physical nakedness (Gen. 3:22). Whenever a person’s evil deeds are exposed by his conscience, he feels naked in the sight of God and men and will always attempt to conceal himself, as his conscience makes him **feel** that he is exposed to all around him.

This presentation of the gospel (Gen. 3:15) in connection with the sacrifice of animals (Gen. 3:21) and a covering is a type of Jesus Christ being slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Hence, the gospel type (offering by blood) in connection with the preaching of the gospel is established in Genesis with the parents of Cain and Abel. Most likely, Cain and Abel received basic instruction about the essentials of worship from their parents.

Although, the *pattern* of public worship is greatly expanded under Moses and then again under Christ, the fundamental pattern for public worship is

established right at the beginning of Genesis, and further expanded in the account of Cain and Abel.

Right from the very beginning of Genesis these three characteristics of public worship are clearly set forth. These concepts are illustrated in the account of Cain and Abel in Genesis chapter four:

1. An Appointed Public time—The Lord’s Day—Gen. 4:3
2. An Appointed Public place—The Lord’s House—Gen. 4:16
3. An Appointed Public Sacrifice—The Lord’s Lamb—Gen. 4:7

II. THE APPOINTED PUBLIC TIME

*And **in process of time** it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.—Gen. 4:3*

There has always been “*the Lord’s day*” or a day specifically set apart for public worship both prior to, and after Moses. In Genesis 4:3 the literal Hebrew text reads “*at the end of days.*” Most scholars see this as a reference to the Sabbath Day which God instituted following six working days, and therefore “at the end of days” means at the end of six days. Jesus said that the Sabbath was “*made for man*” and not merely for God or for Jews (Mk. 2:26). No Jews existed when the Sabbath was “*made.*” Indeed, the children of Israel were reprimanded by God before the Ten Commandments were given to Moses (Ex. 16:26-28) for violating His Sabbath (Ex. 20). The Jews were called to “*remember*” the Sabbath, rather than to invent it. The Sabbath they were called to “*remember*” originated in Genesis 2:2-3.

Nowhere does Scripture ever say that the Sabbath is the seventh day “*of the week.*” That phrase cannot be found in relationship to the Sabbath law anywhere in Scripture. True, God provided a seven-day pattern in Genesis 1-2 consisting of six working days followed by a seventh day of rest. True, our calendars follow that seven-day pattern in weeks, months and years. However, neither the natural lunar month, nor the solar year is divisible by seven. There are twenty-nine and a quarter days in a lunar month and a little over 365 days in a solar year. This means that the “week” is an imposition upon the natural clock of creation. The only thing commanded by God is there must be a pattern of seven days in total, wherein six working days precede and follow the seventh Sabbath day. However, where this pattern

of seven days is to begin and end in regard to our modern calendar is not due to any command prior to the cross. Indeed, it could not be entirely restricted by God to any particular day or date in any human calendar, as He himself applies the Sabbath law to a variety of days and longer periods of time within the Jewish calendar. The truth is that the Sabbath law demands only the pattern and principle of six equal periods of time followed by the seventh equal period, which is to be observed as the Sabbath. This pattern and principle could be applied by God at any point within the human calendar of events.

For example, in Leviticus 23 the Sabbath was applied to days of the month that fell on the 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 50th day, as well as, on the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th day of the calendar month. In the seventh month it was applied to the 10th day of that month. All of these were literal 24-hour days in keeping with Genesis 1-2:3. However, it was also applied to periods of time longer than a twenty-four-hour period (7th month, 7th year, 50th year) in keeping with meaning of the Hebrew term *yom* translated “day” in Genesis 2:4. In Genesis 2:4 the Hebrew term *yom* is more than a 24-hour period of time and this secondary application of *yom* is in direct connection with the Sabbath institution in Genesis 2:3.

Hence, God could never restrict the Sabbath to the seventh day “*of the week*” without violating His own application of the Sabbath to other 24-hour days (1st, 8th, etc.) and longer periods of time than 24 hours (month, year, etc.). Hence, the command was sufficiently broad to include any specific period within the human calendar without restricting it to one specific application. However, it was not wrong to apply the Sabbath to the seventh day “*of the week*” any more than to the other days it was applied in Leviticus 23. Therefore, we should not restrict God’s Sabbath Law to something narrower than what God Himself applied it.

The Old Covenant encumbered the creational Sabbath with ceremonial laws. However, under the New Covenant those Sabbatical ceremonial restrictions were abolished (Col. 2:16) and the Sabbath of the Lord returned to its simplicity, as a day of joy and gladness (Psa. 118:24) in the resurrection of Christ as the seal of his finished work which finds its ultimate fulfillment in the new heaven and earth to come. It continues to be set apart from all other days as a day of resting from secular and selfish pleasures but set especially apart unto the Lord (Isa. 58:13), recognizing it as the “*Lord’s Day*”

(Rev. 1:10), rather than our day. Under the new covenant it was set apart for public worship (Acts 2:1; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10). Under the new covenant it is never to be a burden but a blessing to the people of God and never applied or forced in a legalistic manner.

Observance of a public Sabbath day (Heb. 4:9) will only be abolished when the believer enters not merely into spiritual rest by faith in the gospel (Heb. 4:2), but soul rest in heaven (Heb. 4:11) and ultimately the eternal “day” of rest in spirit, soul and body in a new creation and new earth yet to come (Rev. 21:1-4). Hence, the fourth commandment still retains applications other than a mere 24-hour day. The millennial reign is called “*the day of the Lord*” and the new heavens and new earth will be an eternal Sabbath or 8th day which is everlasting.

Under the new covenant the “*first day of the week*” is the appointed day for public worship which commemorates the greater redemptive work of Christ (Heb. 4:10), and points forward to a coming yet unfulfilled rest when God can once again look upon all creation, and say it is “*very good.*” Some imagine that Romans 14 condemns Sabbath keeping, when in fact Paul is dealing with cultural differences (days, food, drink) between Jews and Gentiles rather than Biblical principles or precepts but those things that are neither good nor evil in themselves. The Sabbath under the Old Covenant is abolished and replaced by the “*Lord’s Day*” for New Testament Christians; (Col. 2:16; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10).

This is the unanimous practice of all Christians from the twentieth chapter of the gospel of John until Constantine the Great. Long before Constantine made Sunday observance Roman law, it was the revealed command of God (Psa. 118:25; Mk. 16:9) and unanimous universal practice of all Christians from the New Testament period to the third century.

Common sense dictates that public worship must have a recognizable public appointed time. Doing all things decently and in order demands a recognizable public appointed time. Hebrews 10:25 demands a regular appointed time. The example of Christ and the apostolic congregations leave no room to doubt that there was an appointed day called “*the Lord’s Day*” and that designation was not given to every day of the week.

The Sabbath epitomizes the essence of worship. It commemorates a time when all of creation was in perfect harmony and at rest with God. It epitomizes a time and condition when God could look upon all His creation

and say “*very good*.” Under the Mosaic legislation proper observation required sinless perfection and keeping of all other commandments in spirit and in practice. The Lord’s Day commemorates the redemptive work of Christ which does not merely restore peace between God and all creation but ushers in a new and better creation which can never be defiled by sin again. The New Covenant Sabbath is without all the legalism that characterized the Old Covenant Sabbath and finds its ultimate fulfillment in the creation of a “*new heaven and earth*” that ushers in an eternal day of rest where once again God can look upon everything he has made and pronounce that it is “*very good*.”

III. THE APPOINTED PUBLIC PLACE

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.—Gen. 4:16

Cain could not go out from the presence of an omnipresent God. David realized that in Psalm 139 when he said that whether he ascended into heaven or hell God was there. There is no escape from the presence of an omnipresent God. Yet, the text says that “*Cain when out from the presence of the Lord*.”

Cain went out from the “*house of God*” or the particular place designated of the public altar where they came to meet God for public worship.

Individual worship has no appointed time or place but is 24/7 in all places at all times. However, public worship has always had an appointed place and time for “*acceptable*” worship as defined by a divine “*pattern*.”

A. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

In Genesis the appointed place of worship occurred where the public altar was erected. Prior to the creation of nation of Israel public worship was conducted by the firstborn in every household. Upon the creation of the nation of Israel the tribe of Levi took the place of the firstborn in every household for conducting public worship:

And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel. And I have given the Levites as a gift to

Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come near to the sanctuary.—Numb. 8:18-19

The simple gospel pattern symbolized in the altar and sacrifice established in Genesis was expanded under Moses according to the pattern God gave that was manifested in the form of the tabernacle, with its furniture, sacrifices, and structure. The tabernacle was covered with the skins of animals, thus symbolizing a living structure. Later the house of God was made of stones. Both the tabernacle and temple structures were symbolical of the New Testament house of God which consisted of “*lively stones*” (1 Pet. 2:5).

This “*pattern*” that establishes “*acceptable*” public worship in the sight of God is often repeated in the Old Testament. It is first spelled out with greater detail with the institution of the Mosaic Tabernacle, then Solomon’s temple and then in the temple revealed to Ezekiel and finally the *ekklesia* of Christ.

1. The Mosaic House of God—the Tabernacle

When God provided a public place to meet with Israel he instructed Moses to build it according to a specific pattern:

*According to all that I shew thee, **after the pattern** of the tabernacle, and **the pattern** of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.—Ex. 25:9*

*And look that thou make them **after their pattern**, which was shewed thee in the mount.—Ex. 25:40*

*And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: **according unto the pattern** which the LORD had shewed Moses, so he made the candlestick.—Numb. 8:4*

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,

*as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, **that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.**—Heb. 8:5*

Later, we will see that conformity to the pattern in all things was necessary to manifest the two great truths that you will remember are essential for personal worship or the truth about God and His plan of redemption.

2. Solomon’s House of God—the Temple

God provided the pattern for a new house of God to David, who in turn gave it to Solomon to build:

*Then David gave to Solomon his son **the pattern** of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, - 1 Chron. 28:11*

*And **the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit,** of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: - 1 Chron. 28:12*

*And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for **the pattern** of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD.—1 Chron. 28:18*

*All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, **even all the works of this pattern.**—1 Chron. 28:19*

3. Ezekiel’s House of God

God provided Ezekiel the pattern for the house of God in Ezekiel 43-46.

*Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and **let them measure***

***the pattern.** And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, **shew them the form** of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and **all the forms thereof,** and all the ordinances thereof, and **all the forms thereof,** and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep **the whole form thereof,** and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house. And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar.— Ezek. 43:10-13*

The Jewish mind could not conceive of public worship apart from the “house of God” and they could not think of “the house of God” apart from the divine “pattern” that qualified acceptable public worship.

4. Christ’s House of God.

But if I tarry long, that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—1 Tim. 3:15

Significantly these words come from a former Jewish rabbi and are directed to a man who was raised by a Jewish mother and grandmother under the Old Testament Scriptures. When a Jew spoke of “the house of God” what dominated the Jewish mind was a designated public house of worship where every aspect of public worship had a divine pattern.

The words “the house of God” and its variations are found 313 times in Scripture and in every case prior to 1 Timothy 3:15 (311 times) it refers to the institutional house of God for public worship where there was a qualified public ministry administering qualified public ordinances in keeping with a qualified Biblical *pattern*. Indeed, in this very context there is a pattern set forth for selecting the ministry which will serve in this “house of God” (1

Tim. 3:1-13).

In previous lessons, you had been introduced to a building pattern in Matthew 16:18 and in Matthew 28:18-20 which patterns are put into practice in the book of Acts. There is a distinct pattern for building New Testament congregations that is inclusive of its constitution, membership, ordinances, ministry and mission.

If you will remember in a past lesson on the baptism in the Spirit, every house of God was characterized by seven aspects:

1. **Public qualified builder**
 - a. The Tabernacle–Moses
 - b. The Temple–Solomon
 - c. The Church–Christ

2. **Public Qualified house of worship**
 - a. The Tabernacle–Lev. 1-8
 - b. The Temple–Lev.1-8
 - c. The Church–1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-20

3. **Public Qualified Ministry**
 - a. The Tabernacle–Levite Priesthood
 - b. The Temple–Levite Priesthood
 - c. The Church–Acts 1:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13; Acts 6

4. **Public Qualified ordinances**
 - a. The Tabernacle- Leviticus
 - b. The Temple - Leviticus
 - c. The Church–Lk. 7:29-30; Mt. 26:12-30; 1 Cor. 5, 10, 11

5. **Public Authorized system of faith and practice**
 - a. The Tabernacle–Deut. 12
 - b. The Temple–Deut. 12
 - c. The Church–Mt. 18:17-18; 28:18-20; Acts 2:1-3, 41

6. **Public Accreditation by fire and immersion in the Shekinah glory of God**
 - a. The Tabernacle–Ex. 40:36-37
 - b. The Temple–2 Chron. 7:1-3

c. The Church—Acts 2:1-3

7. **Public Confirmation of Perpetuity**

a. The Tabernacle—Lev. 6:12-13

b. The Temple—2 Chron. 7:1 with Lev. 6:12-13

c. The Church—Mt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:26

Like all other previous houses of God, the New Testament house of God is merely an extension of the visible expression of the gospel first contained in the altar and sacrifice in Genesis 3.

The New Testament congregation is a visible gospel order. It gives external expression to the gospel in every aspect of its nature. For example, the profession necessary for membership demands a gospel profession. It gives external expression of the gospel in its ordinances, in the kind of professed membership, in preaching and teaching, in its commission, and in its discipline, which is designed to remove or correct anything that does not outwardly conform to the gospel.

It is this qualified gospel “*pattern*” that identifies it as “*the house of God*” and “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” for “*acceptable*” public worship in the sight of God.

In later lessons it will be seen that there is a divine pattern for observing both the Lord’s Supper and baptism.

All false or apostate congregations can be easily identified by their departure from the constitutional pattern, and or departure from the ministry pattern, and/or their departure from the pattern of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

It is only a congregation which is properly constituted and observing what Christ commanded (the pattern for public worship), that can assemble “*in my name*.” No matter how small that congregation may be, it is the presence of this visible gospel order and proper observance that gives evidence that Christ is in its midst (Mt. 18:20). When such a church is observing what Christ commanded (Mt. 28:18-19) God is being glorified by Christ in the church (Eph. 3:21) and “*acceptable*” public worship is the product.

B. A LOCATED HOUSE OF GOD

In the New Testament, the congregation or assembly is the “*house of God*” as an authorized administrative body of baptized believers (Mt. 18:15-18). Moreover, this administrative body of baptized believers always meets together in “*one place*.”

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord **in one place**.*—Acts 2:1

*When ye **come together therefore into one place**, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.*—1 Cor. 11:20

*If therefore **the whole church be come together into one place**, - 1 Cor. 14:23*

When the congregation is gathered together in one place it is for public worship:

*And when they had prayed, **the place was shaken where they were assembled together**;* - Acts 4:31

*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, **to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ**.*—1 Pet. 2:5

*And **upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together** to break bread, Paul preached unto them.*—Acts 20:7

The Lord’s Supper cannot be observed by “*the church*” apart from actually assembling together in one place.

The very Greek term *ekklesia* demands locality as it means called out to “assemble” and that is impossible apart from members coming together in one place or else the members are not assembled.

Cain and Abel assembled together in one place. Later God instructed Jacob to build an altar for public worship at “*bethel*” which means “*the house of God*.” God has always had a designated place to meet his people for public worship.

When Israel was in wilderness they were instructed that after coming into the promised land they were to build a public “*house of God*” or the

“*tabernacle of the congregation*” in the place where he shall choose to place his name:

But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.—Deut. 12:6-8

The place God chose to “*put his name*” is “*his habitation*” and it was from such a designated place that “*Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.*”

C. THE CHURCH IS A DESIGNATED PLACE TO WORSHIP

The New Testament congregation is the designated house for public worship. The congregation can only gather together in a place. Paul, writing again to the congregation of God which is at Corinth instructs them to bring their offerings to the assembly on the first day of the week when he would assemble with them:

*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the congregations of Galatia, even so do ye. **Upon the first day of the week** let every one of you **lay by him in store,** as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.—1 Cor. 16:1-2*

In the Old Testament, the offerings were brought to “*the house of God*” as the “*store*” house upon the Lord’s Day:

*But **unto the place** which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto*

***his habitation** shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And **thither ye shall bring** your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and **your freewill offerings**, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: - Deut. 12:5-6*

*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes **and offerings**. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the **storehouse**, that there may be meat in **mine house**, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.—Mal. 3:7-10*

All of these Scriptures clearly indicate that they had an appointed place to meet as the “house of God”, and it was on the “first day of the week” or the “Lord’s day.” It is in the house of God, the church, where the manifest order of public worship is most clearly seen, and therefore, “to God be glory by Christ in the church” not only in this age, but in the age to come where the church will continue to be the best visible manifest expression of the glory of God.

IV. AN APPOINTED PUBLIC SACRIFICE

*And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**.—Rev.13:8*

*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it **he being dead yet speaks**.—Heb. 11:4*

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.—Acts 10:43

*Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world—
Jn. 1:29*

The writer of Hebrews leaves no question that the Old Testament sacrifices represented Christ (Heb. 10:5-19).

The singular “*burnt offering*” found throughout the book of Genesis is expanded into five different offerings in the book of Leviticus.¹⁵⁸

The Old Testament altar and its sacrifice gave visible representation of the gospel of Christ. The gospel truth whether declared in words (Acts 10:43) or expressed in the altar sacrifice is essential to both personal and public worship “*in spirit and in truth.*” Without it, the appointed time and place are worthless and without it all worship is vain, empty, null and void. The appointed time is “*the Lord’s*” day. The appointed place is the house “*of God.*” The appointed sacrifice is declared in the gospel “*of Christ.*”

If there is one fundamental truth, it is that there is no salvation for anyone, at any time, outside of Christ. The sacrificial lamb offered up by Abel in Genesis 4 is the consistent primary Old Testament type of Christ and His atonement.

Prior to the cross, Jesus said “*I am the way the truth and the life no man cometh to the Father but by me*” (Jn. 14:6). After the cross, Peter said: “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

There is no other Savior. There is no other Gospel. There is no other way of salvation for fallen children of Adam. All who will be saved are “*chosen in him before the foundation of the world*” (Eph. 1:4), and all who are saved have been “*predestinated to be conformed unto the image*” of Christ (Rom. 8:30), and all who are to be saved will be raised like unto him (1 Jn. 3:2). The same gospel preached now was preached prior to the cross (Heb. 4:2; Isa. 53; Rom.10:16) with the only differences being (1) they looked forward by faith as we look back by faith, and (2) prior to the cross it was progressive revelation while we look back at the fulfilled revelation.

The appointed public sacrifice for public worship is manifested in the preaching, membership qualifications, ordinances, mission and discipline of the congregations of Christ.

Conclusion

¹⁵⁸ Therefore, the “*burnt*” sacrifice is the foundational sacrifice that the other four are designed to expand.

The way of the Lord is defined by a divine pattern revealed in Scripture. Acceptable public worship has an appointed time, an appointed place and an appointed sacrifice. It has an appointed and qualified public ministry. It has qualified public ordinances.

Just as the worship of Abel characterizes the “*way of the Lord*” in the Old Testament, so does “*the way of Cain*” characterize the religious way of apostasy from that divine pattern. Professed houses of God that preach “*another Jesus*” or “*another gospel*” or “*another spirit*” or administer ordinances in order to populate their membership with unregenerate persons are at best counterfeit houses of God and at worst, synagogues of Satan or “*high places*” offering up “*strange fire*.”

Many sincere and truly saved persons attend these “*high places*” or counterfeit houses of God. However, when they participate in these public misrepresentations of worship, their **public** worship is vain and void in the sight of God.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What common principle does personal and public worship share?
2. What are the three aspects of public worship?
3. When and who made the Sabbath?
4. For whom did Jesus say the Sabbath was made for?
5. Does the Scripture ever use the words “of the week” in any precept or description of the Sabbath?
6. Does God apply the Sabbath law to more than a 24-hour period?
7. Does God apply the Sabbath law to more than the regular weekly Sabbath?
8. What kind of creation did the Sabbath remember? Sinful or sinless?
9. Is the Sabbath fulfilled by spiritual rest alone or by an eternal rest of spirit, soul and body in a new sinless creation?
10. How could Cain go out from the presence of an omnipresent God?
11. Does God designate a “place” for public worship?
12. Does the NT “house of God” gather in a “place”?

REQUIRED READING:

Sunday and the Fourth Commandment by Mark Fenison—pp. 93-156
[http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/The Sabbath book.pdf](http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/The_Sabbath_book.pdf)

WEEK 11

LESSON 1–Worship–Part 4–
Divine order of the sexes

LESSON 2–Worship–Part 5–
Divine order of the sexes

LESSON 3–Worship–Part 6–
Congregational Music

WEEK 11 LESSON 1

Worship—Part 4— Divine Order of the Sexes

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to demonstrate the Biblical order is based upon superiority of position rather than person and, (2) to demonstrate that the Biblical order is established upon Creation principles and purposes rather than human customs or tradition and, (3) to demonstrate 1 Corinthians 11:1-15 establishes an additional covering to the hair in the worship services.

INTRODUCTION: The next two lessons are the longest lessons in this course. However, there are no additional reading requirements. This lesson is taken directly out of my book “Baptist Women Exalted.” In this lesson the Biblical principles that marriage is between one man and one woman; that God has designed roles of men and women in the home and church to reveal the relationship between Christ and His Church. Also, that the roles of men in the church are patterned after the threefold ministry of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King.

I. I. THE NATURE OF THIS POSITION

“This subordination does not involve personal character. It does not imply personal inferiority of the woman to the man. The writer does not hesitate to say that in many things the woman is superior to the man; in the nobler qualities that go to make up character, in unselfishness, in ministering to the suffering, in love, the woman is many times superior of the man.

Nor does this subordination touch the question of salvation. In respect to salvation, *‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus’* (Gal. 3:28). To quote this verse in an effort to overthrow the doctrine of woman’s subjection to man is to ignore the context and oppose Scripture with Scripture. This verse teaches that all are saved alike, namely, by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26).

Neither is it a question of ability. It is often claimed for some women that they are able speakers. This is not denied, but ability is not criterion of what is right. A man may be skillful as a gambler, but this is no reason why he should be licensed to gamble. The success of women has had in the pulpit has deceived and turned many away from the once delivered Faith. By such parity of reasoning, it can be proven that Moses did right when he struck the rock (Num. 20:11). He was successful in getting water, but he disobeyed God and thereby forfeited the privilege of entering the promised land. It will be through his marvelous success that the Antichrist will command the worship of men. Read 2 Th. 2:1-11 and Rev 13.

The subordination of the woman to the man is a matter of **position**. It is inferiority of rank rather than of person.” (C.D. Cole, **The Divine Order of the Sexes**, Bryan Station Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky, p. 2)

There is no business, organization, or club that can function in an orderly way without established positions of authority. The home and church are no exceptions to this rule. The only other option is anarchy.

II. THE FACT OF THIS POSITION

The Son holds an inferior position to that of the Father, but He is not an inferior person to the Father but is equally God. Likewise, so is the woman to the man.

Scripture clearly states that, *“Adam was first formed, then Eve”* (1Tim. 2:13). Hence, there is a distinct divine order in the act of creation. *“Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man”* -1Cor. 11:9.

Concerning God’s creative purpose for the man, David says,

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” - Psa. 8:6

Only of the man does the Scripture say that he was made in the **image and glory** of God: **but** the woman is the glory of the man.

For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. - 1Cor. 11:7-9

The Scriptures are clear that it is the man who holds the POSITION of authority while the purpose for the creation of the woman is entirely different:

*And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an **help meet** for him. - Gen. 2:1*

God did not give the woman a position over the man nor a position equal to the man. Her position in God's purpose of creation was an inferior one to that of the man. Remember, we are speaking of **position** and not **person**. This same principle of subordination holds true within the Godhead.

The Father holds a superior position to that of the Son but the Son is not an inferior person.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. - 1Cor. 11:3

As to His person, the Son is equal in every respect in nature and attributes. As to His position, it is for the purpose to facilitate better function and order within the Godhead. God is a God of order (1Cor. 14:33, 40).

Likewise, as to her person, the woman is equal in many respects and superior in others. As to her position, it is for the purpose to facilitate better function and harmony within the family and church.

No type of organization, job or club can function harmoniously without designated positions of authority. Where there is no such position of authority there can only be anarchy and confusion. Likewise, positions of authority are designated by God *for* the home and in His congregations in order that harmony and order can be maintained.

Prior to the fall, there was no problem with Eve being in submission to Adam. Eve possessed a nature that submitted to the will of God without

resistance. She gladly accepted her created purpose and found her fulfillment and joy in serving God in the capacity He designed for her.

However, after the fall, she possessed a nature that was at enmity with God and resisted every design God intended for her to fulfill. She possessed a nature that would not be subject to anyone.

The Fall did not change God's intended design for her the least bit. After the fall, God reaffirmed her position of subjection but now with the complications and results of sin:

*Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be unto thy husband, and **he shall rule over thee.*** - Gen. 3:16

What came natural before the Fall now became cumbersome because of a rebellious nature due to sin. She now possessed the strong natural "desire" for a man and yet possessed a strong natural resentment and resistance toward his position of authority over her.

Grace does not annul God's intended design before the Fall. Instead, it provides a godly "nature" that complies with the intended design for the woman prior to the Fall (Rom. 3:31). God's grace in salvation from sin provides the inner desire to please God by obeying His revealed will:

If ye love me, keep my commandments. - Jn. 14:15

Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. - 1Tim. 2:12

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. - 1Cor. 14:37

This divine order is clearly a Biblical FACT and the woman in subordination to the man is the teaching of the Scriptures.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THIS POSITION

We have discussed the FACT of this subordination, now we shall speak concerning God's PURPOSE in this subordination.

As some have rightly said, “God does all things for His own glory.”

Certainly, God had a purpose in mind when placing the woman in a subjective position and the man in the authoritative position.

Let us examine two passages of Scripture that shed much light upon God’s purpose. The first passage states a **creational** fact and a **natural** purpose; while the second passage gives an additional **spiritual** fact and a **Divine** purpose.

And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. - Gen. 2:23-24

There are at least three things that we should take note of from this first passage:

1. Adam was the SOURCE from which God brought Eve into existence.
2. Because of this, the NATURAL PURPOSE of every male and female is to be brought back together in a marriage relationship.
3. The marriage relationship makes the two ONE FLESH once again.

Keeping this first passage in mind, let us now examine the second passage:

For we are members of His body, of His flesh, of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father, and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and His church. - Eph. 5:30-32

You have noticed that this second passage is identical to the first with the exception that *Christ* and His church are the subjects instead of Adam and Eve as in the first passage. As in the first passage, there are three inferences found in this passage:

God has more in mind than just a natural purpose when giving the command about marriage in Genesis 2:24! He has a spiritual design in mind as well.

1. Christ was the SOURCE from which God brought the church into existence (Mt 16:18).

2. Because of this, the SPIRITUAL PURPOSE of the church is to be brought back together into a marriage relationship with Christ one day in the future (Eph. 5:27).
3. This marriage relationship will bring the two back into ONE.

You must remember that the Ephesians only had the Old Testament at the time of writing, and this play upon words concerning this OT passage would have been very confusing if Paul had not said, this is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

In other words, Paul explains that God had a greater purpose in marriage than just the creational fact and natural purpose. A great “mystery” is a previously hidden truth now revealed.

The truth now revealed is that marriage was designed to reflect a greater spiritual truth and a divine purpose between Christ and the church. The subjective position of the woman is to reflect the subjection of the church to Christ.

If we read the verses that precede this last passage we will see this is exactly what Paul is saying:

Wives SUBMIT yourselves unto your own husbands, AS UNTO THE LORD, 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. Therefore, AS the church is SUBJECT to Christ, SO let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives EVEN AS Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So, ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it EVEN AS the Lord the church: FOR we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. FOR THIS CAUSE shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. THIS IS A GREAT MYSTERY BUT I SPEAK CONCERNING CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.” - Eph. 5:22-32.

Each time a young man and a young girl fall in love and then leave all for each other and join in marriage, we have a picture of Christ leaving His glory to take unto Himself a Bride, His church.

So, you see, that from the beginning, God designed natural marriage to reflect a greater spiritual marriage between Christ and His church.

The natural position of the woman in subjection to the man is designed to reflect the spiritual position of the church in subjection to Christ.

This great spiritual truth finds its fullest expression not only within the home but especially in the Lord's congregations where truth is to be preached, taught and manifested. Christ says that the church is, "*The House of God, which is the church of the Living God, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.*" (1Tim 3:15)

We should expect that just as the home is to reflect the natural order and design of marriage, the church should reflect the spiritual design and order of marriage.

Just as in the Old Testament house of God (the temple) God had commanded that certain positions and dress reflect eternal truths, so likewise, in the New Testament House of God (the church) God uses the members of His assemblies to teach eternal truths, not only to the members, but to visitors both earthly and celestial.

*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers
in heavenly places might be known by (through) the church
the manifold wisdom of God. - Eph. 3:10*

God uses the church to teach the angels in heaven. Peter tells us that the angels do not understand many things and that they are looking into these matters (1 Pet. 1:12). The Bible tells us that certain observances in the church are in part designed to instruct the angels (1 Cor. 11:10). Significantly, insubordination began with the angels with the fall of Satan and one third of the angels in heaven (Rev. 12:3-4,9).

God has designed certain commandments to be observed in the church so that this greater spiritual MYSTERY will be manifest both to men and angels.

IV. THE TEACHING OF THIS POSITION

Men are ordained to hold the offices of leadership in the congregations because they symbolize Christ in office as Prophet, Priest and King.

We have seen that God designed marriage between one man and one woman to reflect a greater spiritual truth between Christ and His church. It is in the congregations that this Divine Purpose is to be made clearly manifested to all. God has ordained that the very functions of men and women in His congregations picture this spiritual subordination of the church to Christ. In the congregations, men picture Christ in His threefold offices: Prophet, Priest and King; whereas the woman is to picture the submissive Bride of Christ.

For instance, as **Prophet**, the man is to fill the duties of those who *speake forth publicly* in the church services (Pastor, Deacon, Teacher, Evangelist, etc.).

As **Priest**, the man is to lead the church in *public prayer*:

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the **MAN** Christ Jesus....I will therefore that **MEN** (Gr. anar) pray everywhere... - 1Tim. 2:5,8*

The Greek term translated “men” is the term that means “male” in distinction from women and children.

As **King**, the man is to fill *all positions of authority* over the church (Pastor, deacon, Song leader, Adult men’s teacher or mixed adult teacher, etc.).

In other words, those commands of Scripture that demand that males fill the authoritative roles within the church are not based upon culture and custom but upon God’s ultimate design from creation (1Tim. 2:12-13) that the man picture Christ in authority over the Church.

As Christ’s representative preaches, teaches or acts as a deacon, the woman is to “*learn in silence with all subjection*” (1Tim. 2:11). Is not this what the church should do when Christ speaks? Therefore, the representative of the church (the woman) is to reflect this truth by her silence and submission when the representative of Christ acts in the behalf of Christ. Every command in the New Testament that denies the woman authority to teach men or hold any office of authority over the church is explicitly said to be

based upon the creational order and design of God and not upon custom or prejudice of men (1Ti 2:12-13; 1Cor 11:7-10; 14:34-35). God has a greater design behind these commands than culture or prejudice.

Paul challenges anyone that would dispute his injunctions concerning the woman's position with these words:

*If any man think himself to be a prophet or **spiritual**, let him acknowledge **that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.** - 1Cor. 14:37*

Paul was careful to base all these commandments (silence, head covering, forbidding to teach men, etc.) upon the position *and* order of the woman in the creation account or "as also saith the Law." Paul knew very well that the false apostles at Corinth (2 Cor. 11) would laugh him to scorn if he commanded these things based upon a revelation to him by Christ of a greater mystery behind marriage (Eph. 5:22-32). But what they could not argue with is the fact that these commandments were consistent with the order and design of creation and in harmony with the Old Testament. Peter gives Sarah as an Old Testament example of such subjection (1Pet. 3:1,5-7) in harmony with Genesis 2:20 and 3:16.

All of these commandments concerning the woman are based upon the very same foundation - God's *purpose in Creation*; hence, they must all stand or fall together. In addition to that, this creational order forms the foundation from which the relationship of the Church to Christ is drawn (Eph. 5:22-32). Denial of the subjective position of the wife to the husband destroys the basis for the church to be in subjection to Christ.

Therefore, the inferior position of the woman to the man cannot be successfully denied without also denying that the Church is to be in submission to Christ! Paul's four-fold cord is not easily broken. **(1)** He says that these are the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). **(2)** He says they are in keeping with the Law of God (1 Cor. 14:34; Gen. 2:20; 3:15; 1 Pet. 3:1,5-7). **(3)** He says that the Congregations submission to Christ is established upon the same respective positions between the man and the woman. **(4)** He always refers to the creational design to support these positions (1Cor. 11:7-9; 1Tim. 2:12-13).

The submissive position of the woman to man stands as long as the fact of creation stands, and as long as the church is to be in subjection to Christ stands.

V. THE SYMBOLS OF THIS POSITION

So far in this study, I have clearly shown that there are TWO applications of Genesis 2:14: **(1)** Natural subjection according to a natural creation order; **(2)** Divine subjection according to God's ultimate purpose for marriage.

The natural subjection has to do with the fact of creation. The woman was placed in a subjective position and the man in an authoritative position.

The Divine subjection has to do with God's purpose to teach the world concerning the relationship between Christ and His church.

Therefore, we see a double picture of subjection. One that is NATURAL and one that is SUPERNATURAL. The natural subjection was designed by God to ultimately reflect the supernatural.

Nature has established natural symbols for both the man and the woman to remind and teach them of their God given positions in the home and in society.

Doth not NATURE itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering.
- 1Cor. 11:14-15

Long hair on a woman is her natural symbol of submission, whereas short hair on a man is his natural symbol of authority. It is significant that in Scripture and secular history that short hair on a woman has been a sign of shame (1Cor. 11:6) and rebellion, and that long hair on a man has been a sign of rebellion (e.g. Absalom, Greek philosophers etc.)

The question is often asked "how long is long and how short is short." This question is quite simple to answer, short enough that it leaves no question that you're a man and long enough that it leaves no question that you're a woman, anything in between is "confusion" and God is not the author of confusion (1Cor. 14:33).

However, God intends that more than this NATURAL order with its NATURAL symbols be displayed in His congregations. In His congregations He intends that the SPIRITUAL order be displayed by Divine symbols.

The man is to remove his hat and remain uncovered while in the place of prayer and prophesying, whereas the woman is to cover her head with a veil or hat (1Cor. 11:4-6).

Therefore, we have NATURAL and SUPERNATURAL positions with corresponding symbols to teach both. The natural symbol was given to the

Long hair on a woman is her NATURAL symbol of her submission to her husband. The covering is her DIVINE symbol of her submission to Christ as His Bride.

woman to ultimately correspond and point to the divine symbol that would be worn in the place of prayer and prophesying.

Therefore, Paul asks, **Dothnotnature itself teachyou?** When a woman refuses to wear the Divine symbol in the place of prayer and prophesying she is in rebellion against the very testimony that nature has given her. Her hair “is given her FOR (Greek Anti, “like” or “corresponding to”) a covering” (1Cor. 11:15). Refusal to wear the divine symbol “is all one AS IF she were shorn” (1Cor. 11:5) in God’s eyes.

*For if the woman **be not covered**, let her **ALSO** be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn (hair cut short) OR shaven (no hair), **LET HER BE COVERED**.* - 1Cor. 11:6.

VI. SYMBOLIC POSITION OF INSUBORDINATION

Godly women who love the Lord Jesus Christ also love His Word. The only way to draw near to the Lord we love is to be obedient to His precious Word.

Many times, throughout the New Testament, the Lord repeatedly commands wives to be subject to their own husbands.

We have discussed thus far the woman’s natural and supernatural relationship to their husband. However, there is one more thing we must emphasize, and that is the position of a rebellious woman before God.

In Paul’s Day, a wife who continued to be disobedient and rebellious toward her husband was taken by her husband and publicly shorn (hair cut short) or shaven (bald). By this shameful act her rebellion was made manifest to all. It put her on the same level as a wife who had been caught in the act of adultery by her husband. She was disgraced and put to shame before her friends and relatives.

Paul takes this shameful picture and applies it to those women who refuse to wear a head covering in the assembly. Before God that is all one and the same **as if** they had already been shorn or shaven:

*But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: For that is even all one **AS IF** she were shaven.* - 1Cor. 11:5.

She dishonors the Lord Jesus by symbolically portraying the church in rebellion against Him. The Lord describes unfaithful congregations as “the Great Whore” and her “harlots” (Rev. 17:5).

If the head covering symbolizes submission and faithfulness to Him, then it should be obvious that being uncovered symbolizes the opposite. This is why Paul instructs those women who refuse to put on the head covering to cut their hair short **in addition to** being uncovered:

*For if the woman BE NOT COVERED, let her **ALSO** be shorn (hair cut short)... - 1Cor. 11:5*

However, no respectable Greek or Jewish woman would consider for a moment cutting their hair short as they considered their long hair their glory. Paul knew this very fact and therefore drove the point home by saying:

*But if it be a shame for a woman to be shaven (bald) or shorn (short hair), **LET HER BE COVERED** - 1Cor. 11:6.*

In essence, Paul is saying if a woman refused to wear the divine symbol of submission in the assembly, then she should **in addition to that**, bear the

<p>It should not be too difficult to see that if the covering symbolizes a faithful and submissive wife, then an uncovered woman must symbolize an unfaithful and unsubmitive wife</p>
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shame she is symbolizing by cutting her natural covering (her hair) short or off altogether. Notice, that her husband is not directed to cut her hair but that she is. This demonstrates that her rebellion

is not against her husband but rather against what he represents—Christ!

In God’s eyes and in the eyes of the church, that woman is symbolizing rebellion against Christ and His authority. Hence, she is instructed to cut her hair short or off in order to feel the shame she is symbolizing.

The terms “**also**” and “**that is all one and the same as if**” demonstrate that her hair has not yet been shorn or shaven at the time of being uncovered. Paul is merely arguing that if she is going to be uncovered, she should also in addition to that be shorn or shaven if she would be consistent with her practice.

VII. WHAT DO OTHER AUTHORITIES SAY?

Since we are dealing with symbols and types and since these can be easily twisted to fit what they are not meant for, and since this writer has no intentions to distort truth, note the following comments made by leading authorities in typology:

1. I.M. HALDEMANN, D.D., author of **The Tabernacle, Priesthood and Offerings**, Page 302:

In the New Testament Christian women are commanded when in public assembly to cover their head; they are commanded to do so because while Christ is the head of the man, the man in the public assembly as the representative of Christ in office bearing and teaching is over the woman and considered the woman's obedience to this ordinance of the Lord. The woman is also the symbol of the church as a body and in covering her head she symbolizes the church surrendering to and owning the headship of Christ. It is the symbol of absolute subjection and obedience.

2. HENRY W. SOLTAU, author of **The Tabernacle, the Priesthood and Offerings**, page 267

In the New Testament the woman is directed to cover her head, 1Cor xi. 3-10, because 'the head of the woman is the man;' whereas the man is to be uncovered, because he is the image and glory of God. In the assemblies therefore of the people of God, the woman, standing as a representative of the Church in subjection to Christ, covers her head; the man, being a type of Christ Himself as the Head of the Church, uncovers his head.

3. W.E. VINE, author of **An Expository Dictionary of the New Testament**, pp. 89, 175 (under "authority" and "unveiled") Moody Paperback edition, 1985

In 1Cor 11:10 (exousia) is used of the veil with which a woman is required to cover herself in an assembly or church,

as a sign of the Lord's authority over the church. Page 89, Vol. 1

Whatever the character of the covering, it is to be on her head as a "sign of authority" (v. 10), R.V., the meaning of which is indicated in verse 3 in the matter of headship, and the reasons for which are given in vv. 7-9 and in the phrase "because of the angels" intimating their witness of, and interest in, that which betokens the headship of Christ. The injunctions were neither Jewish, which required men to be veiled in prayer, nor Greek, by which men and women were alike unveiled. The Apostle's instructions were "the commandments of the Lord" (14:37) and were for all the congregations (vv. 33-34) pp. 175-176, Vol. 4

4. BENJAMIN KEACH, author of **Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible**, p. 19

1Cor xi. 10, "A woman ought to have power on her head," that is, a garment signifying that she is under the power of her husband.

5. CHARLES C. RYRIE, author of **The Role of Women in the Church**, p. 74

The Christian doctrine of order in creation involving subordination requires the Christian practice of manifesting that order in public worship by the veiling of woman.

6. JOHN PIPER and WAYNE GRUDEM, editors of **Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood**, p. 135

Understanding Paul as commanding women to wear a head covering as a sign of submitting to male authority fits best with the preceding verses in the passage. Nothing is clearer in verses 3-9 than that Paul wants the woman to wear a head covering because such adornment appropriately distinguishes women from men. Indeed, the focus on male headship over women in verse 3 shows that Paul wants women to wear a head covering in order to show that they are submissive to male headship.

7. C.D. COLE, author of **The Divine Order of the Sexes**, (Lexington, KY: Bryan Station Baptist Church)—p. 9

The truth of the subordination of the woman to the man has a divinely appointed symbol. This truth is to be symbolized by the woman wearing long hair, and when in church an additional appointed covering. This covering is a sign of headship. Headship means authority. Long hair is the sign by which the wife acknowledges the authority of her husband, who is her natural head; and a hat or veil as an additional covering, when in church, to acknowledge the authority of the man in religious matters.

Haldeman, Soltau and Keach have been standard authorities in typology among conservative Christians. W.E. Vine and his book on NT words has been the standard conservative reference work for years. Ryrice is a well-known and popular conservative scholar. There is a unity of thought between these recognized authorities concerning the respective positions of the man and woman and the symbols of authority.

cis at odds with those who are recognized authorities in this field of study.

VIII. OBJECTIONS ANSWERED CONCERNING THE VEIL

The injunction of Paul was neither Jewish which required the men to be covered nor Greek which had no such requirement for the women. The covering is not a GREEK CUSTOM but an ordinance of God observed by all the congregations.

Objection # 1: Is not Paul simply trying to reinforce a local custom since the violation of it would cause unnecessary reproach upon the church in this community?

Answer: There is no question that the head covering was an important custom in many parts of the Roman world at this time. But in some places, it was more important than in other places.

Each country had distinct differences in dress. None dressed identically alike. Their coverings varied in size, shape, color and material as well as length.

Paul is writing to a Grecian city, and gave no instructions on size, color,

length or shape. The Greeks as a custom did not require woman to wear head coverings at all.

1. The Greeks (both men and women) remained bareheaded in public prayer... (A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures in the NT**, Vol IV, p. 159).
2. In the cities Greeks walked mostly bareheaded (**The Life of the Greeks and Romans** by Guhl & Koner, p. 171).
3. In general, both sexes went bareheaded, but when Greek men traveled... (**Mode in Hats and Headdress**, by Wilcox).
4. As a rule, the Greeks, men and women went bareheaded (**Greece and the Greeks** by Walter Miller, p. 126).
5. Most people did not wear head coverings for their head (**Ancient Greece and the Near East**, by Richard Haywood, p. 398)
6. The Greeks took great pride in the care of his hair and was unlikely to wear any head covering unless traveling or exposed the head to the sun (**Meet the Ancient Greeks**, by Xenophon Leon Messinesi, p. 229).
7. The Greeks remained bareheaded during prayer or sacrifice, as indeed they did in their ordinary outdoor life (**Word Studies in the New Testament** by Vincent, Vol 3, p. 246).
8. The injunctions were neither Jewish, which required men to be veiled in prayer, nor Greek, by which men and women were alike unveiled. The Apostles instructions were the “commandments of the Lord” (14:37) and were for all the congregations (vv. 33-34) (**An Expository Dictionary of the NT Words**, by W.E. Vine, Vol 4, p. 175).

Head coverings were not totally absent from Greek life but they certainly were not a part of their daily or religious life. Head coverings were about as customary as they are here in the United States. Certainly no one would call head covering an American custom. Yet, many women occasionally wear various kinds of hats and scarves at various times of the year here.

Those who argue that Paul is reinforcing either a Jewish or Greek custom have simply not done their homework.

Paul could hardly be restoring peace between two types of culture within the church at Corinth as Paul’s injunctions violated the Jewish custom for men and instituted something new for the Greek women.

Objection #2: Paul is not so much trying to reinforce the custom of wearing a veil but rather is using the veil to reinforce the principle of subjection.

Answer: First of all, we have established with abundant evidence that such a custom did not prevail among the Greeks and that such instruction clearly violated the Jewish men's custom of wearing a prayer cap.

This argument rest upon the assumption that the covering was a Greek custom and the principle of submission was not. However, the reverse is the truth. Paul would never command an uncommon practice to enforce a commonly known principle.

Second, Paul argues that she needs to wear this symbol of authority on her head because of the creative order and presence of angels (vv. 7-10). These reasons would require the need of the covering as a teaching instrument in addition to a right attitude or principle (Eph. 3:10). This means that the covering itself is as necessary to symbolize the right attitude as unleavened bread and wine are necessary to symbolize the attitudes that must be present during the Lord's Supper. Nowhere, in this text does Paul say, I am just trying to establish the "attitude" of subjection instead of the covering.

Third, this argument f lies right in the face of popular objection today that "wearing a head covering does not produce the right attitude in the woman wearing it". This objection makes Paul appear foolish for commanding obedience to something that all acknowledge cannot produce the principle or attitude desired.

If the covering is not necessary but only the principle then why enforce the covering upon this Greek church since they never observed such a custom in the first place?

Finally, this argument fails because the Greeks already knew this principle of submission long before Paul enforced this NEW teaching of the covering:

Happy marriages, of course, were by no means impossible; still as a rule the opinion prevailed of the woman being by nature inferior to the man, and holding a position of a minor with regards to civic rights. This principle has indeed been repeatedly pronounced by ancient philosophers and law givers. (The Life of the Greeks and Romans by Guhl & Koner, p, 187)

Her calling henceforth was to be a housewife, to honor and obey her lord, to bear children, to do house work. (Greece and the Greeks, "Woman's Responsibilities" by Walter Miller, p. 73)

If the principle was the only thing that Paul was really trying to enforce then obviously instituting the covering was foolish as that principle was already well known among the Greeks.

The truth is that the covering was necessary to instruct them in far more than just a principle but was necessary to convey the woman as a TYPE of the church in submission to Christ.

The "covering" as applied to the man makes no sense if understood as hair stacked upon the head. The words "that is even all one the same "AS IF" and "also" defy any application of this covering to the hair. The obvious change of Greek terms when speaking of the hair as a covering demonstrate that the hair is not the same covering under consideration in verses 4-10.

The above objection is not consistent with Greek Culture nor with Scripture. Paul would never enforce an uncommon practice to enforce what was already a common well-known principle. It should be evident that more than just the "principle" of submission of women to men is being enforced by the covering.

Objection #3: The covering in this text refers strictly and only to the hair

as stated in verses 13-14. Being uncovered means having the hair cut short while covered means having long hair. Or being covered means having the hair bundled on top of the head while uncovered means letting the hair hang down loose like the harlots.

Answer: These interpretations are completely impossible if the text is to be dealt with honestly.

First, verses 5-6 completely deny that the covering can be long hair.

Notice the wording:

"But every woman that prayeth or prophesying, having her head UNCOVERED, dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one AS IF she were shaven. For if the woman BE NOT COVERED, let her ALSO be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered."

Considering the "long hair" interpretation first, this would mean that Paul is guilty of the nonsense of instructing woman with short hair (no

covering) to cut their hair short (shorn) or completely off (shaven). What is the point in “**also**” cutting her hair short or completely off if her hair is already short (uncovered)? If her hair is already short (uncovered) what sense does it make to say that short hair “*is even all one as if*” she had short hair? There would be no “*as if*” about it. This makes Paul speak foolishly. Moreover, Paul is referring to something that can be put on and taken off at will. You can’t take off and put back on your hair at will.

The “stacked hair” interpretation does no better with this language. If to be “*covered*” means to stack your hair on top of your head, then it makes no sense in warning men not to “cover” their head! Men never stacked their hair upon their head anyway, especially Greeks! Why warn men not to do something they never did anyway! Second, having her hair let down may let her have the appearance of harlots but it certainly is not **as if** she already has short hair or no hair. In fact, the reverse is truer; her hair let down demonstrates that she indeed does have long hair and she is not shorn or shaven.

Hair makes no sense in verses 4-10 as the covering but the hat or veil does. Verses 11-16 are additional arguments to support the veil. One of the several additional arguments for wearing the veil is the natural covering of the hair in verses 13-15.

Another reason that the covering does not refer to the hair in any way is the testimony of the early congregations who lived near the apostolic age:

*The testimonies of Tertullian and Chrysostom show that these injunctions of Paul prevailed in the congregations (M.R. Vincent, **Word Studies in the N.T.**, Vol. 2, p. 787).*

*For indeed it is “on account of the angels” that he saith women must be veiled (Tertullian, **The Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Vol. III, p. 688).*

*In the Scriptures of the catacombs the women have a close-fitting headdress, while the men have short hair (A.T. Robertson, **Word Studies in the N. T.** Vol. IV, p. 162).*

Does not verse 15 say that hair is given her “for” a covering? A.T. Robertson say of this word “for”:

It is not in the place of a veil, but ANSWERING TO (anti, in the sense of anti in John 1:16) as a permanent endowment (Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 162).

Paul argues that even nature teaches the woman that she is to be covered in the assembly as nature has endowed her with a covering that ANSWERS TO or gives support for such an artificial covering. This Greek word “anti” is used in 1Peter 3:21 which obviously teaches that Baptism is a figure that CORRESPONDS TO the ark being lifted by water in the Old Testament (1 Pet. 3:20). The hair is a CORRESPONDING covering that is given to her by nature.

Finally, the Greek word for “covering: in verse 15 is entirely different than the Greek work for “covering” in verses 4-6. In verse 15 the Greek word *peribolaion* is used whereas in verses 4-6 the Greek work *katakaluptai* is used. The Greek term *peribolaion* is used elsewhere to refer to things that reflect natural coverings created by God (Heb. 1:12) whereas *katakaluptai* refers to something that you can place down upon the head, such as a hat or veil. Current Greek usage for *katakaluptai* refers to hats and veils but not the hair. The use of *katakaluptai* in the Greek Version of the Old Testament is restricted to an artificial or cloth veil and never for the hair (Num. 5-18; Gen. 38:15; Ex. 26:34; 29:22; etc.).

<p>Paul is not going to spend 16 verses in a critical letter to this church just to conclude by telling them what he has said doesn't really matter or end by telling them to wear to church what they could not help wearing (hair).</p>

Objection#4: Does not 1 Corinthians 11:16 show that the congregations had no other custom but the hair?

Answer: No. The very opposite is being argued. Paul first tells them that there is a divine order (v. 3) and that in the place of prayer and prophesying this

order is manifested in the wearing of the covering by the woman (vv. 4-6). This covering should be worn for several reasons: First because it reflects the creative order (vv. 7-9); Second, because of the presence of the angels (v. 10). Third, because it makes common sense (vv. 11-15) as even Nature supports it by corresponding natural endowments (vv. 13-15). Last, verse 16 addresses “anyone” that refuses to conform to these apostolic injunctions. Such resistance is without support from other congregations as all other congregations have no other practice or “custom” than what Paul has

commanded in verses 3-6. Verses 7-15 are given as additional arguments to obey verses 3-6. If “anyone” continues to be contentious in light of all this evidence for the head covering, they stand alone.

The objection requires one to accept a contradiction between Scriptures (1Co 11:5 with 1Co 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:10-11). Gill’s interpretation resolves this contradiction completely. Covered women are qualified to participate under the male leadership in prayer and prophesying.

Objection #5: If women put on a hat, then, they are allowed to pray and prophesy in the church according to these instructions.

Answer: “Praying and prophesying” have reference to the worship service as it consisted of praying and prophesying. All those present participate in these acts under the one who leads them. This does not mean that each individual lead in these things or participates individually but rather as a group they participate under those who publicly take the lead in prayer and prophesying. The function of a leader is to represent the rest in the act. Women who come uncovered are not qualified to lead others or participate under the leadership of men (1Co 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-13). Such a conclusion contradicts the plain precepts that are stated later in I Corinthians 14:34-37 and in 1 Timothy 2:11-13).

“Let the woman learn in silence, but I suffer not a woman to teach nor usurp authority over the man but to be in silence”

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Are the Biblical relations between man and woman based upon their persons or their positions?
2. Are the Biblical positions based upon cultural traditions or upon God’s creative purposes and order?
3. What text in Ephesians 5 provides a Biblical basis for the positions of man and woman to be instructive about Christ’s relationship to the church?
4. How do the offices of prophet, priest and king reflect the position of men in the home and church?
5. How does the restrictions of the woman relate to the church’s relationship to Christ as prophet, priest and king?

WEEK 11 LESSON 2

Worship—Part 5— Divine Order of the Sexes—Part 2

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to demonstrate the Biblical order is based upon superiority of position rather than person and, (2) to demonstrate that the Biblical order is established upon Creation principles and purposes rather than human customs or traditions and, (3) to demonstrate 1 Corinthians 11:1-15 establishes an additional covering to the hair in the worship services.

INTRODUCTION: This lesson is taken directly out of my book “Baptist Women Exalted.” In this lesson the Biblical principles that marriage is between one man and one woman; that God has designed to roles of men and women in the home and church to reveal the relationship between Christ and His Church. Also, that the roles of men in the church are patterned after the threefold ministry of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King.

Continued -

Dr. John Gill, a recognized expert in Jewish writings and early customs says of the phrase “praying and prophesying:

Ver. 5 But every woman that prayeth and prophesieth: *Not that a woman was allowed to pray publicly in the congregation, and much less to preach or explain the word, for these things were not permitted them: see 1Co xiv. 34,35, 1Tim. ii. 12; but it designs any woman that joins in public worship with the minister in prayer, and attends on the hearing of the word preached, or sings the praises of God with the congregation (John Gill, Gill’s Commentary, Vol. VI, Romans to Revelation, p. 222).*

This objection rests solely upon the assumption that the covering was an established CUSTOM among the Greeks. Greek women did not wear a veil. This interpretation would require the Christian Greek women to establish it as a Greek custom. Neither custom nor context supports this theory. Like the Lord's Supper, this ordinance is a church ordinance and is to be observed only when assembled.

Objection #6: Paul is not restricting this to the worship services but he is applying this to everyday life. The woman should always be covered in public.

Answer: This objection fails for many reasons. First, it rests upon the assumption that Paul is reinforcing a cultural practice but as proven already the Greeks had no such cultural practice.

Moreover, the immediate context explicitly refers to the place of prayer and prophesy or the public worship service. This is evident because the plural "ordinances" introduces this topic followed by the ordinance of the Lord's Supper and the use of gifts in the assembly. Chapters 11-14 repeatedly qualify the context by the words "when ye come together in one place" (vv. 17, 20, 33, 34).

Moreover, the presence of angels is given as a reason to wear the veil. Since the guardian angel is always present, such an interpretation would require the veil to be worn 24 hours a day (in bed, in the shower, etc.). However, angels are present at the worship assembly for special instructions (Eph. 3:10).

Finally, where else but the assembly can all the church members be present to "Judge in yourselves" (v. 13) if it is comely for a woman to be pray uncovered. Where else but the assembly could she be viewed praying by all the members?

Objection #7: Isn't this a Roman Catholic doctrine that has invaded New Testament Congregations?

This objection rests solely upon the assumption that Roman Catholicism originated it. This is a falsehood. Tertullian, a Baptist, taught it 150 years before Catholicism came into existence. The saints that were persecuted by Catholics wore it in the catacombs.

Answer: We have already shown that Tertullian (who is claimed by Baptists) taught the head covering and he certainly predated the Roman Catholic Church by at least 150 years. Moreover, the persecuted Christians in the catacombs wore this covering and they were certainly not Roman Catholics. It

is strange that those who argue in this fashion practice the Roman Catholic Holidays (Easter, ChristMASS) which are without Scriptural command or sanction and yet reject the covering which is clearly taught in the Scriptures. Just because Roman Catholics practice or teach something is no ground for rejecting it (they teach the Trinity, too).

Objection #8: If we must obey this command, then ought we not to obey Paul where he says, “Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss”?

Answer: First, we have established that the covering was not the general custom of the Greeks, whereas, this command along with the idea of foot washing are customary.

The “holy kiss” and “feet washing” were commands of cultural hospitality whereas the covering was not considered as such in Greek culture and these injunctions violated Jewish culture among Jewish men. The covering falls under the “ordinances” of Christ (v. 2). “feet washing” as follows:

Between individuals of the same sex, and in a limited degree between those of different sexes, the kiss on the cheek as a mark of respect or the act of salutation has AT ALL TIMES been customary in the East, and can hardly be said to be extinct even in Europe. (Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical

Literature, by McClintock, Strong, Vol. V-K-MC. p. 112).

We can also distinguish between the head covering and the “holy kiss” and (1) The head covering is specifically called an ordinance (1Cor. 11:2). Nowhere is the “holy kiss” or “feet washing” called such.

(2) Paul supported the wearing of a Covering with Scripture (1Cor. 11:9-10). Nowhere are the “holy kiss” and “feet washing” provided that kind of support (3) Paul gives the presence of Angels and Nature as reasons to obey the head covering injunction (1Cor. 11:10-13). Nowhere are the “holy kiss” and “feet washing” provided with such support. Both the “holy kiss” and “feet washing” were cultural acts of hospitality. The covering is not a cultural act of hospitality nor a cultural act at all since it violates the Jewish culture for the man and is non-existent in the Greek culture for the woman.

The church may have only two symbolic Gospel ordinances, but not just two ordinances. Church discipline, ordination, etc. The head covering immediately precedes Paul’s introduction of “ordinances” (v. 2).

Objection #9: There are only two church ordinances and the head covering are not one of them.

Answer: There are only two church GOSPEL ordinances but there are many church ordinances. The term “ordinance”

simply means a “command.” In the Great Commission the Lord Jesus infers there are many ordinances or commands given to the church to observe (Mt. 28:20).

The fact that Paul introduces the covering as one of the plural “ordinances” he is about to discuss (1Cor. 11:2) includes it with the Lord’s Supper as a church ordinance (1Cor. 11:17-34).

Objection #10: A Woman shouldn’t wear such a symbol if she is not in submission to her husband at home or to the position of men in the assembly.

Answer: The objector is correct. The same can be said of those who are not fit to observe the symbols of the Lord’s Supper. However, in both cases it will be readily manifested that they are not right with God and man. They should speedily seek to correct the problem and then obediently partake of the symbols as soon as possible.

Size, color and material are not considered essentials or they would have been stated clearly.

Objection #11: If we are to wear such a covering today, it must be like the ones that the Corinthians wore, or we are just mocking these instructions. **Answer:**

Paul gives absolutely no instructions as to the size, color, length or kind of material used for such a covering. What would the Greek Christians at Corinth use? Only secular history affords us any clue to this question. When Greek women did wear a covering on certain occasions there was no standard size, color or length:

- (1) Women covered their heads with a VARIETY of veils made of wool or linen, earlier versions were SMALL, draped over the head simply.... (Fashion in History, by Marybelle S. Bigelow, p. 36, “The Greeks.”)
- (2) These LITTLE white veils were small pieces of linen, sheer and transparent, so fine, indeed that they were often likened to SPIDER WEBS...(Ibid.)
- (3) The headdress of the Greek Women consisted of nets, hair-bags, or kerchiefs, sometimes covering the whole head... (Word Studies in the NT, by Vincent, Vol. 3, p. 246).

The size, material and color of the covering is not specified by Paul; therefore, it shouldn’t be made a point of contention. Obviously, someone who merely puts a ribbon in their hair is not interested in displaying something visible enough to be recognized for what it is supposed to teach. There is room for personal convictions here and liberty for others to follow their own convictions.

The ordinance includes the saved which are of the feminine gender. Lost women do not possess a submissive nature to Christ.

Objection #12: Only married women should wear this symbol as virgins are not married.

Answer: The text uses the Greek term *gune* which is inclusive of all of the feminine gender. Although according to Jewish custom, the betrothal is considered as good as marriage, the wedding between the church and Christ has not yet occurred.

The intent of the instructions in Genesis 2:24 is that God has designed women and men to marry.

Hence, all saved girls and women should be disposed to properly picture the Bride of Christ as a faithful betrothed virgin waiting for that wedding day. Those married women should especially consider it their joy to be a picture of a submissive wife as instructed in Ephesians 5:22-32.

Objection #13: How long is long and how short is short?

An obedient spirit is always more precious before God than any outward token of such. However, an obedient spirit will conform outwardly to God's commands or it is not an obedient spirit.

Answer: Long enough on a woman so that it cannot be regarded as "short" and short enough on a man that it cannot be regarded as "long." **If it is questionable it is wrong.**

IX. OBJECTIONS TO THE WOMAN'S POSITION

There are arguments advanced by some to counter the Biblical evidence for the respective positions of men and women as presented in this book.

We feel that these arguments are based upon insufficient data and/or unfair conclusions. Some of these arguments are as follows:

1. Paul was a woman hater:

Some have suggested that Paul had a strong bias against women and these injunctions reflect purely a male bias.

However, this interpretation does not harmonize with the fact that Paul instructed men to love their wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:23-24). Nor does it harmonize with his injunctions to love their wife as their own self.

Peter told men that if they mistreated their wives, God would not answer their prayers (1Pet. 3:7).

We feel that this is a forced interpretation and that it has no valid foundations.

2. Paul is voicing his own personal opinions but not God's:

Others have suggested that since some of these passages are found with the personal pronoun "I" that Paul is merely voicing his own personal opinion rather than the Lord's on this subject.

However, this argument fails to consider the fact that whenever Paul offers his own personal opinion instead of the revealed will of God, he always makes it very clear that it is his own personal opinion as in I Corinthians 7:12 (but even here he speaks under inspiration - *"I think that I also have the Spirit of God"* - 1 Cor. 14:40).

Moreover, not only do we find the complete absence of such an admission in the context(s) in question we find the absolute denial that it is his personal opinion instead of God's revealed will.

For instance, I Corinthians 14:34 tells the Congregations that this injunction is in harmony with the "law" (Peter gives Old Testament examples of such in I Peter 3:5-6; Gen. 2:20, 3:16) or the Old Testament.

"...they are COMMANDED to be under obedience, as also saith the law..." 1 Cor. 14:34

However, Paul does not leave his command with a mere harmony with the Scriptures but clearly states that what he is commanding is the revealed will of God:

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you ARE THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD." 1Cor. 14:37

We feel that this objection does not deal with the Biblical evidence fairly but is a forced interpretation.

3. These commandments reflect only the culture of Paul's day and hence are not for us today

This is by far the most popular objection to these passages today.

However, such an objection could possibly be used for any command of the Bible that a person did not want to obey since every command was written in a time and culture foreign to our own.

Is there any valid evidence why we must interpret these passages according to cultural customs?

First, the Biblical context does provide reasons for these injunctions; however, not once do any of the Biblical writers suggest or state that "custom" is a reason for these injunctions.

Second, the reasons that are provided by the Biblical writers completely exclude "culture" or "custom" as possible reasons reject the inspiration of the Scriptures reject Him (Mt. 5:18; Jn. 5:46-47; 10:35).

As we have seen already, Paul makes it clear that these commands are in harmony with the Old Testament Law of God (1Co 14:34) and that these are the commands of the Lord (1Cor. 14:37) rather than cultural injunctions.

In addition to these reasons, the only other reason given by Paul is a PRE-cultural one. Paul states that these commandments are to be obeyed because they reflect God's creative purpose and design for the male and female (1Tim. 2:13-14).

Paul's argument is that God has designed men and women physically and psychologically for certain roles and that violation of these commandments reverses God's creative design for them.

To argue that these commands are the results of a culture when other grounds are explicitly stated that clearly exclude "culture" or "customs" is to handle the Word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2). We feel that this objection completely ignores and distorts the obvious Biblical evidence to the contrary.

4. The Bible was written by men and is subject to error.

This is a common objection used by those who reject the inspiration of the Scriptures.

However, it is only necessary to point out that the one who claims to be our Lord and Savior, believed that “every jot and every tittle” was completely inspired and divinely preserved forever (Mt 5:18) and that those who reject the inspiration of the Scriptures reject Him (Mt. 5:18; Jn. 5:46-47, 10:35)

If only certain parts are inspired while others are not, pray tell who can we trust to tell us which is which?

We feel that this objection makes a complete mockery of Christ and the ministry as well as any person who may use this and still claim to be a “Christian.”

5. Since there are examples found in the Bible of woman in leadership positions, any interpretation that forbids it must be wrong.

However, in all fairness, it must be admitted that we have multitude of examples in the Bible that contradict a great deal of Biblical precepts.

For instance, who would claim that lying is acceptable with God because we find a multitude of examples, where otherwise godly people, tell lies (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rahab, etc.)?

Should we automatically conclude that since we can find contradictory examples, that these examples must overrule the precept that forbid it or that these precepts must be wrongly interpreted?

What should be our approach to this objection then? I think it is only fair to examine each supposed example and determine from the context whether or not it really conflicts with these precepts or really demonstrates that these precepts are misinterpreted.

a. Deborah

Probably one of the most popular examples used to support women in public offices or in the ministry is Deborah.

However, there are some important contextual details that these interpreters fail to tell you.

For instance, they fail to tell you what the state of Israel was when Deborah judged it. Those days are repeatedly characterized by these words:

“In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes” - Judg. 21:25

The Prophet Isaiah tells us that women in positions of authority over men and over a nation is an indication of such an apostate condition:

“As for my people, children are their oppressors and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.” - Isa. 3:12

Another significant detail that these interpreters overlook from the Biblical context is that Deborah initially refused to take the lead because she knew it was God’s command that a man be responsible for leadership (Judges 4:6) and that if the man did not lead it would be to his “shame” that God would resort to the use of a woman (Judges 4:9). Significantly, in Hebrews 11 it is the coward Barak that received the credit instead of the woman.

We feel that these admissions by Deborah and the condition of Israel reinforces these precepts and demonstrates that when a church or a nation places woman in authority over men it is visible indication of a rebellious state as characterized in the book of Judges and as clearly stated in Isaiah 3:12:

“As for my people, children are their oppressors and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.”

b. Phillip’s Daughters

Another example in Scripture used to prove that these precepts must be interpreted wrongly is the case of Philip’s four daughters in Acts 21:8-9.

However, there is nothing stated in the context to indicate that they violated any of the precepts in question.

All that is said is that they prophesied. It does not say when or where they did their prophesying. It does not say they prophesied in a church. Everything is built upon “silence” and “assumption”.

If we are going to make assumptions from silence, it is easy to assume that their prophesying was done in a manner consistent with these precepts rather than in opposition to them.

For instance, if we are going to assume they prophesied in the church, we can assume they prophesied among the women as did Miriam in Exodus

15:20 and as instructed in Titus 2:3-5 and then that prophecy was related to the church as was Miriam's.

At the very least, this example is based more on silence than on specifics. Since it is possible to interpret this example in harmony with the precepts in question, it cannot be used to dogmatically disprove them.

Don't confuse 'position' with 'person'. The Bible teaches more than equality of 'persons' as it teaches us to treat others better than ourselves. However, the Bible does not teach equality of positions or authority in the home.

c. Phoebe the "servant"

Another example used to support the position of women in leadership roles in the church is Phoebe in Romans 16:2.

It is argued that since the Greek term translated "servant" is used in its masculine form for the office of deacon, that its feminine form when used of Phoebe must be a "deaconess."

However, these interpreters fail to tell you that this Greek term is primarily used in the New Testament in the sense of a "servant" or one without any authority (e.g. Jn. 2:5).

Moreover, the context does not demand that she holds the church office of "deaconess."

For instance, she is able to travel and this indicates that she does not have a family to care for and therefore is most likely one of those "widows" described in I Timothy 5:9-13 that was qualified for church support.

Second, Paul's description of her as one who has been the "*succourer of many*" perfectly fits the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 5:10.

Third, she may well have come to the church at Rome to minister to that church as described and directed in Titus 2:3-5.

Finally, it took a man in the office of authority to command the church at Rome to help her fulfill her service, which at least implies she held no office of authority so that she could command their obedience.

Again, this example more naturally harmonizes with the precepts in question. As for the other interpretation, it must overcome the masculine qualifications for the office of Deacon as set forth in I Timothy as well as all the precepts that forbid women (at least in Paul's day) to teach or usurp authority over men!

Therefore, this objection must be dismissed as a forced and unnatural argument.

d. Priscilla

One final example used to overthrow these explicit and clear precepts is the case of Priscilla in Acts 18:26.

Again, however, there is nothing stated in the context that must be interpreted to be in conflict with these precepts. For instance, this text does not state that this teaching was done in church.

The fact that Aquila's name is mentioned first indicates that Aquila led in this discussion. Moreover, there is nothing to suggest that Priscilla usurped authority over Apollos but merely attended this discussion with her husband. It is certain that Priscilla was not involved apart from the authority and supervision of her own husband in this matter.

However, grant that she did usurp authority over a man here and still you only have an example of a violation of the precepts in mention.

This case cannot be used as a "proof" that these precepts are invalid or that they are wrongly interpreted.

X. WHAT DO THESE PRECEPTS MEAN?

The meaning of these precepts that forbid women usurping authority over men is not hidden or unclear but is spelled out by the Biblical writers in no uncertain terms.

There are three basic Divine intentions behind these precepts: (1) They express the Positional order God intended from Creation. (2) They express the Protection that God designed from creation. (3) They express the Pictorial teaching that God designed from Creation.

All these precepts are based upon God's design for the roles of men and women from creation.

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him a help meet for him." - Gen. 1:18

"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man." - 1 Cor. 11:8-9

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was in the transgression." - 1 Tim. 2:13-14

“For the husband is the head of the wife, EVEN AS Christ is the head of the church For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I SPEAK OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.” - Eph. 5:23, 31-32

1. The Creative Positions

There is no institution or fraternity upon the face of the earth that would even think of abolishing *positions* of authority as only chaos and anarchy would be the result.

However, this is exactly what some Christians want in the home. They want equality in position.

Don't confuse “position” with “person.” The bible teaches more than equality of “persons” as it teaches us to treat others better than ourselves. However, the Bible does not teach equality of Positions or authority in the home or church.

God knew that the home needed structure so that confusion and rebellion against God would be kept in check.

This positional authority is no more degrading to the woman as it is for the man or Christ when the Apostle says:

“But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” - 1 Cor. 11:3

Mothers teach their children to respect and obey them because that is right and it is God's revealed will as the Parent holds the position of authority over the children.

However, the very same Biblical context that places the parents over the children places the husband over the wife. The woman cannot demand of the children what she refuses to obey herself.

It is clear that the headship of the man in the home is directly based upon and related to the headship of Christ over the church (Eph. 5:22-24). The “headship” of the man can no more change than the “headship” of Christ over the Church.

If a woman concedes that it is God's will that her husband is to be the head of the house by divine appointment, then it is unreasonable and irrational to suggest that as soon as the family departs the home and enters

the church that God approves of an order in the church that reverses the roles ordained in the home. That makes God the author of confusion. It is more natural to believe that these precepts in question are in perfect harmony with God's order in creation and in the home as well as in the church.

If God has appointed the headship of the man in the home, God cannot but be the author of confusion if He reverses that order in the church.

Hence, these precepts are in perfect harmony with God's revealed will for the home and are very logical and necessary for the order and spiritual growth of the family.

2. The Creator's Protection

God created the man physically superior to the woman for the purpose that the man would protect her and the children from harm. In general, God created the man with a more predominate "rationale" drive to *protect* the woman from deception (1Tim. 2:14). That does not mean women are irrational.

In general, God created the woman with a more predominate "emotional" drive to *protect* and nurture her children. That does not mean that men are not "emotional."

I Corinthians 14:34 commands the wife to ask her husband at home if she is to be taught rather in the church. Why? First because God holds the man responsible for the spiritual growth of his family. Second, no other man should be allowed to take his place simply because the woman will "bond" with the one who provides her spiritual needs on a continuing basis. How many times have we read of Pastors and counselors falling into sexual sins with their female members and clients? Why? Simply because the Pastor or counselor replaced the husband as the spiritual leader and teacher of the woman in question.

God commands the woman to look to her husband as her teacher in order to *protect* her from "bonding" with another man.

The man is held responsible by God to teach his children and wife (Gen. 18:19; Eph. 6:4).

If a woman concedes that it is God's will that her husband is to be the head of the house by divine appointment, then it is unreasonable and irrational to suggest that as soon as the family departs the home and enters the church that God approves of an order in the church that reverses the roles ordained in the home. That makes God the author of confusion.

3. The Creative Picture

The Bible teaches us that there will be no marriage in heaven but that we will be as the angels.

God has a greater design in marriage other than reproduction. Ephesians 5:23-32 tells us that God's design behind marriage was to picture the relationship between Christ and His church. The man is to represent Christ in His threefold

office as Prophet, Priest and King while the woman is to represent the Bride of Christ under the submissive instruction and leadership of the man.

Hence, the headship of the husband and the subjection of the wife is meant to be a visible picture of the headship of Christ over the church. To reject or reverse this creative picture is to violate the intended picture God has designed.

Therefore, you cannot assert POSITIONAL equality of the woman with the man without asserting the equality of the church POSITIONALLY with Christ.

Ephesians 5 may teach mutual "submission" to one another but it does not teach mutual "positions" to one another. If Christ is the "head" of the church, then God intends that the husband be the "head" of the wife.

It is highly inconsistent with common sense and with the Bible to teach the headship of the man at home but teach the opposite in the church.

Congregations that teach the headship of the man at home but allow women to take leadership positions over men in the church violate the Bible and common sense.

XI. THE QUESTION OF SILENCE?

Let your women keep silence in the congregations: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the Law." - 1 Cor. 14:34

To what extent are we to understand this command to be silent in the congregations?

First, the apostle makes it clear that this command is not limited just to the church at Corinth as he explicitly says “*in the congregations.*” Second, in I Timothy 2:11-13 Paul makes it clear that it is based upon the creative order and nature of men and women.

In I Corinthians 14 the subject is speaking publicly in the assembly (tongues and prophecy). It is in this context of PUBLIC SPEAKING before the assembly that this command is given.

In I Timothy 2:11 it is qualified to mean that **no form of public speaking that would appear to exercise spiritual authority over men** is to be allowed. Hence, this command restricts women from taking any kind of vocal or positional leadership role before the assembly. This would include asking questions (1Cor. 14:35) as questions can be so worded to instruct and rebuke.

However, it does not appear that answering a question when asked would be inappropriate, such as, their salvation experience before the assembly, votes to baptize them, or choice of a hymn selection. Neither would it appear that singing a solo would violate these injunctions. To demand that she cannot sing unless accompanied by her husband would limit singing to only married women whose husbands could sing. Some man (song leader) can give the introduction if one is needed before the assembly, but she is sufficiently confined within the guidelines of the music so that no authority is usurped.

What about women who have no husband? Obviously, they cannot ask their husbands at home? Older women are to be the teachers of younger women (Tit. 2:3-5). The Pastor accompanied with his wife can also answer questions after the services.

Although women cannot teach or usurp authority over men, they can teach and instruct other women and children in the Sunday school (Tit. 2:3-5). They can also be used by the Lord in the area of hospitality (1Tim. 5:10).

The only passage of Scripture that has been interpreted to contradict these clear injunctions against women speaking publicly before the assembly is I Corinthians 11:5. Here Paul prohibits women to pray or prophesy without being veiled. The assumption of many is that if they are veiled then they can pray and prophesy in the assembly.

However, this “assumption” would pit one Scripture against two clear Scriptures to the contrary.

I Corinthians 11:5 does not have to be interpreted this way. There are at least two other possible interpretations that do no violence to the context and yet harmonize with the other clear injunctions.

Charles Ryrie suggests that I Corinthians 11 and 14 should be interpreted according to the primary subject matter of each context. He suggests that I Corinthians 11 is dealing with the subordinate *position* of women whereas I Corinthians 14 is dealing with the *activity* of women in the public assembly:

*Paul was not dealing there with the question of women's praying and prophesying. The question which evoked the answer recorded in Chapter 14 was the question of the proper use of spiritual gifts. At this point in the epistle he was dealing with the question of public ministry of women. In other words, Chapter 11 concerns women's position and Chapter 14 their activity in the public assembly - Charles Ryrie, **The Role of Women in the Church**. (Moody Press, pp. 76-77)*

There is absolutely no question that Ryrie's conclusion is correct from a contextual point of view. But why mention the words "pray and prophesy" at all in conjunction with women? This interpretation is certainly better than pitting Scripture against Scripture but still it leaves a question.

However, an even more satisfying interpretation of I Corinthians 11:5 is that Paul is referring to their PARTICIPATION in prayer and prophesying through the leadership of a man in the church. That is, they cannot participate in the worship service unveiled. Whenever a man leads the church in prayer or prophesying, the rest of the church participate by representation not by individual expression.

John Gill points out that the whole worship service was designated by the terms "*pray and prophesy*" rather than *individual* expression (Gill's Commentaries, Vol. VI. 1 Cor. 11:5).

XII. MODEST APPAREL

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with

braided hair or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works - 1Tim. 2:9-10.

Have you ever noticed that the Bible has much to say about the apparel of women but next to nothing to say about the apparel of men? Why is this? The answer is very simple. The sexual drive of the man is highly aroused by the revealed form of the woman more so than the woman is toward the form of a man.

Simply stated, the Bible speaks of the “attire of a harlot” as clothes or the lack thereof that entices men to commit adultery or fornication first in their mind and then in actuality.

Presumably, a godly woman would not desire to dress in such a way to cause men to sin. The Bible provides two basic principles for dress and style so that godly woman can avoid being such a stumbling block to men.

The principle provided in the above text is **modesty**. This term is a translation of the Greek word *kosmos* where we get our English term “cosmetics.” It means an “orderly arrangement.” The contextual definition of this “orderly arrangement” includes clothing and arrangement of hair and face in such a way that it “**professeth godliness.**”

What do the words “**professeth godliness**” mean? Perhaps the best way to understand those term is to look at the opposite. The ungodly woman arranges herself in such a way to entice and seduce men. She dresses to reveal her form and figure.

Clothing that “**professeth godliness**” is arranged in such a way to hide, conceal and avoid any kind of “come on” to the opposite sex. Godly apparel is not form fitting and scanty but loose fitting and fully covering those sexual areas that men’s eye is looking for.

Paul is not forbidding the moderate use of make-up or jewelry or pretty hair styles. He is not forbidding women to be attractive. What he is forbidding is the emphasis of sexual attractiveness and undue attention being drawn to self rather than to the Lord.

Your clothing communicates your personality or inner self. This is why Peter tells women to adorn themselves after the inward man or a meek and quiet spirit. Your clothes should not emphasize your sexuality but your spirituality.

The second principle the Bible provides for appropriate dress for women deals with the proper style of clothing. Deuteronomy 22:5 demands a clear and distinct separation between male and female clothing styles. God made them male and female and expects them to appear that way both in clothing and hair styles (1 Cor. 11:14-15).

One lady writer well says concerning this verse

*the emptiness of a statement as 'my pants are feminine' is shown by one clear example: what if a man would say 'my skirt is masculine'?! ... How would you react dear lady, if your hairy-chested and hairy-legged husband attempted to justify his wearing a skirt by pronouncing it masculine? - Patti Williams, **Schizophrenic Women**, (Hephzibah House, Wino Lake, IN).*

Prior to the unisex movement in America (1960's) the distinctive male attire was pants and the distinctive female attire was a dress. This fact is demonstrated by the symbols on bathroom doors and the phrase "*the man wears the pants in the family*" both of which clearly identify pants as masculine attire.

It is interesting that since the unisex movement has adopted pants as its unisex symbol of clothing, there has been a greater percentage of divorce, affairs and increase of homosexuality.

*It is vitally important for boys to identify with males and for girls to identify with females. Without such identification, children may later suffer sexual maladjustment's in marriage or be inclined toward homosexuality. - Paul D. Meier, Frank B. Minirth, Frank Wichern, **Introduction to Psychology & Counseling**, p. 110.*

Certainly, the style of clothing is not the only factor but it is a significant factor. Children between the ages of 6-8 identify with their role model visually. Since the sexual revolution of the 60's each new generation has been more sexually and homosexually permissive.

The kind of clothes you wear will affect your personality. One lady writer tried a little experiment. One day she wore her old mini skirt and black boots, the next day she wore a pair of pants and the last day she wore a modest dress while taking note of her attitude and actions each day. The result was that

she definitely noted a change of personality and actions each day toward men. She acted more submissive and feminine in the dress. Certainly, a *modest* dress does not correct personality faults but it does tend to influence a woman to be more feminine.

Mrs. Williams began her tract on this subject with these provocative words “*A woman who is causing problems in the body of Christ is either not dressed properly or not under submission to her husband*” (Ibid.).

God is not the author of confusion. Why stay in a gray area when you can wear a style that even bathroom doors define as definitely feminine? Why adopt a questionable style when you don’t have to? Why? unless it is to revolt against principles that are unquestionably godly (Rom 8:7)?

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Does Paul use the same Greek term for hair in verse 15 as he does for the covering in the previous verses?
2. If the previous covering is referring to hair, then how could an uncovered woman (woman without long hair) be instructed in addition to her short hair to be also “shorn” (hair cut short) or “shaven” (bald)?
3. How should the command for women to be silent in the church be interpreted and applied?
4. How long is long and how short is short when it comes to hair?
5. How does 1 Tim. 2:10 define “modest apparel” in parallel language?

WEEK 11 LESSON 3

Worship—Part 6— Congregational Music

LESSON GOALS: The goal for this lesson is to provide Biblical guidelines that define appropriate lyrics and music to be used in the public worship service.

INTRODUCTION: Today's seeker friendly congregations use all forms of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) as the primary tool to draw the lost world (youth primarily) into the congregational services in order to provide a feel good and comfortable atmosphere. One type of CCM that is growing in popularity among charismatic congregations is Christian rock-n-roll and rap. It has been statistically proven that those congregations which employ CCM are the fastest growing congregations on the planet. Why? The answer is very simple, because it is the same kind of music the lost world loves to hear. It is simply Christianized worldly music. The sources for this particular type of CCM are primarily musicians who are also involved in secular rock-n-roll. It should be a cause of concern that the greater part of musicians involved in producing Christian rock-n-roll and rap have no different lifestyles than the secular rock-n-roll and rap counterparts.

This does not mean all contemporary Christian music is bad or cannot be enjoyed personally or cannot be used in the worship service.

CCM artists have produced many beautiful songs worthy of use in the worship service. However, not all forms of CCM are suitable for use in the church worship services. The Lord's congregations should be very discerning in their employment of CCM in their worship services as one of the great sins of Israel was failure to discern between what is holy and what is profane (Ezek.22:26).

Historically, the primary users of this kind of music were at first charismatic congregations which now employ rock-n-roll and rap. These kinds of songs usually consist of repetitive words or phrases which charismatic song leaders use to create an altered state of mindless emotionalism. This kind of music has infiltrated most denominations and interestingly the charismatic movement has followed right on its heels and infiltrated those denominations.

Some feel that music is spiritually neutral and purely a matter of personal taste. Don Butler, the Gospel Music executive director said, “*There is no such thing as ‘gospel music.’ Every style and form of music can become gospel, whether it’s jazz, pop, rock-n-roll, or rap.*” (IM Mar/Apr 1991 p. 27).¹⁵⁹

Does the Word of God agree with the above assessment? The Bible has much to say about music in connection with public worship. The Bible refers to singing and musical instruments over 400 times and contains over 150 Psalms or songs designed for instrumental accompaniment. We believe the Bible provides several clear and explicit precepts and principles to define what is proper versus what is improper lyrics and music for use in public worship.

I. THE BIBLE’S HYMN BOOK— THE PSALMS

*But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of
Israel.—Psa. 22:3*

There is a good reason why God “*inhabitest the praises of Israel*” because the book of Psalms was the hymn book of Israel used for worship in the House of God. The Psalms contain substantive doctrine and practical teaching concerning the true nature of God and His redemptive work.

It contains practical teaching for daily living. It also contains the harsher teachings of Scripture with regard to sin and its consequences. It is simply the Word of God arranged into lyrics for instrumental accompaniment.

Unlike much of contemporary Christian music (CCM), the Psalms is not a selection of feel good positive teachings or a composition of endless and isolated repetitive phrases about God and His goodness. Much of CCM

¹⁵⁹ https://www.wayoflife.org/databaselif_music_is_neutral.html <https://hewhohearslethimhear.wordpress.com/2010/08/19/christian-rock-exposed/>

have adopted selective repetitive words and portions of the Psalms that are more positive and less offensive to a broader ecumenical based audience. No doubt one purpose for doing this is to achieve higher sales, but another more sinister design is to help achieve ecumenical unity among denominations as music is a very powerful means to teach error as much as truth. Indeed, many of the CCM lyrics are so ambiguous they could be sung to Allah.

II. THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF “CHRISTIAN” MUSIC

“... that which is HIGHLY ESTEEMED among men is ABOMINATION in the sight of God”. Luke 16:15

“There exists a vast mass of love songs of the poets, written in a fashion entirely foreign to the profession and name of Christians. They are the songs of men ruled by passion, and a great number of musicians, corrupters of youth, make them the concern of their art and their industry; in proportion as they flourish through praise of their skill, so do they offend good and serious-minded men by the depraved taste of their work. I blush and grieve to think that once I was of their number. But while I cannot change the past, nor undo what is done, I have mended my ways. Therefore, I have labored on songs which have been written in praise of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”—Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525-1594)—emphasis mine

A. CHRISTIAN LYRICS AGREE WITH BIBLICAL TEACHING

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.—Col. 3:16

This should be a no-brainer! Songs provided in the Scriptures were simply preaching or teaching set to music. Songs that have unbiblical lyrics

do not honor God and are not received by God as worship but are false teaching no matter how beautiful the music may be that accompanies those words and no matter how much people love singing such songs.

Many songs preach “*another gospel*” of works which God utterly detests and condemns in his word. One acid test for acceptable music in the house of God is do the songs teach sound doctrine, could they be preached from the pulpit?

The “*word of Christ*” cannot dwell in us richly, if the content of our psalms, hymns and songs are filled with unbiblical theology and false doctrines.

The Presbyterian commentator Albert Barnes says:

It is true in a more important sense that he who is permitted to make the hymns of a church, need care little who preaches, or who makes the creed. He will more effectually mold the sentiments of a church than they who preach or make creeds and confessions. Hence, it is indispensable, in order to the preservation of the truth, that the sacred songs of a church should be imbued with sound evangelical sentiment.—Albert Barnes,

Notice that one design for Psalms, hymns and songs was for the purpose of teaching the Word of Christ. Our songs should be theologically sound in doctrine.

B. CHRISTIAN SONGS ARE “SPIRITUAL”

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and **SPIRITUAL SONGS**, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Col. 3:16*

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and **SPIRITUAL SONGS**, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Eph. 5:18-21*

The Apostle Paul speaks of “*Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*” (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Does Paul mean “*spiritual songs*” are different than “*Psalms*

and hymns” or does the phrase “*spiritual songs*” describe “*Psalms and Hymns*?” I believe that “*spiritual songs*” describes “*Psalms and hymns*.” So, what is the difference between “*Psalms and hymns*”?

The **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** quotes Gregory of Nyssa in the 4th century and his distinction in these terms:

Gregory of Nyssa (4th century) distinguishes these as follows: The Psalms were accompanied by instruments, the hymns were mainly vocal, and the song, ode, was a general term comprehending both.

Many times, “*Psalms and Hymns*” refer to the very same song, but the latter without musical accompaniment. For example, as the Lord was departing from the place where they observed the Lord’s Supper they went out singing a “*hymn*.” The song usually sung at the conclusion of the Passover Supper was part of the *Hallel*, i.e., Psalm 115-118. Hence, it was a “*psalm*” however, walking out the door they were probably without musical accompaniment and so they just were vocalizing the words, and thus the Psalm sung without instrumental accompaniment is called a “*hymn*.” Another distinction is that the term “*Psalms*” conveys the idea of “praise” designed for instrumental accompaniment, whereas the term “*hymn*” conveys singing that is directed toward deity.

1. Spiritual versus Carnal Songs

In the Scriptures the adjective “*spiritual*” is routinely contrasted with the word “*carnal*” or “*fleshy*.” Songs that honor God are “*spiritual*” in character as opposed to “*carnal*” in character.

The term “*spiritual*” refers to the character of the *Holy Spirit*. That which is “*spiritual*” is “*holy*” or sets us apart from the world unto God. For example, the *Holy Spirit* is the “*Spirit of truth*” as opposed to the “*spirit of error*” (1 Jn. 4:6) and thus to be “*spiritual*” is to be set apart unto “*truth*.” So, we learned in the previous principle that “Christian” or “gospel” songs must have doctrinally sound lyrics.

Also, “*spiritual*” conveys the idea of self-denial rather than self-indulgence. “Carnality” describes the peculiarities of the fallen human nature. The fallen human nature is self-focused and self-centered and seeks to please

the appetites of the flesh rather than being God focused and seeking to submit to the will of God.

Even songs with proper lyrics and music can be sung in a way that is carnal (as will be seen later in more detail). They can be sung in such a manner so that the focus is upon the performer rather than upon God. In God's sight that kind of performance is carnal.

2. Spiritual versus Sensual

The way a song is sung can be carnal. Gyrating bodies with slurring and sliding and rasping sexual toned voices in the classic Elvis style are sensual and not spiritual as they focus only on the singer and appeal to the carnal pleasures of the audience.

The very kind of music used in worship can promote sensuality. Music that is dominated by a strong beat can change the focus of the song away from godly instruction found in the lyrics unto the sensual responses by the body. This type of music has its origin with the African occult and naturally brings out the animalistic sensual nature and is the chief characteristic of rock-n-roll and rap. Its effects can be clearly seen in how infants and little children respond. Infants cannot understand the lyrics but they respond to the music by swaying of the body. In infants it may be cute but in adults it is clear how their body responds in a sensual movement in keeping to the rhythm and beat of the music so that the focus is upon self and pleasure rather than on God. There is a difference between sensual body language and praise body language.

Later when rock-n-roll Christian music is dealt with more directly it will be demonstrated clearly that the music itself is sensual, worldly and not "*spiritual*." The acid proof is that the vast majority of those who produce this kind of music have no different lifestyles than the secular rock-n-roll artists. Many of them are Charismatic and nearly all of them are ecumenical while others are simply pragmatists who seek money from the business. This kind of music appeals to the world and makes money.

3. Spiritual songs can be understood by all

*For God is the King of all the earth: sing you praises **with understanding**.* - Psa. 47:7

*For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and **I will sing with the understanding also**.* - 1 Cor. 14:14-15

Paul is condemning the congregation at Corinth for allowing anyone to sing in such a manner that the congregation cannot understand what is being said. Such singing is not a sign of spirituality but a sign of confusion and carnality. Songs where the music so dominates that the lyrics are not discernable has lost its “*spiritual*” value.

C. CHRISTIAN SONGS ARE GOD FOCUSED

*The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore, my heart greatly rejoiceth; and **WITH MY SONG will I praise HIM**.* - Psa. 28:7

Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. - 1 Cor.10:31

Music in the congregational service is not for *personal entertainment* or showmanship but is one of many other designated means for worshipping God. In our own home or at some other public venue is the place for entertainment, but not the house of God as that is the place for worship. The worship service is not designed to emphasize or elevate the musician or singer but to elevate and emphasize God and His truth. Songs in the church are designed to glorify God and “*teaching one another*” the truths of God’s Word.

In the Bible there were no “Christian concerts” or “rock bands” or itinerant traveling musicians or singers. Therefore, music used in worship is not meant to please and entertain us, but to please God, as “*worship*” is about giving unto God what pleases Him. Do you remember the meaning of the English term “*worship*”? It means to “*give worth*” or “*honor*.” We are to give what is worthy of His name. His “*name*” represents his Person, His authority and His revealed will.

*Give to the LORD the glory **due to his name**; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*—Psa. 29:2

Worship that gives worth “*due his name*” is worship performed “*in the beauty of holiness.*” The term translated “*holiness*” is also translated “*holy... sanctification... saint*” and verbal forms “*sanctify... sanctified.*” The Hebrew term means “to set apart.” So, a “*saint*” is one “set apart.” To be “*holy*” is to be “set apart”. To “*sanctify*” or to be “*sanctified*” is to be set apart. That meaning raises a question. The question is, set apart from what unto what? The answer is, set apart from the world, and set apart unto God’s revealed will. We are set apart from the “world system that opposes the revealed will of God.” We are **not** set apart by being taken **out of** the physical world, but we are set apart from that world system that hates God and violates His will and thus dishonors His name. Jesus said that true worship “*must be in spirit and in truth*” (Jn. 4:24). His Spirit is the “*Holy*” Spirit or the Spirit that “sets apart” His people unto His revealed will found in His Scriptures, as Jesus says, “*sanctify them by thy word for thy word is truth*” (Jn. 17:17).

Just because you give unto God what you may call worship, does not mean it is received as worship by God. God receives only that which glorifies or is worthy “*due his name.*” Any form of worship that is in violation of His revealed will is rejected as true worship - regardless of how beautiful and acceptable it may be before men. This is especially applicable to music used by men to worship God.

Any kind of singing or music that turns the focus upon the way it is being sung or upon the performers is carnal singing and carnal music. The Biblical design for music in the worship service is to focus on God and His glory. The role of the musician or singer is to turn the focus of the audiences upon God. Does the music in your church focus upon God?

D. LET ALL THINGS BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER AS GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION

These precepts are provided by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:33, 41 to guide the worship service in the house of God. He says “*let all things*” be done decently and in order because whatever God does is balanced, orderly, and beautiful to both the eyes and ears. He deals with singing in this chapter (1 Cor. 14:14-15). The Bible says that the creation of God reveals the glory of

God. Even in this sin cursed creation we can see that God is a God of order, symmetry, balance, harmony and unity. There are natural laws that govern the macro to the micro universe. When we take a telescope and examine the universe we see order, balance and harmony at work insomuch we can set our clocks by the very way our own solar system operates. When we take the most powerful microscope we see more complexity working by natural laws, in keeping with order, symmetry and balance.

Music operates according to laws. Music is a creation of God, and it consists of (1) melody,¹⁶⁰ (2) harmony and (3) rhythm. Music that glorifies God will be to the ear what the rest of His creation is to the eye, the beauty of balance, order and symmetry without confusion, disorder or imbalance in the relationship between melody, harmony, and rhythm. It is this orderly combination of balance that provides beauty to the ear.

When music (melody, harmony, rhythm) is joined with lyrics, then the combination will either be in balance or in conflict with each other. In worship, the role of music is to make the message (lyrics) more meaningful and beautiful to the ear and thus to the mind. When music is so loud it drowns out the message of the lyrics it produces confusion, disorder and turns the focus away from the message and thus defeats the very purpose of the lyrics.

Anything called “music” which has no melody is nothing but noise.

When rhythm (beat) becomes so strong it entirely dominates a song, then the design of the music no longer serves its chief aim, which is to convey the message of the lyrics to the mind, but rather turns the focus of the music from the mind to the body producing sensualism. In true worship the mind must dominate the feelings/passions and appetites of the body. Remember, Paul warned of the warfare between the regenerate nature and the law of sin in Romans 7:14-25. The law of sin indwells the body and works through its natural appetites to overpower the mind (Rom. 7:18). True spiritual worship occurs only when the mind is brought into submission to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:25). If the appetites of the body rule, the result is carnality. When the rhythm (beat) becomes so strong that it entirely dominates a song, then the focus of the music has changed from the mind of the listener to the sensual responses of the body of the listener.

¹⁶⁰ *A Melody consists of a linear sequence of tones. A good melody (even if it doesn't have words) is often one that we could hum, sing, or whistle. Harmony refers to the different pitch, tones or notes being used. Rhythm refers to the beat or tempo.*

Paul commands believers to let all things be done in *moderation* or in balance and that is true in music if it is going to glorify God. If there is one thing that stands out in Paul's teaching on public worship in 1 Corinthians 14 is that edification is the chief aim in worship and that worshippers ought not be out of control because the spirit is subject to the prophet, and there is a due order of worship where the mind is in submission to the Spirit and rules over all other aspects of true worship.

Satan's use of music always creates imbalance, disorder, and confusion. However, Satan also uses the proper musical balance with lyrics to teach and train the mind in error, or he uses the improper balance of music to empower the law of sin in the flesh so that the passions of the flesh dominate the mind so as to produce either a sensual or mindless form of worship. Instead of worship in the beauty of holiness, either a sensual "party" spirit is produced or a mindless altered state of consciousness is produced.

E. A "JOYFUL" NOISE

O come, let us sing to the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.—Psa. 95:1

A joyful noise is not an indiscriminate loud sound. The Hebrew term translated "noise" is also translated "shout." In Job, the sons of God gave a "shout of joy" in response to the finished marvelous creative work of God. It refers to a burst of joyful praise. It is not referring to a sustained deafening noise created by modern day sound systems or an excuse to defend loud "Christian" acid rock or rock-n-roll music in a church auditorium.

Remember, the purpose of worship music is to glorify the Lord and draw attention to Him. Excessive loud noise draws attention to the instruments or performers and away from God.

III. THERE IS SATANIC MUSIC

Son of man, take up a lamentation on the king of Tyrus, and say to him, Thus said the Lord GOD; You seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the

*sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: **the workmanship of your tabrets and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created.** - Ezek.28:12-13*

*Your pomp is brought down to the grave, and **the noise of your viols**: the worm is spread under you, and the worms cover you. How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations!—Isa. 14:11-12*

The Hebrew term translated “*viols*” in Isaiah 14:11 is everywhere else translated “*psaltery*” which many believe was a six-string guitar. However, the musical instruments listed in Ezekiel 28:12 and Isa. 14:11 are metaphors of the innate natural musical ability that characterized the nature of Satan when created as Lucifer as the highest archangel and therefore most likely the worship leader over all the angels in heaven.

Interestingly, the first mention of music in the Bible *among men* is found in the family that departed from the way of the Lord—the way of Cain:

*And his brother’s name was Jubal: he was **the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.** - Gen. 4:21*

Of course, this does not mean that all music is of the devil, as it was God who first created Lucifer with his musical ability. However, when it comes to the worship of God, Satan is behind all music that creates confusion, disorder, imbalance and false doctrine among the professing people of God.

A. THE BEAUTIFUL SIDE OF EVIL

Johanna Michaelsen is the author of an international bestselling autobiography entitled “The Beautiful Side of Evil.” Her book is advertised with these words:

She always seemed to have magical spiritual gifts, but Johanna Michaelsen was deceived by very dark forces when she was just a little girl. Even after she dedicated her life to the Lord, the occult had a strong grip on her soul. Johanna’s

“fellowship” with demons brought her indescribable depression and despair.

*For many years she was caught up in the occult, yet she believed that the “angels” who reached out to her were servants of God, not Satan. **One demon convinced her that he was Jesus, and she thought she was doing all of these things for the Christ of the Bible.***

Nevertheless, during this period her experiences and visions and worship all provided what she described as “warm fuzzies” or the good feelings of emotional euphoria. She came to the conclusion that Satan could counterfeit both the power and the fruits of the Spirit.

My point is that Satan has counterfeit worship and praise as much as he has counterfeited everything else of God.

Many, like Johanna are *sincerely* thinking they are worshipping God and experiencing all the “warm fuzzies” when they are in reality interacting with demons who come as “*angels of light*” empowering “*wolves*” in “*sheep’s clothing*” as ministers who have bought them into counterfeit worship music to worship “*another Jesus.*”

Sincerity does not make evil good. She illustrates the complete vanity of sincerity by picturing two men standing at the edge of a high cliff. One stands there with the intent to commit suicide by jumping to his death. The other stands there in absolute sincere faith that if he jumps he will fly. Both jump and both go splat! Both were sincere, but you can be sincerely wrong. True worship must be “*in spirit AND in truth*” (Jn. 4:24).

B. THE DEVIL’S MUSIC

Within the confines of marriage there is a place for sensual music, but the congregation is not that place. There is a type of music that is sensual by its very nature. It is the type of music that originated from the African occult and is typically expressed in American rock-n-roll, acid rock, and rap music.

The composers and artists who perform this kind of music freely admit that the very nature of that kind of music is sensual and sexual and demonstrates that kind of influence by their own personal lifestyles. For

example, when secular rock-star, Michael Jackson was asked why he did the filthy-sexual, hand gestures on stage, he replied:

*“It’s the music that **COMPELS** me to do it. You don’t think about it, it just happens. **I’M A SLAVE TO THE RHYTHM.**”* (*The Evening Star*, February 11, 1993, p. A10)

However, if you think Jackson is an exception to the rule than read what other rock stars have also said:

“I felt that if I could take a ... tune and drop the first and third beats and accentuate the second and fourth and add a beat the listeners could clap to as well as dance this would be what they were after” (Bill Haley, cited by Charlie Gillett, **The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll**, p. 14).

“I dig that rock and roll music; it has a back beat; you can’t lose it” (Chuck Berry).

“When they play their music, ooh that modern music, they like it with a lot of style; but it’s still that same old backbeat rhythm that really, really drives ‘em wild” (“The Heart of Rock & Roll” sung by Huey Lewis and the News).

“It’s the beat that gets to you. If you like it and you feel it, you can’t help but move to it. That’s what happens to me. I can’t help it” (Elvis Presley, cited by Steve Turner, *Hungry for Heaven*, p. 35).

Irwin Sibling of *Sing Out* magazine said, **“The great strength of rock & roll lies in its beat. It is a music which is basically sexual, unpuritan...”** (*Sing Out*, May 1965, p. 63).

Debra Harry of Blondie says, **“The main ingredients in rock are sex and sass”** *Hit Parader*, Sept. 1979, p. 31).

Jan Berry of Jan and Dean says, **“The throbbing beat of rock provides a vital sexual release for adolescent audiences”** (cited by Blanchard, **Pop Goes the Gospel**).

Chris Stein, lead guitarist for Blondie says, “*Everyone takes it for granted that rock and roll is synonymous with sex*” (People, May 21, 1979).

Rapper, Luke Campbell of 2 Live Crew says, “*The sex is definitely in the music, and sex is in all aspects in the music.*”

Rocker, Tom McSloy says: “*Rock is visceral. It does disturbing things to your body. In spite of yourself, you find your body tingling, moving with the music*” (Tom McSloy, “Music to Jangle Your Insides,” National Review, June 30, 1970, p. 681).

Paul Stanley said, “*Rock ‘n’ roll is sex. Real rock ‘n’ roll isn’t based on cerebral thoughts. It’s based on one’s lower nature*” (cited by John Muncy, The Role of Rock, p. 44).

John Oates of Hall & Oates says, “*Rock ‘n’ roll is 99% sex*” (Circus, Jan. 31, 1976).

Allan Bloom, author of The Closing of the American Mind, observed: “... *rock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal to sexual desire*” (The Closing of the American Mind, p. 73).

Simon Frith, author of Sound effects, said, “*We respond to the materiality of rock’s sounds, and the rock experience is essentially erotic*” (Sound Effects, New York: Pantheon Books, 1981, p. 164).

Dr. David Elkind, chairman of the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study at Tufts University in Massachusetts, said: “*There is a great deal of powerful, albeit subliminal, sexual stimulation implicit in both the rhythm and [the] lyrics of rock music*” (The Hurried Child, Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley Publishing Co., 1981, p. 89).

Frank Zappa of the Mothers of Invention said, “*Rock music is sex. The big beat matches the body’s rhythms*” (Life, June 28, 1968).

Malcolm McLaren, punk rock manager, said: “**Rock ‘n’ roll is pagan and primitive, and very jungle, and that’s how it should be! The moment it stops being those things, it’s dead ... the true meaning of rock ... is sex, sub-version and style**” (**Rock**, August 1983, p. 60).

Adam Ant says, “**Pop music revolves around sexuality. I believe that if there is anarchy, let’s make it sexual anarchy rather than political**” (**From Rock to Rock**, p. 93).

Gene Simmons of Kiss said, “**That’s what rock is all about—sex with a 100 megaton bomb, the beat!**” (*Entertainment Tonight*, ABC, Dec. 10, 1987).¹⁶¹

“WHAT IS ROCK MUSIC?”

“*The rhythm in rock is the dominant part of the sound. The heavy emphasis on the BEAT is what distinguishes rock from every other type of music.*” (Frank Garlock, *Music in the Balance*, p. 32)

“*Perhaps the most important defining quality of rock and roll is **the BEAT**, ... Rock and roll is different from other music primarily because of **the BEAT**.*” (Charles Brown, **The Art of Rock and Roll**, p. 42)

And it is that BEAT that appeals to the FLESH and the FLESH loves!

“*The sexuality of music is usually referred to in terms of its rhythm — it is **the BEAT** that commands a directly **PHYSICAL** response.*” (Simon Frith, *Sound Effects, Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock ‘n’ Roll*, p. 240)

“*Rhythm is the element of music most closely allied to **BODY MOVEMENT** [fleshly, carnal], to **PHYSICAL** action. Its simpler patterns when repeated over and over [which is exactly*

¹⁶¹ The citations listed above were taken from David Cloud and the website <http://www.wayoflife.org/database/opposedtoccm.html> 12/12/2016

what rock does] *can have a hypnotic effect on us*". (Joseph Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, p. 19)

Larry Norman, the father of Contemporary Christian Music in his song, "*Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music*", sings about the **FLESHLY** and **PHYSICAL** response (moves my feet) of the **BEAT** of rock.

*I ain't knocking the hymns, Just give me a song that has a **BEAT**. I ain't knocking the hymns Just give me a song **that moves my feet***

The lyrics are many times drowned out by the music, and most of our youth are into the music rather than the lyrics.

Donnie Brewer of 1970's Group Grand Funk says:

*"We take the kids away from their parents and their environment to where the only reality is **the rhythm and the BEAT**." (Hart, *Lowell Satan's Music Exposed*, p.102)¹⁶²*

C. CONFESSIONS BY LEADING CCM MUSICIANS

Many of the most popular Contemporary Christian musicians and Singers play both rock-n-roll and CCM. They openly admit that they are bridging the gap between pop and Christian music. Their lifestyle is not much different than rock-n-roll artists

1. AMY GRANT

*I want to play hardball in this business. I want to be on the same level professionally with performers in all areas of music. I love to hear Billy Joel, Kenny Loggins, and the Doobie Brothers. Why not? **I aim to bridge the gap between Christian and pop.***
(Time Mar/85)

¹⁶² <http://www.av1611.org/cqguide.html> 12/12/2016

Grant's also pragmatic about her career. Regarding her album covers and publicity photos, which portray her as a sexy, attractive young woman. The Christian pop star says, *'I'm trying to look sexy to sell a record. But what is sexy? To me it's never been taking my shirt off or sticking my tongue out. I feel that a Christian young woman in the eighties is very sexual'....* *'When he {Prince} started humping the stage, I got a little embarrassed', says the twenty-four-year-old Grant, sitting in the bright sunlight near the swimming pool at her Universal City hotel. I quit looking. When he thrust his crotch up into the florescent shower, 'she continues in her Southern drawl, 'I thought if someone wants to do this at home, fine. If I want to do this at home, fine. I don't want to watch Prince doing it.'* (Rolling Stone - June 1985)

2. STRYPER

The hair is long and the screams are loud'n'clear. The clothes are tight, earrings dangling from their ears. No matter how we look, we'll always praise His name. And, if you believe, you've got to do the same. (Stryper from Loud'n'Clear)

If you had to guess their name, you might think of the Devil's Disciples or the Beelzebubs. Or perhaps the Killer Bees, which is what the four young men on stage look like in their tight leather-and spandex costumes crisscrossed with garish black and yellow stripes. Piles of makeup, spikey hair, and enough dangling chains to tie up half the elephants in Africa complete the picture of the up-to-date heavy metal rock group. Even the music, the sound of a swarm of angry insects electronically amplified several thousand times, fits the image. (Time Mar/85)

3. REZ BAND

A new album, Between Heaven'N'Hell (their eighth), recently hit the streets, and with it, Rez begins its campaign

aimed at winning over the secular mainstream rock audience.... Rez has made a number of other moves designed to facilitate their transition to the secular market. They've pacted with a New York-based management/ marketing firm on a four-month trial basis. They have signed with the venerable Diversified Management Agency (DMA) out of Detroit who will be handling concert bookings. (Other heavy DMA clients include the Scorpions, Quiet Riot, and Autograph.) ...In order to do that, Rez is all too aware, they're going to have to 'play by certain rules,' as Herrin puts it. They've already stopped the practice of altar calls in concert, and they're toning down overt references to the Lord. In general, they want to present themselves, first and foremost, as a rock band. (Contemporary Christian Magazine - April 1986).

4. MICHAEL W. SMITH

The people coming into the concerts are ready to rock. They come out and want to have a good time. Some people need to get out there and preach to them. Ask them for a decision at the end, but that's not my calling. The kids I see are just ready to kick it out and have fun. (CCM June 1986)

5. STEVE TAYLOR

I appeared on the Dove Awards last year and I still feel uncomfortable about it. I really don't belong there because I'm not really part of that Gospel mainstream. Sure, I'm a Christian and that influences the way I write songs but that's just being honest, everybody pushes a point of view. (CCM Feb 1986).

6. LEON PATILLO

I'm going to make a stand. I'm going to do something different. I'm going to let the world stand up and say, 'Wow, man, did you see that guy?' And it's going to be a perfect setup. As soon as they've got their mouths open or their hearts open and

they're going 'Wow', I'm gonna throw Jesus right down their throats. (CCM Oct. 1985).

7. MYLON LeFEVRE

Our music is rock and roll. We don't even tell anybody it's contemporary Christian music... We are a rock'n'roll band. We sound like one, we look like one, and at the end of the night we smell like one.... It's a rock'n'roll show that is a ministry. You can't separate the two. Rock'n'roll is what I do. I put on a good show. I entertain those people, I have a good time with them..... One of the things Mylon may be referring to is a new album due out soon from CBS. He and the band are going by the name, Look Up. It's a Christian album, but you really have to know the Word to know it. CBS ain't gonna know it. Every song on there - every note on there - is played by born- again, Spirit-filled Christians. We had a good time making the record. It's an anointed record and it's got a good message, but it's very shallow. We really avoided certain words and phrases, you know. It's just about themes. (CCM Mar 1986)

I do believe that some kinds of music are demonic (acid rock) regardless of what kind of lyrics may or may not accompany it. Just look at the appearance and lifestyle of those who perform this kind of music.

Know this, that there is no such thing as "Christian" rock music. Just as there is no such thing as "Christian adultery" or "Christian homosexuality". - <https://hewhohasearslethimhear.wordpress.com/2010/08/19/christian-rock-exposed/>

D. THE POWER OF MUSIC

We find in 1Samuel 16:23 that music has power. Saul was refreshed as an evil spirit departed from him because of the music David played on a harp. In 2 Kings 3:15 the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha when a minstrel played.

Worldly music has power also. The music and lyrics in large rock concerts have resulted in killings, and brutality in the mosh pits. You have often heard the phrase “mood music.” Music has the power to create different kinds of mood depending upon the innate nature of the music being played.

Look at the charismatic use of music. They characteristically use songs with short repetitive phrases designed to bring about a mindless emotional altered state of mind. Such singing opens up the audience to demonic power that they wrongly attribute to the Holy Spirit.

If “*God is a spirit*” (John 4:24), then the music presented as worship to God must be “*spiritual*.” The kind of power behind the music will manifest itself in lyrics and responses by the listeners.

E. REPETITIVE EMOTIONAL MINDLESS “PRAISE” MUSIC

The Charismatic movement has introduced what they refer to as “praise” songs. These songs are primarily short repetitive phrases set to a catchy tune. They have no other purpose but to evoke an emotional mindless state whereby they can be manipulated or emotionally moved to do whatever the praise leader wants them to do. These “praise” songs are like little missionaries for the Charismatic movement. They find their way into congregations and then they are followed by persons who introduce the charismatic doctrine and practice. Don’t let their missionaries (praise music) into your church music.

Such repetitive lyrics may be fine in small quantities for use among children but should be avoided in the worship services. The worship service needs to use music with lyrics that have right doctrine and fuller substance rather than repetitive phrases that are designed to merely produce emotional mindlessness.

F. A NEW SONG

*I will sing a **NEW SONG** unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. Psal. 144:9*

The words “*new song*” are found nine times in the Bible. Seven times occur in the Old Testament (Psa. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10) and twice it is found in the New Testament (Rev. 5:9; 14:2).

Certainly, David wrote many new compositions and we need theologically sound saints to provide us with new compositions. However, David did not mean he could not use an old composition to praise God when he stated the above words. The song he sang was “*new*” like the mercies of God are “*new*” every morning. It is like the “*new*” man within, it never grows old but is always “*new*” in reference to quality due to its source. Like the “*new*” heavens and earth it never grows old but is always “*new*” due to its origin and heavenly quality. His song originated from God and not from this world. It had its source with leadership from above rather than from beneath. Therefore, it retained its eternal quality due to its heavenly content that can never age. Its melody and lyrics were in keeping with the Word of God. He is also speaking of his own spiritual renewal due to experiencing God’s presence, promises and deliverances afresh so that the song had “*new*” relevance and meaning due to an encounter with God. Charismatics interpret this to mean singing in what they call tongues (but are really ecstatic utterances and having nothing to do with Biblical tongues). Paul says with regard to singing songs in the worship service that he would not sing in some unknown language but “*I will sing with my spirit and I will sing with my understanding.*” In other words, if he can’t understand what he is singing, he won’t sing.

Therefore, the idea is not writing a “*new*” composition or singing in tongues, but it has reference to what characterizes the things of God which never grow old but are always “*new*.” Would to God that our members were experiencing the presence, promises and deliverances of God during the week so that when they came into the assembly the songs they sang would be always “*new*” to them in the sense of ageless truth and heavenly quality.

IV. DANCING UNTO THE LORD

There is no Biblical evidence that dancing occurred in the Temple, Synagogue or early congregations; therefore, it was no formal part of public worship in the house of God.

In the Bible, there was no romantic or sensual dancing in connection with worship of God: men and women did not dance together, but separately from each other.

There was no pattern of dancing or instructed steps or movements, but

dancing unto the Lord was physical outbursts of joy or leaps of joy that were spontaneous rather than a discipline that had been learned or taught or a religious ritual or performance. It would seem that joy could no longer be physically contained but was expressed by the body as an outburst of praise. Dancing unto the Lord in the Bible has no similarities with what is going on in the charismatic movement today. The charismatic dance is a just another phase in the charismatic evolvment in comparison to barking like a dog, uncontrollable laughter, slithering from their seats to the floor or being slain in the Spirit that is supposed to signify a baptism in the Spirit.

All of these are unbiblical, demonic, and found in the occult.

V. THE LOST SENSE OF REVERENCE

For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.—Isa. 66:2

The sense of reverence no longer can be found in many worship services. Church services are regarded more as a community club where coffee and donuts are served while they are being entertained. Pastors come to the pulpit dressed in shorts or casual attire as though the worship service was merely an attempt to make sinners comfortable in the presence of God. Many have lost the sense that they are entering into the house “*of God*” and into the presence of the Creator of heaven and earth. However, would such a person even dream of coming this way into the White House if the President invited them? No, they give more honor and reverence to earthly kings than the King of kings.

Paul thought it was important to instruct Timothy how he was to act in the presence of God, in the “*house of God*, the church of the Living God.”

*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest **know how withoutest to behave thyself in the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—1 Tim. 3:15*

Paul was speaking not merely about the congregation but the place where the congregation assembled for worship. Paul told the Corinthians

“when you come together in one place...when the church is gathered together...”
 There is always a “place” where an actual assembling occurs. In that place there is to be behavior that corresponds to the presence of God. The public worship service was not to be treated lightly or as something common but with the dignity and reverence due to the presence of the Almighty and Holy Creator.

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.—1 Chron. 16:29

The “*beauty of holiness*” does not refer merely to worship “set apart” by obedience to the Scriptures in regard to how God is to be worshipped (in truth), but to the disposition of spirit required to worship a holy God (in spirit). The proper spirit in the presence of God is a “*humble and contrite spirit*” rather than a “party” spirit or an attitude seeking to make sinners at ease in Zion.

The Man of God should approach the pulpit in a spirit of reverence and the fear of God that drives him to utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit to say that which is acceptable and honoring to God in whose presence he stands. That means he must make prayerful preparations under the leadership of the Spirit before even approaching the pulpit. In so doing, the fruit of it will be joy unto the Lord.

The Song leader needs to realize the significance of his ministry. He needs to prayerfully seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit so that he chooses songs that not only compliment the preaching of God’s Word but offer proper tone that glorifies God. The Song leader and Preacher need to be under the guidance of the same Spirit so that unity and harmony characterizes the worship service in all of its aspects.

Those who come to the public house of worship should prayerfully prepare themselves to enter into the presence of God. They need to be conscious that they are coming to meet God, not the preacher, and not their friends. They are not coming to put on a fashion show. They are not coming to a party. They should be coming to seek God, to hear from God, to be blessed by God and be a blessing to others (Psa. 84).

The membership should come dressed in such a manner that their children recognize this is a very special occasion and place. They should

dress their best for God and for God's people. They should not come dressed like harlots or like beach bums. Your outer attire reveals your inner spirit.

Sadly, parents are more concerned how their children behave in the house of a stranger, than in the house of God. Children should be taught "*the fear of the Lord*" or how to view God, and the things of God in reverence. There should be a sense of dignity and respect within the house of God.

Conclusion

Not only must the content of the lyrics reflect the truth of Scripture, but the nature of your music must convey the harmony, unity and tone that honors God. As demonstrated in the introduction of this section, *sincere* praise is not sufficient alone to be accepted as true worship. David was a man that was said to be a man "*after God's own heart.*" There was no lack of sincerity on the part of this man. However, David learned by experience that sincere heartfelt praise music was not the essence of true worship. Here is a description of his heartfelt sincere worship:

And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.—1 Chron. 13:8

Note the words "*with all their might.*" There was no lack of heartfelt sincerity. There was no lack of praise and instruments of praise.

However, their praise did not harmonize with their practice in the act of worship. God was so displeased with their worship practice that he killed one of these sincere participants. In the account, the cart carrying the ark of the covenant lurched and Uzzah *sincerely* reached out and touched the ark in an attempt to make sure it did not tip over. God killed Uzzah for touching the ark even though it was a sincere act to prevent the ark from flipping over. David learned that sincerity and praise are only acceptable to God if it is accompanied by obedience to His word:

For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.—1 Chron. 15:13

Notice that David did not blame the person God killed. He said “ye” and “us” and “we” sought him not “*after the due order.*”

David read the book of Leviticus and learned that worship must be “set apart” (holiness) by obedience to the revealed will of God:

*For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that **we sought him not after the due order.** So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, **as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD.**—1 Chron. 15:13-15*

God’s Word instructs the Levites to use poles in carrying the ark on their shoulders. Sincerity and praise is unacceptable to God as true worship when it is in connection with open violation of God’s revealed will. David was sincerely wrong.

There is a time and place for romantic sensual music and/or lyrics but it is not in the church. There is a time and place for many other kinds of music, but not in the church. Music used for church worship should be the kind that is balanced so that the music promotes the message of the lyrics which are true to Scripture. Music used in the church should be beautiful to the ear without confusion or imbalance. **Tempo/rhythm is not a problem if it is in balance with the melody and harmony of the music.** God is a God of order, decency, moderation and beauty.

Fanny Crosby is the greatest hymn writer that ever lived, writing over 9,000 songs! Before Fanny was saved, at 45 years old, she wrote many secular songs. But after she was saved — things were different. . . Here’s what Fanny said about mixing Christian and worldly music:

*“Sometimes I need to reject the music proposed for my songs because the musicians misunderstand that the Fanny Crosby who once wrote for the people in the saloons has merely changed the lyrics. **Oh my no. The church must never sing its songs to the melodies of the world.**” (Danny Castle, video “What’s Wrong with Christian Rock”)*

That does not mean that there is not secular music suitable for Christian lyrics, but it does mean that there is secular music that we should not want to identify with Christ because of its past associations. But do you know why Fanny Crosby said that — because Fanny was saved! And God “*hath put a NEW SONG in my mouth, even PRAISE unto our God*” inside the NEW Fanny Crosby! Fanny Crosby wrote over 9,000 songs to the Lord! Fanny used over 200 different pen names because she wanted to make sure God got the glory and not her.

*Praise Him! praise Him! Jesus, our blessed Redeemer!
SING, O Earth, His wonderful love proclaim! Hail Him! Hail
Him! Highest archangels in Glory; Strength and honor give to
His holy name! Like a shepherd, Jesus will guard His children,
In His arms He carries them all day long; Praise Him! Praise
Him! Tell of His excellent greatness; Praise Him! Praise Him!
Ever in joyful SONG!*

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Just because music is not Christian music does that make it bad?
2. Does that mean all forms of music and lyrics are suitable to be used in worship?
3. What are the three aspects of music?
4. Does the bible provide principles and precepts for music and lyrics used in church worship?
5. Define “spiritual” in contrast to “carnal.”
6. Define “spiritual” in contrast to “sensual.”
7. Define “spiritual” in contrast to “disorderly” “confusion” and imbalance with regard to music.
8. Define “spiritual” in connection with the focus of music with regard to our mind versus our flesh with regard to Romans 7:14-25.
9. Define “spiritual” in connection with the content of lyrics used in worship music.
10. Is there a specific type of music that is carnal and sensual by its very nature?

11. Is there a specific type of music that is chaotic, disorderly and confusing by its very nature?
12. What is the primary use of music when accompanied with lyrics?
13. Who is the primary object of music in worship?
14. Explain how the performance, music and lyrics can lose their proper focus in worship?
15. How should music reflect God's order, beauty and symmetry in creation?
16. What does a "joyful noise" refer to?
17. Is tempo/beat a bad thing if it is held in balance with melody and harmony?

REQUIRED READING:

Why we are opposed to Contemporary Christian Music by David Cloud -

<http://www.wayoflife.org/database/opposedtoccm.html>

<https://hewhohasearslethimhear.wordpress.com/2010/08/19/christian-rock-exposed/>

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PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 12

LESSON 1–Worship–Part 7
–Tithe and Offerings Tithes, Etc.

LESSON 2–Worship–Part 8
–Patterns of Perverted Worship

LESSON 3–Worship–Part 9
–Patterns of Perverted Worship

WEEK 12 LESSON 1

Worship—Part 7— Tithes and Offerings, Etc.

LESSON GOALS: The Goals for this lesson are (1) to provide the Biblical teaching on tithes and offerings and, (2) to establish the validity of the tithe and offering under the New Covenant administration and, (3) to briefly explain the Biblical basis and principles for church business meetings and, (4) to introduce the historical origin of the modern Sunday School with its pro's and con's.

INTRODUCTION: Both the Old and New Testament distinguish between tithes and offerings. The primary reason many oppose tithing as a New Testament teaching is because they fail to understand that 2 Corinthians 8-9 is contextually speaking about free will offerings that are consistent with the Old Testament teaching about free will offerings rather than an attempt by Paul to replace tithing. In this lesson it will be shown that they are not to be confused either in the Old or New Testament Scriptures.

I. TITHES

A. THE TERMS

Both Hebrew and Greek words translated “*tithe*” mean “tenth.” So, the idea of a “tenth” is derived from the very words used in the Old and New Testaments.

B. BEFORE MOSES

There are two recorded cases of tithing prior to Moses. The first is Abraham and the second is Jacob. This proves that tithing is not an Old Covenant ordinance but preceded the Mosaic Law.

1. Abraham:

With regard to Abraham we read:

*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which has delivered your enemies into your hand. **And he gave him tithes of all.**—Gen. 14:18-20*

Abraham had been an idol worshipping heathen (Jos. 24:2) Where did Abraham get the idea to even give anything to the High Priest, much less a “tenth”? Why would Melchizedek receive it? Long before Abraham “*the way of the Lord*” was known among men (Gen. 6:12 “*his way*”). At a very early date (Genesis 3) the way of the Lord was distinguished from “*the way of Cain*” (Jude 11). The way of the Lord included three basic elements (1) An appointed place for worship (Gen. 3:16); (2) An appointed time of worship (Gen.3:43) and; (3) An appointed sacrifice for worship (Heb. 11:4).

Other teachings characterized the way of the Lord very early. For example, as early as Enoch the seventh from Adam there was prophetic writings (Jude 14) that mention bringing gifts, presents and offerings (Enoch 52:2) to God as well as the coming of the Lord and future judgment. The book of Job was written long before the writings of Moses and before Abraham lived which included other teachings about the resurrection of the body and the coming redeemer (Job. 19:17-21). God said of Abraham:

*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they **shall keep the way of the LORD**, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring on Abraham that which he has spoken of him.—Gen. 18:19*

Prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai the Lord had commanded Israel not to pick up manna on the Sabbath. When the children of Israel disobeyed God said,

*And the LORD said to Moses, **How long refuse you** to keep my commandments and my laws?—Ex. 16:28*

The implication is that the way of the Lord had already been revealed to Israel long before this time and yet they again disobeyed. Included in the “*way of the Lord*” was Sabbath keeping, or an appointed time of worship (Gen. 3:3-4) and long before the Law was given at Mount Sinai.

The “*way of the Lord*” was not merely restricted to certain teachings and the appointed day, place and sacrificial offerings for worship, but “*to do justice and judgment.*” I believe Abraham did not dream up this response to the High Priest of the Lord but it was part of the “*way of the Lord*” that had been revealed directly to unto him by the Lord as was the gospel (Gal.3:8). Both Lot and all of his goods were taken by those kings. Abraham recovered them all and gave the High priest a tenth “*of all*” that he recovered.

However, the New Testament reveals much more about this tithing event in Hebrews 7:1-11

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

(2) To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

(3) Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like to the Son of God; stays a priest continually.

(4) Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

(5) And truly they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brothers, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

(6) But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

(7) *And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.*

(8) *And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.*

(9) *And as I may so say, Levi also, who receives tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.*

(10) *For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.*

(11) *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*

Paul, writing to the Hebrew Christians (2 Pet. 3:15) through his penman Apollos, is arguing for the superiority of the Melchizedek Priesthood over the Levitical priesthood. He claims that Levi, and therefore, the entire Levitical priesthood under the Law had already paid tithes unto Melchizedek while yet still in the loins of Abraham. Thus, Paul argues the Melchizedek priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood as Melchizedek was superior to Moses and Moses superior to Levi.

However, in the midst of this pre-law and Law context, Paul uses the **present** tense for every verb in this text says this:

8 And here men that die [dying] ***receive*** [receiving] ***tithes; but there he receives*** [receiving] ***them, of whom it is witnessed*** [witnessing] ***that he lives.*** [living]

In other words, Paul is telling these Hebrew Christians that men who are presently dying are receiving tithes, and Christ is presently receiving them right now in heaven as a continuing witness that he lives. Paul is declaring that tithing is a declaration that Christ as our High Priest lives.

Some commentators object that this is the only instance in Abraham's life that he ever tithed. No, this is the only recorded instance of him tithing. However, there are other indications that he continued to give a tithe that will be dealt with a little bit later.

2. Jacob

The second instance recorded prior to Moses is that of Jacob:

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth to you.—Gen. 28:20-22

Where did Jacob get the idea of a “tenth”? When did he ever perform this promise? Who did he give it to? Wouldn't it be foolish of Jacob to make such a promise if he had no idea how he would be able to give it to the Lord?

If we are going to make assumptions based on silence, then I think it is more reasonable to assume that Abraham did exactly what God said he would do:

*For I know him, that he **will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment...** - Gen. 18:19*

Abraham taught Isaac and Isaac taught Jacob and Jacob taught his twelve sons who taught their children so that God could say to Israel prior to giving of the Law at Mount Sinai:

*And the LORD said to Moses, **How long refuse you** to keep my commandments and my laws?—Ex. 16:28*

The appointed day of worship involved sacrifice unto the Lord. Remember, Moses had told Pharaoh that the children of Israel were going three days into the wilderness to offer sacrifice unto the Lord.

Prior to the Levitical priesthood, the firstborn of the family acted as the priest and leader in public worship:

And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that opens the

matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; - Numb. 3:12

Remember, that Job, Abraham and his children were shepherds by trade. The plundering of kings was not the weekly occupation of Abraham and so this event simply shows how consistent Abraham was in his tithing. But as the priest over his own family public worship, his tithe unto the Lord would be animals set apart to be offered up at the weekly altar unto the Lord. The firstborn was the priest in every family, who received a double portion from his father and led the family in public worship. Job was the public worship leader and priest in his family:

*And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that **Job sent and sanctified them**, and rose up early in the morning, and **offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all**: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. **Thus did Job continually.**—Job 1:5*

As priest he offered up sacrifices and interceded in behalf of their sins. The text says that he “*sent for them*” meaning they came and attended the public worship wherein Job acted as the family priest before God. The text says he “*sanctified them*” and that this was a customary habitual practice—“*did Job continually.*” So, there was an appointed place and appointed time where an appointed worship occurred overseen by a Priest. The tithe of a shepherd would be that portion of his flock that would be set apart for weekly sacrifice unto the Lord. What was not sacrificed on the day of worship would be set in store sanctified unto the Lord.

Therefore, tithing is not legalism, as it preceded the Law but is identified with the “father of all who are of faith” he who was justified without works by grace.

Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.—Gal. 3:7

And it is in direct connection with the father of all who are of faith that tithing is said to be a continuing witness that Christ lives (Heb. 7:8).

And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

Significantly, when God calls upon Israel to stop robbing Him of tithes and offerings, God bases it upon his immutability rather than the Law:

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

(7) Even from the days of your fathers you are gone away from my ordinances, and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, said the LORD of hosts. But you said, Wherein shall we return?

(8) Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, Wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings.

(9) You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed me, even this whole nation.

(10) Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, said the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

He does not charge them with robbing the priesthood, but robbing Him. Tithes and offerings are the tokens of gratitude that give recognition to God as creator and provider of all things. When Paul establishes why the wrath of God is justified upon all fallen mankind one of the first charges is:

*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, **neither were thankful**; - Rom.1:21*

Tithing is a manifestation of thankfulness. The same basic system of tithes and offerings established later under the Law of Moses had been established in principle under the firstborn family priest in public worship since the time of Abel.

C. MOSES

Under Moses there is a clear distinction made between tithes and offerings and how they are to be used distinct from one another.

1. Offerings

Offerings were free will offerings and were given from a joyful free heart of gratitude above and beyond the tithe.

*Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that **gives it willingly with his heart** you shall take my offering.—Ex.25:2*

*Take you from among you an offering to the LORD: whoever is of **a willing heart**, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass, - Ex. 35:5*

*And they came, every one **whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing**, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. -Ex. 35:21*

*The children of Israel brought **a willing** offering to the LORD, every man and woman, **whose heart made them willing** to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.—Ex. 35:29*

It is from these free will offerings that the House of God was built and maintained while the tithes went to the support of the ministry and then the ministry would give a tenth of the tithe back to the Lord for the support of the poor among them.

*Thus speak to the Levites, and say to them, When you take of the children of Israel the tithes **which I have given you from them for your inheritance**, then you shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, **even a tenth part of the tithe.**—Numb. 18:26*

A “heave offering” was simply presented first to the Lord and then taken and used in other ways.

With exception of the third-year tithe, all their tithes and offerings would be brought to the appointed place of worship:

But to the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even to his habitation shall you seek, and thither you shall come: And thither you shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and of your flocks: And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand to, you and your households, wherein the LORD your God has blessed you. . . . But when you go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety; Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall you bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which you vow to the LORD: You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your corn, or of your wine, or of your oil, or the firstborn of your herds or of your flock, nor any of your vows which you vow, nor your freewill offerings, or heave offering of your hand: But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God shall choose, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite that is within your gates: and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all that you put your hands to. Take heed to yourself that you forsake not the Levite as long as you live on the earth. - Deut. 12:5-7, 10-11, 17-19

It is with regard to the free will offerings that the Biblical principles provided by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8-9 apply. As it will be demonstrated later in more detail 2 Corinthians 8-9 is concerning a special free will love offering for the poor at Jerusalem.

2. Tithes

All the tithes of Israel that they offered as a “heave offering” were given wholly to the Levites as their inheritance.

*And, behold, I have given the children of Levi **all the tenth in Israel** for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.—Numbers 18:21*

*But **the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering** to the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said to them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.—Numb. 18:24*

The “heave offering” was simply lifted up by a Priest before the Lord and blessed and then it belonged to the Levites. The “heave offering” consisted of animals and grains, fruits and wine. The Lord continues to instruct the Levites what they were to do with the “heave offerings”:

*Thus speak to the Levites, and say to them, When you take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then **you shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.**—Lev. 18:26*

They would take the “heave offering” which was the tithe of Israel given to the Levites, and before the Levites could take it as their own, they too must offer up a tithe of it as a “heave offering” unto the Lord and share a portion of the rest with the offeror. So here is the picture. The head of an Israelite family comes and gives to the Priest his tithe for a “heave offering” unto the Lord. The Priest receives it, and then takes a tenth of that “heave offering” and offers it up to the Lord. The remaining nine tenth of the heave offering given to the priests belongs to the Levites in general while sharing a portion with the offeror. However, the tenth of the heave offering offered up by the individual priest belongs to the High Priest:

(27) And this your heave offering shall be reckoned to you, as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the wine press.

(28) Thus you also shall offer an heave offering to the LORD of all your tithes, which you receive of the children of Israel; and you shall give thereof the LORD’s heave offering to Aaron the priest.

However, the very best of the heave offering that the Levites received from the people was the part offered up to the Lord by the Priest as the “tithe” of their increase from what they received from the people:

*(29) Out of all your gifts you shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all **the best thereof**, even the hallowed part thereof out of it.*

After the Levites had offered their “tithe” unto the Lord, and share a small portion with the offeror, the rest of the heave offering was theirs to do as they pleased:

*(30) Therefore you shall say to them, When you have heaved the best thereof from it, then **it shall be counted to the Levites as the increase of the threshing floor, and as the increase of the wine press.***

(31) And you shall eat it in every place, you and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation.

It is clear that a small portion was shared with the offeror so that his family could feast while worshipping in Jerusalem before heading back home. In the following passage it is clear that the offeror would partake in some of what he brought as a feast before the Lord.

*And thither you shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and of your flocks: **And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand to, you and your households, wherein the LORD your God has blessed you.**—Deut. 12:6-7*

*Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall you bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice *וּשְׂמֵרָתְכֶם* which you *וּשְׂמַרְתֶּם* to the LORD: **And you shall rejoice***

before the LORD your God, you, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; for as much as he has no part nor inheritance with you.—Deut. 12:11-12

They are forbidden to partake of this portion at home for a feast, but must bring it to the appointed place of worship and eat their portion there before the Lord:

*You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your corn, or of your wine, or of your oil, or the firstborn of your herds or of your flock, nor any of your vows which you vow, nor your freewill offerings, or heave offering of your hand: **But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God shall choose**, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite that is within your gates: and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all that you put your hands to.—Deut. 12:17-18*

This implies that a portion of what they brought was for them to supply their family a feast during the time at the Tabernacle/temple while the rest was given to the Levites. They could eat other things at their home but the tithe was brought unto the Lord (Deut. 12:15-16).

However, if they lived too far from the House of God, then they could take of that portion which was reserved for their own feasting at the house of God and eat it at home

*If the place which the LORD your God has chosen to put his name there be too far from you, then you shall kill **of** your herd and **of** your flock, which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, and **you shall eat in your gates whatever your soul lusts after**. Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so you shall eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike.*

If they lived too far or it was too much for them to carry, then they are instructed to sell it and bring the money to the temple but while the money was still “*in your hand*” it could be used to purchase a lavish feast while they were visiting the temple away from home but the remainder belongs to the Levites.

*And if the way be too long for you, so that you are not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from you, which the LORD your God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD your God has blessed you: **Then shall you turn it into money, and bind up the money in your hand, and shall go to the place which the LORD your God shall choose:***

From that money they purchased a lavish feast for their family while they worshipped and tithed of the rest in Jerusalem:

And you shall bestow that money for whatever your soul lusts after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatever your soul desires: and you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you, and your—Deut. 14:24-26

Since the two most frequented times of the year to bring tithes and offerings to the house of God also coincided with the two great periods of feasts, this provision for their families financed their needs while worshipping. The early “first fruit” harvest of grains was ready to be offered to the Lord during April/May right at the time of Passover, Feast of Unleavened bread and Pentecost. The latter rain crops were ready to be offered in September right at the time of The Great Day of Atonement, the feast of tabernacles and trumpets.

Table 3. Harvesting and ingathering.
based on modern agricultural practices in Israel

	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Wheat:			x						
Barley		x							
Oats			x						
Peas		x	x						
Chickpeas				x					
Lentils		x	x						
Vetch		x	x						
Sesame					x				
Flax					x				
Millet					x	x			
Grapes				x	x	x	x		
Figs						x	x		
Pomegranates						x	x		
Olives							x	x	x

Taken from - www.gci.org/law/festivals/harvest 2/8/2018

The first tithe of the first harvest would come in early in the year about April/May during the time of the great feasts (Passover, Feast of unleavened bread, and Pentecost) where all males would have to come to Jerusalem and such offerings financed that feast.

The next harvest would come in about August/September and the tithe for that would be brought to Jerusalem every year which also financed the great feasts during that time when again all males had to appear for The Great Day of atonement (tabernacles, and trumpets).

3. Year of tithing

However, every third year was designated as the “year of the tithe” where they (may refer to those who lived too far from the appointed place—v. 24) did not go to Jerusalem but provided a great feast for those “within their gates” for those who were widows, fatherless, homeless, strangers and the Levite.

At the end of three years you shall bring forth all the tithe of your increase the same year, and shall lay it up within your gates: And the Levite, (because he has no part nor inheritance with you,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within your gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.—Deut. 14:28-29

After obeying the Lord during this year of the tithe then he could claim the following promise before the Lord:

When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year--the year of tithing--and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, 13 then shall you say before the LORD your God: 'I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which you have commanded me: I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten

them. 14 I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for unclean use, nor given any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that You commanded me. 15 Look down from Your holy habitation and bless Your people Israel and the land which you have given us, just as you swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey'(Deuteronomy 26:12-15).

4. Three different tithes?

Some have speculated that there were three different tithes based on Deuteronomy 14:22-27 and so they conclude the Jews actually paid 30% a year instead of 10%.

However, the Israelite paid his tithe as his crops came in twice a year, just as we pay our tithe as our check comes in. If we pay 10% out of last week's check and then pay 10% out of this week's check we don't conclude there are two types of tithing or that we are paying 20%. They tithed of all their increase, but it did not come in at one time. There was the tithe of the early grain harvest at the beginning of the summer, and then there was the fall harvest at the end of the summer.

The third year of tithing was the same tithe but with a greater application. They were to bring it out and share it with the Levite within their gates and the poor, stranger, fatherless and widows. The Levite was given first mention in its distribution and so the Levites were taken care of first in that year. The regular sin offerings, burnt offerings, peace offerings and free will offerings were still being brought to the appointed place of public worship and so the house of God was not forsaken on the third year. Therefore, there were not three different kinds of tithes but three different uses of the same tithe. Its primary use in all three cases was to provide for the ministry. Its secondary use was for the people of God who were involved in the worship at the House of God. Its final application was to the needy.

Those are good principles for properly directing the tithe today (1) Support of the Ministry; (2) Support of those within our own congregation; (3) Support of the needy outside the house of God.

D. DURING THE DAYS OF CHRIST

Christ affirmed tithing in Mathew 23:23 when he said “*these things you ought to have done*” and distinguished tithing from free will sacrificial giving when he honored the widow’s mite and, in another passage, spoke about bringing a “gift” unto the Lord.

E. PAUL

1. To the Corinthians

There are three different occasions that Paul addressed tithes and offerings to the Corinthians congregation:

- a. 1 Cor. 9:6-14—This refers to tithes which supported the Levites in the temple for the support of the ministry so that the ministry does not have to work.

13 Do you not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

14 Even so has the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Verse 13a refers to the tithe that all Israel brought to the temple. Verse 13b refers to the sacrificial offerings that the ministry could partake. Hence, verse 13 covers both tithe and offerings under the Law. In verse 14 the words “even so” means “just so” has the Lord ordained for those who preach the gospel—the ministry is to be sustained by tithes and offerings.

- b. 1 Cor. 16:1-3—This refers to the special free will offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. However, he uses the same Greek term also used to translate “storehouse” in Malachi 3:10 to describe bringing what is laid by “store” with regard to this offering.
- c. 2 Cor. 8-9—This refers to the same free will offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem. To claim the principles set forth in this passage replace

tithing is simply wrong. These are the common principles taught in the Old Testament for “freewill offerings” not tithing.

2. To the Hebrew Christians¹⁶³

- a. The book of Hebrews is framed within the context of the local assemblies (Heb. 10:25; 12:7-14).
- b. In proving that the Melchizedek Priesthood is superior to the Levitical Priesthood Paul establishes tithing under the Melchizedekian Priesthood. He uses all present tense verbs when he says:

Heb. 7:8 *And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.*

Notice, he does not say “then men that died received tithes” but “*here men that are dying are receiving tithes.*” One of the greatest Biblical reasons for giving tithes today is that it is a witness that you believe you have a living High Priest who is able to meet your needs. Second, when you give tithes to men, it is Christ in heaven that is actually counts that as being given to him.

II. CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

Its Order: In the Scriptures whenever the congregations had business to conduct the ordained members took the lead, the Scriptures were the guide and the final decision were made by the congregational body of members.

The Scriptures clearly teach and support the use of an orderly system so that confusion does not rule in the congregation:

1. Let all things be done decently and in order—1 Cor. 14:41

¹⁶³ I see no conflict between Hebrews 2:4-5 and the Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Hebrews. First, Paul was not called to be an apostle to the Hebrews but he was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Second, because the context has the early confirmation of the ministry of Christ among the Jews by the twelve apostles which Paul as Saul of Tarsus was present and did observe (Acts 7). Third, because it is most likely that Apollos was now with Paul (Tit. 3:13) and served him as his penman in writing this letter, therefore, explaining the literary style of Greek being used. Fourth, because Peter claims that Paul had written such an epistle to the Hebrew Christians (2 Pet. 3:15-17).

2. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace as in all the congregations—1 Cor. 14:33
3. Let all things be done with charity—1 Cor. 16:14
4. Let all things be done unto edifying—1 Cor. 14:26
5. Do all things for the glory of God—1 Cor. 10:31

It should never be necessary that congregations be bound by iron clad parliamentary laws in their business meetings. Christian love and courtesy should prevail to such an extent that a church can carry on her business transactions without paying too much heed to parliamentary regulations. Enough should be known, however, about such laws for a church to carry on a business meeting in "decency and in order."—J.E. Cobb, **Cobb's Baptist Church Manual**, (Baptist Pub. House Little Rock, AR 1979) p. 205

The key word above is “*should*” but sometimes due to our fallen nature it is necessary to impose some kind of parliamentary procedure to keep in check members who are not so spiritually mature to impose their own self-restraint. Therefore, most Baptist congregations follow the Roberts Rules of Order for conducting business meetings in order to maintain the Biblical principles above. Of course, such rules are not mandatory by Scripture.

Many congregations when they are constituted adopt church bylaws to make sure that a necessary minimum number of the whole church membership are present before any business can be conducted and that any important business must be announced to the whole church and given advance notice before it can be brought to the floor of the church in a business meeting.

In the 35 years I pastored congregations we rarely had any big blow ups, or disorderly conduct in any church business meeting. I think primarily it was due to the fact that I carefully prepared myself and our congregation for the business that would be conducted. I customarily gave the church a week's notice for any new business that might be considered in the upcoming business meeting and asked them to pray about. We immersed our business meetings in prayer before it occurred. Moreover, we did not have regular church business meetings but only as circumstances demanded.

Its Purpose: The church business meeting is not for changing the essential doctrine and practice of the church. That was determined at the time of the constitution of the church when it adopted the faith and practice of the authorizing church. If a fundamental change of doctrine and practice is thought to be needed, then the church has departed from its original faith and order and needs to be reconstituted by a church of like faith and order that reflects such a fundamental change. By “fundamental” change I am referring to essential doctrine and practice that would change its denominational character and/or fellowship of congregations.

However, further clarifications or expansions of their articles of faith in keeping with their essential doctrines and practice may be a proper subject for the church business meeting.

In the New Testament, business meetings were called primarily for filling, selecting, and qualifying candidates to fill vacant church offices (Acts 1:15-26; 6:1-5), or selecting and sending out missionaries (Acts 11:21; 13:1-4). Many church business meetings are unnecessary and uncalled for and merely give opportunity for disgruntled members to vent, or heretics to cause division. In the New Testament the ordained leadership usually called such meetings as they were needed.

III. CHILDREN AND SUNDAY SCHOOL

The modern Sunday school was started in England by Robert Raikes in 1780. C. B. Eavey says of him,

Accordingly, in 1780, he started his first Sunday school in Mfr.s Meredith's kitchen in Sooty Alley, so name because chimney sweeps lived there.—C. B. Eavey, **History of Christian Education**, (Moody Press, Chicago, Il. 1964) p. 224

Prior to that time the whole family were part of the worship and teaching services.

The Scriptures make it clear that the fathers are responsible for the instruction of their wives and children at home in the things of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-5). The Pastor would instruct the assembly and then the fathers were responsible for teaching their own families as they understood the Word as guided by the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament times many congregations met in the homes and the older women would aid the younger women with their children (Tit. 2:4).

However, that does not mean that Sunday school violates Biblical precepts or principles.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, there is a greater rise of divorce and broken families today than ever before. Many single mothers are attending church and have no husband at home to teach the children and/or the father is lost and does not come to church. Sunday school meets those needs.

Some congregations have what is called “children’s church” that removes all the children from the main service until they are teenagers and disciplined to behave in the worship service as many attendees bring in undisciplined children. Many Baptists are divided over these issues. Some would argue that children in the worship service distracts the parents and other members and interferes with the worship because of unruly children. Today, parents are afraid to administer corporeal punishment in public or even to take the children outside to administer corporeal punishment due to being reported to social services.

Personally, I lean to having the children together with their parents in the worship service. When I was a child, my brother and I had no mother as she died when I was but three years old. Dad was in the pulpit preaching. However, he told us before services that if we misbehaved then after service at home we would answer for it and he always kept his promise in actions that left a lasting memory.

Selecting Sunday School Teachers

The role and office for teaching the congregation belongs exclusively to the pastoral office. Sunday school teachers are merely an extension of that office. Therefore, the congregation should allow the Pastor to select and/or remove Sunday school teachers. The problems with congregational selection of Sunday school teachers are many. Majority opinion in the selection of teachers may reflect popularity rather than proper qualifications.

Many times, congregational selection is a prime way for slick talking, but popular heretics to gain foothold in the teaching process whereby to

¹⁶⁴ *Of course, those who live by the regulative principle would reject anything added to the Scriptures.*

undermine the Pastor. It places an obstacle in the path of the Pastor in the removal of a teacher.

The Pastor is God's designated overseer to feed the church (Acts 20:28). The Pastor should select and remove Sunday school teachers rather than the congregation, as the Sunday school teacher is simply an extension of his office. God has established the office of Pastor to oversee doctrinal instruction and the church has called him to that office and should allow him to appoint those whom he believes are consistent with his teaching and remove those who are not.

The primary qualification for a Sunday school teacher is their moral and doctrinal example with an aptitude for teaching. It is better for the Pastor to teach Sunday school class with all the members and children than to place them under inept teachers and/or teachers who are not qualified morally or doctrinally.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What do the Hebrew and Greek terms translated "tithe" mean?
2. What are the two pre-Moses examples of tithing?
3. Abraham had been a heathen idol worshipper (Josh. 24:2). From whence did he get the concept of tithing to the true God?
4. What is implied by "the way of the Lord" in Genesis 18:19?
5. From whence did Jacob get the idea of tithing?
6. Are there three different kinds of tithes, or were there three different applications of the tithe?
7. Did the children of Israel receive everything at once or was it spread throughout the year at various harvests?
8. Was the first fruit tithe an additional 10% to other tithes, or was it simply part of the tithe for all their increase in the whole year?
9. Was tithes and offerings distinguished in the Old Testament?
10. Does 1 Cor. 16:1-2 and 2 Cor. 8-9 deal with tithes or a special free will offering?
11. Did Jesus approve of tithing?
12. What does giving a tithe declare in Hebrews 7:8?
13. Does Paul use completed action verbs or incomplete action verbs in Heb. 7:8?

14. List five Scriptures that provide a biblical basis for an orderly church business meeting.
15. Are Church business meetings designed to change doctrine and practice?
16. Who is attributed in history as the father of the modern-day Sunday school as distinct from the church worship service?
17. What kind of Sunday school teacher should be selected by the Church?
18. Who is the overseer of biblical instruction, and thus over the Sunday school?

REQUIRED READING:

Baptist Church Manual by Pendleton—pp. 163-177



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 12 LESSON 2

Worship—Part 8— Patterns of Perverted Worship

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to investigate “*the way of Cain*” and, (2) to investigate “*strange fire*” and, (3) to investigate “*high places*”.

INTRODUCTION: The vast majority of religion on earth has its historical and/or doctrinal origin with “*Mystery Babylon*”¹⁶⁵ or the mystery religion that was first institutionalized at the tower of Babel after being first personalized by Cain in Genesis chapter three. The vast amount of Christianity is nothing more than this polluted and Christianized Babylonian religion or “*the way of Cain*.”

I. THE WAY OF CAIN

*Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain....—
Jude 11*

*And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had **respect unto Abel** and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering **he had not respect**. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.—
Gen. 4:4-5*

*By faith Abel offered unto God **a more excellent sacrifice than Cain**, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous,*

¹⁶⁵ Students are urged to read “*Two Babylons*” by Alexander Hislop. This book documents the origin of false religions and how they dispersed into all cultures when God confused the languages at Babel.

God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.—
 Heb. 11:4

Jude in his defense of “*the faith*” gives this solemn warning. What is “*the way of Cain*”? It is mentioned with two other Old Testament men (“*the error of Balaam*” and “*the gainsaying of Core*”). Balaam and Korah attacked and tried to pervert God’s pattern of *public* worship.

For example, Balaam attacked God’s pattern of public worship in Israel by introducing idolatry through fornication among them. Korah attempted to usurp and overthrow the public ministry established in God’s divine pattern.

The “*way of Cain*” is opposition to “*the way of the Lord*” which ultimately “*corrupted his way upon the earth*” (Gen. 6:12) bringing universal judgment upon the earth in the form of Noah’s flood. The way of the Lord refers to the pattern of faith and practice. “*The way of Cain*” is grouped with Balaam and Korah because they too attacked and tried to pervert God’s pattern of public worship. The way of Balaam is defined within the context of Genesis 3-6 with special emphasis on Genesis 4:3-16.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?

And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.—Gen. 4:3-16

In order to understand “*the way of Cain*” there are some basic questions the reader should ask about the worship account provided in Genesis 4:3-16

1. Where did Cain and Abel get the idea to offer a sacrifice?
2. What is the meaning of “*well*” and “*accepted*” in verse 5?
3. What is the manifest difference between the worship of Abel versus the worship of Cain?
4. Why did Cain kill Abel when it was God, rather than Abel that rejected his sacrifice?
5. How could Cain “*go out from the presence*” of an omnipresent God (Gen. 4:16)?
6. What was the spiritual condition of Cain and Abel?

A. THE WAY OF THE LORD

In response to the first question, it should be obvious that either they were made aware of this manner of worship by their parent's instructions and practice, or directly by God, or a combination of both.

For example, when Adam and Eve sinned, their conscience exposed their spiritual and physical nakedness in their own eyes, and before God, which they tried to conceal by fig leaves, and then by hiding in the garden. God found, confronted and exposed their sin. God preached the gospel unto them (Genesis 3:15) about the good news of promised "*seed of the woman*" (virgin birth of Christ) who would be hurt by Satan ("*bruise his heel*") but in the end the promised seed would destroy Satan ("*bruise thy head*"). This was followed by God providing skins of animals to cover their shame (Gen. 3:22). Obviously, the skins for their "*coats*" required the death of the animals.

New Testament prophets describe Jesus Christ as "*the lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev. 13:8) and "*the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*" (Jn. 1:29). Genesis 1-4 would be included in the time frame "*from the foundation of the world.*"

In addition to this obvious typology applied directly to Christ as "*the lamb slain*" Jesus Christ identified Abel as the very first prophet of God.

*That the blood of **all the prophets**, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; **From the blood of Abel** unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.—Lk. 11:50-51*

Peter also claims that "*all the prophets*" preached the very same gospel for remission of sins:

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.—Acts 10:43

God preached this same gospel to Adam and Eve, and then illustrated it in type by shedding the blood of lambs to provide "*coats*" to cover their physical nakedness, which also were types of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Cain and Abel learned about the sacrifice of a lamb

as a blood atonement as the center piece of God's pattern of public worship through their parents who received it directly from God, just as they learned about the time and place for public worship.

B. THE WAY OF CAIN IS THE WAY OF DISOBEDIENCE

This brings us to the second question with regard to the application of the terms "*well*" and "*accepted*" in Genesis 4:5. God "*accepte*" the sacrifice of Abel because Abel did "*well*" in the sight of God by observing the pattern established by God for worship. God is the law giver who from the beginning established what it is to do "*well*" and what it is not to do well (Gen. 2:13). You did "*well*" if you obeyed the Lord's **revealed will**, but you did not do well if you disobeyed God's revealed will. Abel obeyed God and thus did "*well*" and both he and his sacrifice were "*respected*" by God, while Cain did not do "*well*" but disobeyed God's revealed will and that is why both he and his sacrifice were not respected by God.

C. THE WAY OF CAIN IS THE WAY OF BLOODLESS WORSHIP

This brings us to the third question. What is the manifest difference between the worship of Abel and the worship of Cain? It is neither the place nor the time, nor is it the proper object of worship (the one true God) that is in question. The only manifest difference is the kind of sacrifice being offered. Abel offered up what represented the life and death of a lamb, the "*firstling*" of his flocks. There is no question that this particular offering continued to represent the proper sin offering throughout the remainder of the Scriptures right up to Christ being offered up on the cross. It is the preeminent sacrifice to represent the gospel of Christ.

In direct contrast, Cain offered up a bloodless sacrifice from the "*fruit of the ground*" as the occupation of Cain was that of a farmer. Moreover, man came from the ground but life came from God. Abel offered life that came from God by the shedding of blood. Significantly, Cain's offering is the only food offering found in the book of Genesis. The consistent Genesis pattern among the people of God is the animal sacrifice. Under the Mosaic ceremonial laws, a food offering would have been acceptable if it had followed

a sin offering. Without the shedding of blood man cannot approach God, as there is no remission of sin apart from the shedding of blood. Hence, the ceremonial type of Christ's sacrifice was indispensable in the Old Testament form of worship. The sin offering was the necessary prerequisite as a type in order to make a food offering acceptable. The sin offering typified the basis of atonement while the food offering typified the righteousness of the offeror based upon the atonement. To offer a food offering without a sin offering would be a ceremonial declaration of your own righteousness apart from Christ, and thus a rejection of the substitutionary atonement of Christ and declaration of justification by works. This innovation by Cain was the first declaration by ceremonial type of "another gospel" or the gospel of justification by works based ultimately upon the life of Cain, rather than the life of Christ. Hence, the way of Cain is the perversion of public worship of God at the very heart and essence of that worship—denial of the substitutionary atonement of Christ.

D. THE WAY OF CAIN IS THE WAY OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

This brings us to our fourth question. Why did Cain kill Abel when it was God that rejected the sacrifice of Cain?

And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.—Gen. 4:4-7

How did God make known that He respected the one and not the other? The text does not say. However, many believe God showed his respect in the same manner as he did when Moses and Solomon offered up the first offerings in the dedication of the tabernacle and temple by consuming the sacrifice by fire from heaven.

Cain was visibly upset and angry because God rejected his offering - "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

However, Cain had no right to be angry, for the fault was with him and

his offering. God directly confronted Cain and laid the blame at his own door. “*if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.*” The Hebrew term translated “*lieth*” is descriptive of a crouching beast waiting to spring and devour. Not only did his rejection originate with his own sin, but with willful sin. Both Cain and Abel were sinners by nature, and the law of sin indwelt them both. However, willful sin is much more grievous, as willful, or presumptuous sin is the unleashing of the beast within that can ultimately destroy us.

Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.- Psa.19:13

The real root of his willful sin is manifested in the words “*And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*”

The language infers a root of fear that promoted jealousy within Cain in regard to Abel. Cain was next in line to Adam as the apparent heir or firstborn to rule over the world (Gen. 1:26). By this time Adam and Eve had multiple younger siblings (Gen. 5:4 “*sons and daughters*”).¹⁶⁶ His firstborn position was not in jeopardy as long as he did “*well*” or obeyed the Lord. It would require some humility by the elder son to procure the proper sacrifice, as he was a farmer, and Abel was the shepherd. He would have to procure it from his younger brother the shepherd. This fear and root of jealousy had now come to its head by God showing respect unto Abel and his offering over Cain and his offering.

Cain had been rebuked and for him and his worship to be “*accepted*” he would have to do what he knew was regarded as “*well*” with God. He would have to swallow his pride and go to his younger brother Abel and secure the proper sacrifice provision—a lamb. Perhaps this explains why after this rebuke that Moses says “*And Cain talked with Abel his brother...*” (Gen. 4:17a).

His jealousy rooted in fear and pride was too great, and the unleashed beast (indwelling law of sin) within Cain resulted in the death of Abel and rejection of “*the way of the Lord*” or God’s pattern of salvation.

¹⁶⁶ Genesis 5 is a listing of firstborn sons. The firstborn was not necessarily the first male child born but referred to the position of rightful heir. This is seen in the fact that Seth takes the position of firstborn while Cain who was actually the first male child born was still alive. This proves that Cain’s position as firstborn had been taken from him and given to Seth.

Religious persecution of the just is the way of Cain (Lk. 11:50-51; Rev. 17:5).

E. THE WAY OF CAIN IS THE WAY OF APOSTASY

This brings us to the fifth question. Moses says that “*he went out from the presence of the Lord*” (Gen. 4:16). We have dealt with some of these questions in a previous lesson but repetition is the best teacher. How can Cain leave the presence of an omnipresent God? David denied that he could go any place that would escape the presence of God (Psa. 139). Hence, the text must refer to the appointed place of worship where God routinely met with the worshippers in their act of public worship. From this point forward, the public appointed place where a public altar exists to worship God is called “*the house of God*.” When Abraham built a public altar for worship he called it “*Bethel*” or the “*house of God*” (Gen.12:8). When Jacob built an altar for worship, it was at Bethel (Gen. 35:1). The finality of this statement “*he went out from the presence of the Lord*” and dwelt in the land of Nod was an act of complete apostasy from “*the house of God*” and thus a complete apostasy from “*the way of the Lord*.”

Cain departed and produced a family line of his own (Gen. 4:18-24) which kept its own distinct and separate family line of firstborn sons in distinction from the firstborn family line of Adam through Seth (Gen. 4:25-5:32). This separation lasted until intermarriage occurred between them in Genesis 6:1-5. That intermarriage with those who followed “*the way of Cain*” resulted in a universal wickedness and apostasy from “*the way of the Lord*” by the whole human race which ended in the destruction of the world:

*And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt;
for all flesh had **corrupted his way** upon the earth.—Gen. 6:13*

This initial separation by God’s people from those who pervert “*his way*” (Gen. 4:18-5:32) has been the continued command after the flood which finds its clearest teaching in the ceremonial laws of Moses, and is still expressed in the teachings of the apostle Paul:

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for
what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?*

and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, - 2 Cor. 6:17

The revealed will of God is still that believers should marry only believers.

*The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, **she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.** 1 Cor. 7:39*

This brings us to the sixth and final question. What was the spiritual condition of Cain and Abel? We have inspired men to instruct us in this matter?

*Not as Cain, **who was of that wicked one**, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.-1 Jn. 3:12*

The Bible says that Cain “*was of that wicked one.*” Jesus sheds more light on the meaning “*of that*” wicked one:

*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*

Notice that both John and Jesus are characterizing false religionists. The doctrine of a person may indicate the spiritual condition of that person or at minimum indicates demonic influence.

If Cain was “*of that wicked one*” meaning he was “*of your father the devil*” then Abel was of God and his spiritual Father was God. In regard to Abel the writer of Hebrews says:

***By faith** Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, **by which he obtained witness that he was righteous**, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.—Heb. 11:4*

The sacrifice by Abel “*obtained witness that he was righteous.*” He never offered it to obtain righteousness but the offering was witness that he was already righteous “*by faith.*” The same is seen in Abraham who was justified (imputed righteousness and remission of sins—Rom. 4:5-8) before he submitted to a divine ordinance (Rom. 4:9-11). Today baptism is such a witness as an external type of salvation (1 Pet. 3:21 “*the like figure*” of an already “*good conscience*”).

“*Learn not the way of Cain*” as those who follow this way are following the doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1) which may indicate at worst they are lost religious people and at best deceived believers who need to “*come out*” of that kind of public worship (Rev. 18:4). “*The way of Cain*” eventually produced the first organized institutional religious rebellion against God at the tower of Babel which continued among all nations as “*Mystery Babylon*” or the “*the Great Whore*”—as polluted public religion and worship.

The way of Cain dominated much of the religious worship of Israel¹⁶⁷ even in the time of Christ (Lk. 11:50-51). The way of Cain is the repudiation of the essentials of true public worship or “*the way of the Lord.*” It is the way of all false religion. It is the “*broad way*” (Mt.7:13).

II. STRANGE FIRE

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. - Lev. 10:1

In Leviticus chapter nine God had provided fire straight from heaven to kindle the wood on the brazen altar:

¹⁶⁷ *After the death of Solomon, the children of God often followed “the way of Cain” as in the case of Jeroboam who introduced another pattern of worship into Israel in order to maintain his rule over the ten tribes.*

*And there came a fire out from before the LORD and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.—
Lev. 9:24*

Moreover, the Levitical priesthood was commanded to sustain this initial flame on the altar never allowing it go out:

And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings. The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.—Lev. 6:12-13

It was only from this perpetuated fire upon the altar that censers were used to transport it to keep the candlesticks and altar of incense burning in the Holy Place. Also, the High Priest entered into the most holy place once a year and not without fire from the altar burning in his censer. Hence, it was necessary for worship in all three divisions of the tabernacle/temple.

When a plague came upon the children of Israel, Moses told them to take fire from the altar with incense and put within their censers:

*And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.
— Lev. 16:46*

Israel had sinned greatly and was suffering the wrath of God against their sin. Therefore, by bringing the fire from the brazen altar in censers into the midst of Israel, the plague was stopped due to what the initial fire from God upon the altar symbolized – the satisfaction of God’s wrath upon the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This same fire from the brazen alter was extended to all three divisions of the tabernacle/temple through the use of censers. This symbolized that the entire pattern for ministry, service and worship in the house of God was inseparable from the gospel truth.

The initial occurrence of this fire from heaven was attended by the house of God being immersed in the Shekinah glory:

Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house... the glory of the LORD upon the house –2 Chron. 7:1,3

This combination of fire and immersion occurred at the beginning in the dedication of each new house of God. This occurred after the building of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:35; Lev. 9:24) and after the building of the temple (2 Chron. 7:1-3) and after the building of the church (Acts 2:1-3).

Therefore, both the fire and the immersion in the Shekinah glory were public manifestations of approval that this house was built according to God's divine pattern for public worship. Although, the immersion in the Shekinah glory did not continue after the dedication, the fire on the altar was perpetuated by the priesthood and through censers was extended into all three aspects of the house of God. This fire was a perpetual reminder that this house was built according to a divinely approved divine pattern.

By obtaining fire from some other source than the altar, Nadab and Abihu were cutting off, thus separating the fire from the altar from the rest of the sanctuary using "strange fire" in their ministry and worship. Moreover, they had cut off God as its source and deviated from the divine pattern of ministry and worshipped that God initially instituted and approved.

III. THE EXTENDED SYMBOLISM OF THE BRAZEN ALTAR

This fire from heaven had its first contact with the sacrifice upon the brazen altar. Fire consuming that sacrifice signified God had accepted that sacrifice as a sufficient substitutionary provision for the sins of his people. The Levitical ministry was to take that fire from off the brazen altar through censers and use it in their service throughout the other two courts of God's House. It was used to keep the candlesticks burning and the altar of incense burning, and once a year when the High Priest went into the holiest of holies in the very presence of God he must have coals from off that altar in his censer or else he would die.

By way of extension, this fire was inseparable from every aspect of divine service and worship performed in this house of God. Symbolically it demanded that the truth of the gospel is consistent with every aspect of

divine service and worship in the house of God. Any public ministry or worship that is inconsistent with the truth of the gospel is a ministry of strange fire. In the New Testament “house of God” the truth of the gospel is the basis for baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It is the basis for its entire worship service. It is the basis for its commission. This inseparability of the gospel truth from every aspect of divine worship is what Paul meant when he said,

*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save
Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 1 Cor. 2:2*

Every aspect of the divine pattern of God’s house is consistent with the truth of the gospel. This inseparability from the truth of the gospel is what makes the church as the house of God “the pillar and ground of the truth.

Contrariwise, this means that any church or ministry or administration of the ordinances or the Great Commission which is inconsistent with the truth of the gospel is the results of “strange fire.” For example, any congregation which is constituted of unregenerate infants is a “strange fire” ministry. Any public ministry that preaches “another gospel” is a ministry of “strange fire.” Any message that mixes our works with Christ’s finished work is “strange fire.” Any administration of ordinances that pervert the gospel (sprinkling, pouring, infant baptism; sacramental view of ordinances, perverting symbolism) is “strange fire.” Any ministry that perverts the Lord’s Supper into a sacrament or open communion is a ministry of “strange fire.”

A. DIFFERENT SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

The only fire available within the house of God was the fire upon the brazen altar or derived from that fire upon brazen altar. This means that “strange fire” is obtained from some other source and authority than what God provided and authorized. Abihu and Nadab, had self-originated, and self-authorized, and self-authenticated their own fire. Not only so, but this departure perverted the entire divine pattern of worship instituted by God. They had no authority from God to deviate from His authorized established pattern of worship. Strange fire has its origin, pattern and authority in someone else or something else other than in God.

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.—Isa. 50:11

They had no authority to self-originate; self-authenticate and self-perpetuate their new pattern of worship and that is precisely what they had done. “Strange fire” is the introduction of a new unauthorized source of ministry and worship. Strange fire “corrupts” the house of God and adulterates it into just another “high place” or harlot place of worship. The New Testament “house of God” – the church – (1 Tim. 3:15) had been built according to a precise divine pattern (Mt. 16:18; 28:18-20; Acts 2:40-41) along with all of its ordinances (Lk. 7:29-30; Mt. 26:12-30; 1 Cor. 5, 10, 11) and ministry (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13; Acts 6). What Nadab and Abihu intentionally attempted to do within the “house of God,” is exactly what Paul predicts men would do to the New Testament “house of God”:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.—Acts 20:29-30.

They introduce an unauthorized source of worship that deviates from the divine pattern leading it into apostasy, adulterating it as a “harlot” church, or they self-originate a new kind of church that has departed from the faith. This is precisely how all false churches and false denominations have their origin. They self-originate by their own self-authority and self-authenticate their own pattern of ministry, service and worship.

The New Testament House of God has been authorized by God the Son to do the work of the ministry, administer the ordinances and to reproduce after its own kind (Mt. 28:18-20). Just as the Levitical Priesthood were to perpetuate the fire never allowing it to go out, so the Great Commission is the process for perpetuating and reproducing New Testament churches after their own kind until the end of the age never allowing the New Testament church institution to fail. The Lord promises his day in and day out presence in perpetuating his church – “I will be with you always, even until the end of

the world.” In the first church at Jerusalem the divine pattern for service and worship was established with authority to perpetuate itself through carrying out the Great Commission.

The authority given to the first church at Jerusalem is the authority to evangelize, then baptize and gather those baptized into a teaching/observing assembly. This means that these new baptized believers are either brought into an existing New Testament church or they are constituted into a new church. In either case, New Testament churches are derived from previous New Testament churches through the administration of this commission “day in and day out” until the end of this age.

“Strange fire” is seeking authority outside the house of God in order to perform the Great Commission ministry. “Strange fire” is how all false churches and denominations came into existence by usurping the authority that Christ placed only in an existing New Testament church to reproduce churches of like faith and order after their own kind through their administration of the Great Commission

B. STRANGE FIRE AND “ANOTHER SPIRIT”

God is not the author of “strange fire.” Strange fire originates with “another spirit” the “spirit of error.” A good example of “another spirit” is found in the worship service at Corinth. Paul warned them about “another Jesus” and “another gospel” and “another spirit” in their midst (2 Cor. 11:4). All of this is symbolized by “strange fire.” Worship that is defiant to the Lord’s revealed will is calling Christ “accursed” in the most practical sense (1 Cor. 12:3). Their worship service was more comparable to their former pagan worship under the leadership of demons (1 Cor. 12:2). Strange fire was in their midst. When worship is under the leadership of the Spirit, then all aspects of public worship will surrender to the Lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3).

Paul clearly states that “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor. 14:33) in regard to true public worship. However, confusion characterized the public worship at Corinth. Therefore, Paul was clearly stating the “confusion” that characterized their public worship in the church of Corinth had some other spiritual source than God – and that is the origin of all “strange fire” (1 Tim. 4:1). Strange fire breeds confusion and incomprehension corporately

(1 Cor. 14:1-12) and individually (1 Cor. 14:13-18) instead of edification, understanding and unity in all aspects of public worship. Strange fire breeds disorder (1 Cor. 14:23-27) and unseemly and indecent conduct in the name of spirituality (1 Cor. 14:28-29). Strange fire reverses the Biblical pattern of the sexes in the name of spirituality (1 Cor. 14:33-36). The prevalent “spirit of ecumenical confusion” is also strange fire. The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit “of truth” but is the Spirit of unity manifested by conformity to, instead of rebellion against truth. When Jesus Christ prayed for the unity of the saints He did so according to the basis of truth:

Sanctify them by thy word, thy word is truth—Jn. 17:17

The essence of “strange fire” is manifested when congregations and denominations with uncommon doctrine and practice join in worship based upon a common experience (tongues, slain in the spirit, etc.), and yet without any change of conflicting doctrine. The theory of the universal invisible church is a doctrine that justifies this spirit of ecumenical confusion by claiming all true believers are members of one mystical invisible body, even though divided by doctrine and practice, and even though many may be excluded by congregations as heretics (2 Thes. 3:6).

Strange fire is worship, or a ministry, or a church, or a denomination that has been cut off from the Spirit of truth and it is manifested by their departure from the faith once delivered or the pattern of like faith and practice found in New Testament congregations.

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.—Isa. 50:11

Conclusion

At minimum, “*strange fire*” identifies exactly opposite with what the “*fire*” from heaven is identified with. “*Strange fire*” at minimum represents deviation (false doctrines and practices) from the divine pattern of worship. It represents another source and authority behind a deviate pattern of worship.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What two other Old Testament characters and errors in public worship does Jude include with “the way of Cain”?
2. How did Korah and Balaam attempt to pervert the worship of God?
3. The phrase “*the way of Cain*” is in opposition to the Biblical phrase “the way of.....”–Fill in the missing words.
4. Where did Cain and Abel get the idea to offer a sacrifice?
5. What is the meaning of “*well*” and “*accepted*” in verse 5?
6. What is the manifest difference between the worship of Abel? versus the worship of Cain?
7. Why did Cain kill Abel when it was God, rather than Abel that rejected his sacrifice?
8. How could Cain “*go out from the presence*” of an omnipresent God (Gen. 4:16)?
9. What was the spiritual condition of Cain and Abel?
10. What is the institutionalized form of “the way of Cain”?
11. Where did fire come from to light the wood on the altar in the House of God?
12. What did fire from heaven indicate about the finished work called “the house of God” What aspect of the new house of God was the specific object of the fire from heaven and what was the symbolic significance of the fire with that object?
13. Was this fire restricted to the altar or was it used in every aspect of the house of God? What is that significance?
14. What then is “strange fire”?
15. What three phrases in 2 Cor. 11:4 characterize strange fire?

WEEK 12 LESSON 3

Worship—Part 9— Patterns of Perverted Worship

LESSON GOALS: This lesson is designed to investigate Biblical worship with respect to what the Bible designates as (1) high places and (2) the Great Harlot.

INTRODUCTION: Some feel that one church is as good as another and as long as a person is directing their personal worship to God, then nothing else really matters, as they can worship God on a mountain top as well as in a valley or in one denominational church as much as another. It is true that *personal* worship may be performed anywhere at any time as long as it is performed “*in spirit and in truth.*” However, the Scriptures do not agree that *public* worship may be performed just anywhere as *public* worship involves a proper scriptural pattern involving correct forms and relationship with what the Scriptures characterize as the “*house of God*” and all other forms and relationships are what the Scriptures call “*high places*” and “*the Great Whore*” or perverted forms of *public* worship.

IV. THE COUNTERFEITS— “HIGH PLACES”

Abihu and Nadab introduced “*strange fire*” within the house of God in an attempt to pollute the divine pattern of worship internally. However, it was Jeroboam who worked from the outside to completely transform and pollute the divine pattern of worship. God called such perversions “*high places.*”

1 Kings 12:27 If *this people go up to do sacrifice in **the house of the LORD** at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this*

people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

*31 And **he made an house of high places**, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. 32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, **like unto the feast that is in Judah**, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.*

*33 So he offered **upon the altar which he had made** in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month **which he had devised of his own heart**; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.*

Jeroboam tried to replicate God's pattern for public worship that eventually became more popular in Israel than the "house of God" at Jerusalem. They became so popular in the time of Isaiah that even the enemies of God thought the "high places" represented God, as much as the temple in Jerusalem.

But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem. Ye shall worship before this altar?—Isa. 36:7

This is precisely what has occurred in “church history” with the Roman Catholic Church and then the Reformed Roman Catholic congregations (Protestantism). This is precisely what has occurred in the 19th century with the Restoration church movement (JW’s, Mormon’s, Seventh Day Adventists, and Pentecostalism, etc.). High places have become recognized as equal if not superior places of worship than New Testament congregations.

Jeroboam usurped God’s right to authorize and originate a public ministry by self-authorizing and originating a public ministry that perverted the pattern of God’s ministry in Jerusalem:

*And he made an house of high places, and **made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.**—1 Kings 12:31*

*So they feared the LORD, **and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places,** which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.—2 Kings 17:32*

This is precisely what has occurred with all the “high places” in church history. They have adopted an unqualified ministry, ordinances and doctrine and practice.

Jeroboam authorized and originated public sacrifices and feasts that perverted God’s pattern in Jerusalem:

*1 Kings 12:32 **And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah,** and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he offered **upon the altar which he had made** in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month **which he had devised of his own heart;** and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.*

Notice the repetitive theme that all of this was self-originated and self-authorized:

1 Kings 12:28 *Whereupon the king took counsel....29 He set.....31 And he made.....32 Jeroboam ordained..... So, he did..... he had made.... he placed.... which he had made.....33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made.... which he devised of his own heart.....and he offered....”*

This is precisely what Constantine, Luther, Calvin, King Henry VIII, Charles and John Wesley, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles Russell, Ellen G. White, and etc., have done—self-originated and self-authorized their own kind of congregations or “*high places*.”

Strange fire is the attempt to pollute the divine pattern of public worship either from the inside, or by an external complete counterfeit. Strange fire is self-authorized worship according to patterns and doctrines/ traditions of men.

Paul predicted that there would be internal attempts to pollute the New Testament pattern of public worship:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.—Acts 20:28-30

The Apostle John described external counterfeit places of public worship under the metaphor of “*harlots*” (Rev. 17:5; 18:4) or polluted forms of institution worship, while the divine pattern of worship is described under the metaphor of a “*chaste virgin*” (2 Cor. 11:2) and/or “*bride*” (Rev. 19:6-7).

Therefore, *public* worship “*in spirit and in truth*” has been established according to a divine pattern. It has an appointed time [The Lord’s Day], a public appointed place [The house of God], around a public appointed sacrifice [the gospel of Jesus Christ].

Strange fire represents several clear ideas. **First**, it is fire from another source than God and His authority. **Second**, it is worship that does not originate from, and characterize the brazen altar sacrifice, thus it represents worship characterized by “*another gospel*.” **Third**, it represents a whole system

of worship that has deviated from the divine pattern of public worship. That divine pattern not only includes the basics of the Lord's Day, the Lord's House and the Lord's sacrifice, but the pattern of membership, ministry and ordinances that characterize the Lord's House. Where there is no scriptural baptism there can be no true New Testament congregation. Strange fire includes departure from the essentials of personal worship. It is manifested in the five perverted forms of worship (will worship, idolatrous worship, vain worship, disorderly worship and ignorant worship).

Worship in High Places by God's People

"*High places*" were polluted institutions for public worship. Today we have many such "*high places*" or false congregations wherein God's people may be found performing public worship unto God. However, this is not new. In the Old Testament true children of God were found among those who worshipped Jehovah in "high places":

So, they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, *which sacrificed for them **in the houses of the high places***.—2 Kings 17:32

*Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, **yet unto the LORD their God only***.—2 Chron. 33:17

In the New Testament there were those who professed to be followers of Christ who served God in such "high places" or perverted places of public worship: outside

*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her**, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*—Rev. 18:4

The New Testament congregation is metaphorically described as a "*chaste virgin*" (2 Cor. 11:2). The metaphor of a "*chaste virgin*" refers to a congregation that conformed unto and was faithful to the divine pattern for public worship. Paul warned that such a metaphorical "*chaste virgin*" could be metaphorically "*corrupted*" (2 Cor. 11:3) departing from that divine pattern and embracing the strange fire of "*another gospel*" and "*another spirit*" and "*another Jesus*" (2 Cor. 11:4) through a perverted ministry (2 Cor. 11:5-11).

A metaphorically “*corrupted*” chaste virgin is a metaphorical “*whore*” or “*harlot*” or that which is not faithful to Christ. The Great Whore and her harlot daughters in Revelation 17-19:4 represent such public institutions of worship that have embraced “*strange fire*” and deviated from the divine pattern of worship or “*the faith once delivered.*”

V. THE GREAT WHORE AND HER HARLOT DAUGHTERS

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying to me, Come here; I will show to you the judgment of the great whore that sits on many waters:

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit on a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5 And on her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The identification of the Great Whore and her harlot daughters is one of the most disputed passages in Scripture and not without good reason.

Satan wants to conceal her true identity as it is essential to his ministry of confusion and counterfeiting true Christianity.

Some have attempted to confuse Christians concerning her true identity by suggesting she is the Roman Government or the city of Rome, or the city of Jerusalem.

A. SHE IS NOT GOVERNMENT

She is sitting on the back of the beast with seven heads and in Biblical typology government is pictured as beasts (Daniel 7). This beast is an amalgamation of the beasts described in Daniel 7. In addition, this woman is said to have committed fornication with the “*kings of this world*” thus again, distinguishing her from secular rulers and governments as “*kings*” are heads of government. This “*fornication*” with kings is metaphorical and refers to the union of state with religion.

B. SHE IS NOT JERUSALEM OR REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL

One of the most common interpretations of the Preterist¹⁶⁸ view of eschatology is that the Great Whore is symbolic of Jerusalem and the apostasy of Israel. However, this harlot is said to be presently reigning over the kingdoms of the world at the time John wrote as he uses the present tense in Revelation 17:18. Jerusalem, or Israel did not reign over anyone but was ruled over by Rome and was eventually was destroyed by Rome in the first century. The economic prosperity described in Revelation 18 could hardly describe the state of Israel’s economy in the first century.

C. SHE IS NOT THE SECULAR CITY OF ROME.

There can be no question that she dwelt in Rome at the time John wrote as he described her as sitting on seven hills and as the city who presently ruled over the world. There is early coinage released by Rome prior to the writing of Revelation that pictures Rome as a woman sitting on seven hills:

Archeologists have discovered this coin during the reign of Vespasian dated in 71 A.D. Therefore, it was not in circulation prior to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem but it was in circulation prior to 97-98 A.D. when John wrote the book of Revelation.

¹⁶⁸ “Preterist” is a person who believes that most if not all eschatological prophecies have already been fulfilled in the past and mostly in the first century and all that remains is the appearance of Christ from heaven.



However, she is not the physical city of Rome but the chief inhabitant of that city who rules over secular government that dwells in that city. She is distinctly called “*Mystery Babylon*” which is the designation for the mystery religion of Babylon. The Mystery religions dominated Rome at the time John wrote this book. The Caesars or rulers of Rome regarded themselves as the high priest of this religion. They were the high priest called *Pontiff Maxim* or *Pontifex Maximus* and ruled over a college of priests who were later called *cardinals*. There are ancient coins that display this religious title of the Caesar’s. The coin below was issued by Tiberius in 14-37 A.D. The Latin on the back side of this coin says “*Pontif maxim*” which was his High Priest title in the mystery religion. On the front side is a picture of Tiberius while on the back side with the title “*Pontif Maxim*” is a woman who pictured Rome as the seat of the mystery religion ruling over the world.



The religious ruler of Rome is still called “*Pontifex Maximus*” and still is the chief priest over a college of “*cardinals*” and still issues coins of which the following of Pope Leo X is one of many.



So, the Great Whore is not the physical city of Rome but rather Rome is where this woman was located at the time John wrote. She is the mystery religion of Babylon which headquartered with its high priest in Rome who is personified as a god-man and the object of divine worship. On Sunday once a month all Roman citizens were required to offer a pinch of incense up to Caesar and say “Caesar is Lord.” John refused to do this and it is for that reason he was sent to the prison island of Patmos where Rome exiled its political and religious prisoners.

D. SHE IS THE MYSTERY RELIGION OF BABYLON

5 And on her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

She is responsible for all the deaths of God’s prophets and apostles and the blood of all the saints that have been shed on the earth beginning with the blood of Abel. She is the institutionalized religion of “the way of Cain.”

And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain on the earth.—Rev. 18:24

This includes the future martyrdom of saints as well:

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.—Rev. 17:6

As well as the martyrdom of the apostles and prophets during the NT period:

Rejoice over her, you heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets; for God has avenged you on her.—Rev. 18:20

E. SHE REMAINS HEADQUARTERED IN ROME UNTIL THE RETURN OF CHRIST

12 And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength to the beast.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

15 And he said to me, The waters which you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17 For God has put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18 And the woman which you saw is that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.

Notice in verse 18 the present tense (“*is... which reigns*”) identifies her with the city of Rome at the writing of John in 97-98 A.D. The Seventh head has ten horns and neither this head nor horns had yet arisen at the time of John. John was alive at the time of the sixth head or the one that “*is*” (v. 10).

John was alive at the time of the one world Roman Government ruled from the city of Rome. However, it would not be until the seventh head and during the reign of the beast that the ten horns destroy this woman. John predicts that time is yet in the future and the time when the woman is destroyed is called “*one hour*” during which time the same Beast and ten horns make war with Christ as he comes from heaven.

However, the secular religious roman government was overthrown in 476 A.D. by the Germanic tribes. The only religious government that has ruled over the world from Rome since 476 is Christianized Mystery Babylon or the Roman Catholic Church. She is the “mother” of both the Reformed Roman Catholic denominations (Protestantism) and the Restored religious denominations in the 19th century as all of these denominations originated by prophets or persons who were formerly Protestants.

Roman Catholicism has and is presently trying to unite all the various aspects of the mystery religions dispersed throughout all the other cultures of the world (Buddhism, Hinduism, Muslim, etc.) back into its bosom as well as reuniting her Protestant daughters back into her fold:

F. SPIRITUAL FORNICATIONS

Physical fornication embraced everything that was listed as illicit sexual union in Leviticus 18:6-23. *Spiritual* fornication was the illicit religious union of God’s people or God’s religion with paganism or pagan religions. In the Old Testament this is clearly manifest:

*“and I will cut him off, and all that **go a whoring** after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.”—Lev.20:5*

*They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast **played the harlot** with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where there hast not been lien with (in other words, find a place where you have not copulated, the idea being such a place did not exist). In the*

ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.—Jer. 3:1-2

*I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast **gone a whoring** after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols.—Ezek. 23:30*

Christianizing pagan practices or doctrines and bringing them into the church is spiritual fornication.

*Thus said the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen...
—Jer.10:2*

Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?

And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel?

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Why come out from among them, and be you separate, said the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.—2 Cor. 6:14-17

G. THE UNIFYING DOCTRINE AND PRACTICES OF MYSTERY BABYLON

She commits “fornication” with the kings of the earth. Fornication is an illicit union. Hers is an illicit union between religion and state that began with the tower of Babel and continued to characterize all one world governments right up to the end of time. Her cup is full of “fornications” or illicit unions now manifested in (1) Ecumenicalism; (2) Christianized paganism.

The necessary doctrine for unifying Christianized Babylon is the doctrine of the universal invisible church theory. One of the primary means for unifying all facets of diverse religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Muslim, Christian) is the Roman Catholic Holidays of Christmas and Easter and lent. These things are symbolized under the “cup” that the entire world has drank from and been deceived by her.

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. . . . And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: - Rev. 17:2,4

The holidays of Christmas, Easter and Lent all originate from the Mystery Babylon religion and its worship of Baal which was practiced in its sheer idolatry in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 10). December 25th was the birthday celebration of Baal in ancient Babylon. The major Christmas traditions come from Baal worship. This holiday was Christianized by Rome in the 3rd century in order to keep converts from the mystery religion from leaving the church. Easter gets its name from Queen Ishtar the mystery religion’s fertility goddess and ancient Madonna also called the “*Queen of Heaven*” in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 44:17-19, 25). These Mystery religious holidays gained foothold in Christianity through appealing to children and family fun (Jer. 7:18).

No Christians during New Testament times celebrated any of these holidays nor did they after the writing of the New Testament until the 3rd century and then only among Roman Catholics. The Ancient Montanists, Donatists, Paulicians, Waldenses and Anabaptists refused to celebrate these Christianized pagan holidays. In modern times, neither in America or in Europe where they practiced other than by Roman Catholics (Church of England) primarily until the late 1800’s and then began to be practiced principally due to a religious and political activist writer Charles Dickens¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ *Charles Dickens was raised in the Church of England, which was nothing more than the Roman Catholic Church in England with another head—Henry VIII. However, Dickens was disenchanted with all of institutionalized Christianity. His view of salvation*

who wrote the “Christmas Carol” where he reversed the actual social environment where the majority of Christians opposed these holidays which he characterized them as “scrooge” while the majority were characterized as observers of Christmas or as Catholics. This holiday is observed in all religious cultures around the world as its source is in the Mystery Babylon religion which was spread around the world in the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel. Originally it was the celebration of the birth of Nimrod who is later mythologized and known in other languages as “Baal, Anu, Marduk, Bel, Zeus, Osiris,” and he is the actual “Christ” of the Roman Catholic Church. Many Christians today celebrate it on the basis that it has been Christianized thus approving the Christianization of pagan holidays by the Roman Catholic Church in the third century. However, the old argument “*put Christ back into Christmas*” has no truth with regard to the origin of Christmas as Christmas in its origin is the celebration of Baal who is the type of the Anti-Christ.

Rome’s official colors are “purple and scarlet” as seen in the robes of the cardinals and pope:

H. TWO CONTRASTING WOMEN AND CITIES

Revelation 17-21 contrast two metaphorical cities and woman. One woman is a metaphorical “harlot” and represents all institutional false religion or Mystery Babylon. The other woman is a metaphorical “bride” and represents the New Testament Institution for public worship—the church. However, not all saved people are in the metaphorical bride, but many, if not most are in the metaphorical harlot (Rev. 18:4). The dwelling place of the harlot is characterized as a metaphorical city that is earthly and of this world with regard to its origin, doctrine and practices, while the future dwelling place of the Bride is characterized as heavenly as to its origin, doctrine and practices. In the future new heaven and earth the majority of the saved dwell outside that city (Rev. 21:24) while the faithful dwell inside. Those who are outside God’s way of service now will be outside God’s reward for the faithfulness to His way of service then.

was simply to love others as self. His character of scrooge was not saved by believing in Christ but by viewing himself as worthy for hell because he was unloving. Dickens viewed Christians who opposed Christmas as unloving or as Scrooge.

Those saved that are inside the harlot now are outside the Bride now (Rev. 22:17 “say” present tense). The “*leaves*” are the designated part of the tree of life for those living outside the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:3) while the over comers within the Lord’s congregations are promised to “eat” of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7).

Adam and Eve were created and placed in a paradise on earth (garden of Eden) with the tree of life. While they were obedient that was their home. However, when they sinned they attempted to cover their shame by “*leaves*.” They were cast out of the garden but found salvation outside.

The overcomers will live in the paradise of God on earth (New Jerusalem) while those who have failed will have their portion outside on the new earth as “*saved nations*” (Rev. 21:24) with their portion of the tree of life that signifies their failure to overcome by way of service (“*thy works*”).

Conclusion

“*High places*” are the institutional summation of “*strange fire*” that deviate from the divine pattern of public worship. “*High places*” are equal to public institutions of worship that have “*corrupted*” the divine pattern of worship, and thus are metaphorical “*harlots*.” The Great Whore and her harlot daughters characterize institutional “*strange fire*” and “*high places*” that are guilty of “*fornications*” or the unholy mixture of Christianity with paganism, and thus Satan’s counterfeit church on earth.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How has the practice of Jeroboam been replicated in secular church history?
2. What are three primary characteristics of “strange fire” worship?
3. What are the five types of worship produced by “strange fire”?
4. How does worship in “high places” in the OT have its counterpart with the Great Harlot in Revelation with respect to the people of God?
5. Is the Great Harlot secular government? Why or why not?
6. Is she secular Rome? Why or why not?
7. Is she mystery Babylonian religion?
8. Who has ruled over Rome since 476 A.D.?
9. At what time in prophetic history is she destroyed and by whom?

10. What other metaphorical woman and city is The Great Whore contrasted with?
11. What does her “fornication” with kings of the earth represent?
12. What do the “fornications” in her cup represent?



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 13

LESSON 1–The Institution–Part 1–
Congregational Government

LESSON 2–The Institution–Part 2–
Congregational Officers

LESSON 3–The Institution–Part 3–
Qualifications for ordination

WEEK 13 LESSON 1

The Institution—Part 1— Congregational Government

Lesson Goals: The goals for this lesson are (1) to demonstrate that like the classical and *koine* Greek *ekklesia*, the New Testament *ekklesia* is an organized institution and therefore has all the characteristics of an organized institution (government, officers, ordinances, membership, discipline, mission program) and, (2) to demonstrate the New Testament *ekklesia* like the classical and *koine* *ekklesia* had a democratic form of government.

Introduction: In the ancient Mediterranean world during the time of Christ, the word *ekklesia* was used in various ways and for various types of both political and unofficial, or semi-public institutions. However, if there was one thing commonly associated and commonly understood about the term *ekklesia* in the ancient times, it was its democratic form of government.

I. ORGANIZED INSTITUTION

Sometimes we read or hear scholars argue whether the New Testament *ekklesia* was an organism or an organization. It is both. In fact, every living organism is highly organized. Look at your own physical body. There is no doubt your body is a living organism, but at the very same time, it is a very complex *organized* living organism, so also is the body of Christ—the *ekklesia*.

The former houses of God (tabernacle, temple) were types of the New Testament *ekklesia* as the New Testament *ekklesia* is called “*the house of God*” (1 Tim. 3:15). In the first “*house of God*” or the tabernacle there was a resemblance of a living organism as the external covering of the first house was taken from living animals:

And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins.—Ex. 26:14

The second “*house of God*” was an assembly of stones, great stones all well placed and organized in a visible form.

And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.—Lk. 21:5-6

Both of these former houses of God were types of the New Testament house of God which combines both the living and stone characteristics:

*Ye also, as **lively stones, are built up a spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.—1 Pet. 2:5*

However, this *spiritual* house was composed of the actual *physical* bodies of baptized believers:

*Know ye not that **your bodies** are the members of Christ?—1 Cor. 6:15a*

Again, in 1 Corinthians 12:27 he describes the congregation at Corinth as the metaphorical body of Christ and “*members in particular*” in that body. So, the New Testament *ekklesia* was a *spiritual physical* “*house of God*” as it was an actual visible local assembly of the physical bodies of water-baptized believers that assembled to conduct spiritual business. Hence, “*spiritual*” is not a synonym for “*invisible*” but is an antonym to “*secular*.” Political *ekklesai* were designed for *secular* (non-religious) purposes and *secular* activities, but the New Testament *ekklesia* was designed for *spiritual* (religious) purposes (worship) and spiritual activities (preaching, teaching, practicing of God’s Word, prayer, giving, and communion). Yet, all of these *spiritual* activities were to be done “*decently and in order*” (1 Cor. 14:41) in conformation with specifics provided in Scripture.

The New Testament *ekklesia* was the epitome of organization as it was constituted and operated by a very organized process (Mt. 28:19-20). It had distinct offices with precise qualifications. Its membership is qualified by a

specific profession and rite of immersion in water (Acts 2:40). Its worship services are to be without confusion but performed “*decently and in order*” (1 Cor. 14:41). It has a very specific and orderly commission (Mt. 28:19-20).

Language of Accommodation: Due to the false universal church theory, many make the argument that the “spiritual” *ekklesia* in Scripture is described in salvation terms and therefore excludes all lost persons while the common application of *ekklesia* in the New Testament contained lost members. Therefore, they conclude the Scriptures speak of two different kinds of *ekklesia*, one that is “spiritual” containing only the saved, and one that is visible and local that contains some lost persons.

However, New Testament writers addressed the common *ekklesia* of Christ in terms consistent with what characterized the qualifications for its membership, the profession of its members, and the nature of its business. We call this manner of speech the *language of accommodation*. It is language that accommodates or is consistent with the spiritual design of the *ekklesia* and the profession and activities of its members.

We use the same language today when we meet a new person who claims to be a brother or sister from another church of like faith and order. We address them as “brother” or “sister” based upon their profession. We can’t look into their heart, but as long as their fruits are consistent with their profession we acknowledge their profession by using language that accommodates that profession.

The writers of Scripture had no reason to address such congregations by any other language than what was consistent with Christ’s design and program for these congregations. For example, take Acts 20:28-30:

*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which **he hath purchased with his own blood**. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.—Acts 20:28-30*

Many expositors claim the “church of God” in verse 28 must refer to an invisible universal entity simply because of the language of redemption is used to describe it. But why would redemptive language be withheld as a common descriptive for those who profess salvation? Moreover, both the text (v. 28) and its immediate context (vv. 17, 29-30) repudiate such a notion.

1. God had made the Ephesian elders the overseers over this congregation - vv. 17, 28
2. “*All the flock*” in this congregation in verse 28 is the very same “*flock*” in verse 29-30 which members can leave this congregation and follow grievous wolves.
3. Not only can “*grievous wolves enter in*” this flock but even “*of your own selves*” or elders already in this flock can depart from this flock. This implies lost members can enter into this flock and saved members (“*disciples*”) can leave this flock. These contextual based facts do not harmonize with the invisible church theory.

Paul is simply describing the *ekklesia* located at Ephesus according to God’s design and according to the qualifications publicly required to be a member of this “*flock*” and according to the profession of every member (whether lost or saved) in this flock. This is the language of accommodation that is commonly used by the writers of Scripture when addressing Christ’s institution and its members.

Moreover, the common *ekklesia* in the New Testament is “spiritual” not “secular” in both its design and function. It is a living organism composed of an assembly of physical human bodies that is highly organized with all the characteristics of any institution (specific form of government, specific membership requirements, specific qualified ordinances, specific qualified officers, specified orderly forms of public worship, and a specific qualified orderly mission).

II. THREE MAJOR FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

There are three *basic* forms of congregational government existent in our current world: (1) Episcopal form of government (Chief elder); (2) Presbyterian (plurality of elders); (3) Congregational (majority rule by full membership with elders).

The Episcopal form of Government: This form of government can be as simple as the complete rule over a specific congregation by its chief elder, or as complicated as a denomination with a hierarchy of various levels of elders (deacons, Pastors, Bishops, cardinals) all under one chief elder (Pope, Patriarch, Archbishop; etc.) over the whole denomination with its various individual congregations.

Some denominations that have this form of government are Roman and Eastern Catholicism, the Anglican Church (Church of England/Episcopalian); Methodist, Mormons, and (some) Lutherans, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.

Methodists have a loose form of Episcopal rule they call connexionalism with a bottom-up structure centered on small groups of congregations called *circuits* (thus, the old "circuit riding preachers").

Presbyterian Form of Government: This form of government consists of a plurality of elders at the local level (and sometimes at a denominational level). Thus, each congregation has for its final authority its own board of elders. Such elders may be chosen by the elder board or by the congregation, thus granting the congregation some limited form of majority rule in areas determined by the elder board. Some have a centralized government over the whole denomination consisting of an elder board.

Some denominations that have this form of government are the Presbyterians, Reformed Pedobaptist Congregations, Reformed Baptist congregations, etc.

Congregational Form of Government: This form of government consists of majority rule inclusive of the whole membership including its elder(s) whereby the whole membership recognizes the Bible as final in authority for doctrine and practice as interpreted by the majority. The elders are qualified and chosen by the majority, and the elders are answerable to the congregational body. The congregation is answerable to no other entity with in or without its own body (elder, elder body, centralized denominational body, associational or conventional para-church government, etc.)

III. THE NEW TESTAMENT EKKLESIA GOVERNMENT

The mere mention of the term *ekklesia* in the ancient world brought to mind one great characteristic universally identified with that term—majority

rule by its membership. Without this primary characteristic it ceased to be recognized by the term “*ekklesia*” in the minds of the ancient world. This is the term Christ chooses to characterize his congregations (Mt. 16:18; 18:17; Rev. 1-3, 22:16).

The *ekklesia* of Christ in the New Testament recognizes the Scriptures as final authority as interpreted by the majority of its membership with its elders and is answerable to no other entity outside of its own membership but is answerable to God alone. This majority rule form of government can be seen clearly in the gospel of Matthew, the book of Acts and in some epistles.

A. MT. 18:15-20

This passage assumes that the followers of Christ are members of a congregation, and this assumption is confirmed by the practice in the rest of the New Testament (Heb. 10:25). In Matthew 18:15-20 there is a three-step process in dealing with internal offences by one member against another. In all three steps the whole responsibility lies with the individual member to initiate these steps toward reconciliation. The offended is not told to go tell an elder or a board of elders but is to go directly to the offender. The second step does not instruct the offended to go to an elder or elder board, but to select two or three witnesses and approach the offender once again. In Galatians 6:1-2 Paul qualifies this step by defining such witnesses as those who are considered to be “spiritual” (not invisible) or mature Christians. Significantly, this second step demonstrates that Christ is applying Biblical principles to guide members in this step. The Old Testament required two or three witnesses to convict a person of wrong doing:

One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.—Deut. 19:15

The final step is also initiated by the offended member, rather than an elder or board of elders. The offended is instructed to “*go tell the church*” rather than go tell an elder or an elder board (presumably in a congregational business meeting such as found in Acts 1:15-26).

The inference of the passage is that the congregation would hear both the testimonies of the offended with witnesses and the response of the offender and then make a final decision. If the guilty party refuses to hear the final decision of the congregation, then the explicit instruction to the offended is to treat the offender “*as a heathen man and a publican.*” To treat a person as such was to stop having fellowship with them on all social and religious levels (see Acts 10:27; Gal. 2:12).

Moreover, that response is not meant to be restricted to the offended but is the response of the whole congregation toward the offender that is finalized in the act of exercising the keys of the kingdom in congregational discipline (Mt. 18:18) which removes the offender from their fellowship as illustrated in the case of the fornicating member in 1 Cor. 5:5-12 (“*purge out*”).

Some scholars deny that the instructions to the offended (“*let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican*”) reflect the attitude of the whole congregation toward the offender. However, it is irrational to think that only the offended member would be directed to respond this way while the rest of the congregation continued to treat the offender in full fellowship. That kind of duplicity would only create a much greater division in the congregational body. The response directed toward the offender by the offended is simply representative of the whole membership that stands behind the offended as indicated in the very next verse where the keys of the kingdom are exercised by the congregation toward the offender (Mt. 18:18). The implication is that congregation is backing up its final decision with the exercise of congregational discipline, thus treating the offender as Christ directs the offended to treat them. Paul instructs the congregation at Thessalonica to withdraw from such a “brother” (2 Thes. 3:6) so that the offending “brother” would be “shamed” (2 Thes. 3:14).

Again, the response of the congregation in exercising the key of discipline is to be done in obedience to Scripture. The future tense verb joined with the perfect tense verb used in Matthew 18:18 demonstrates the congregation only has administrative authority rather legislative authority—they have authority only to bind and loose on earth what **shall have already been** bound or loosed in heaven, in keeping with what is revealed in His Word and through oral teaching of the apostles which would be preserved as New Testament Scriptures. Hence, the instructions by Jesus are Biblically based instructions.

Other scholars attempt to interpret “*tell it to the church*” to actually mean tell it to the elders. They suggest that “*church*” here is simply a figure of speech called a synecdoche, a figure of speech that puts the part for the whole. Therefore, they would interpret “*church*” as the whole but what Jesus really means is to tell it to part of the congregation—the elders. I reject this interpretation for the following reasons:

1. In congregational business meetings individuals address the elder in order to be recognized to address the congregation as that is an orderly process, but still the whole congregation would be addressed.
2. Jesus addresses the congregation through the elder (Rev. 2-3) but nevertheless is addressing the whole congregational body (“*says to the congregations*”).
3. The plural “you” in Matthew 18:18 has for its nearest antecedent “*the church*” in verse 17 and the term “*church*” is a *collective* noun which can be the antecedent for the plural pronoun (“*you*”). For example, the *collective* noun “*church*” is the antecedent for the plural pronoun “*you*” in the following texts (1 Cor. 1:2-3; 2 Cor. 1:1-2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1-2; Rev. 1:4).
4. Christ is familiar with the term “elder” and its synonyms and could have easily used those terms if that is what he actually intended.
5. In the first recorded congregational business meeting in the book of Acts, Peter addresses the whole congregation rather than an elder body—Acts 1:15-17—and it is the whole congregation that hears and acts.
6. Finally, in an actual case recorded in Scripture where discipline is called for, the apostle Paul addresses the congregation, rather than the elders in taking this kind of action against the offender in 1 Corinthians
7. Furthermore, it is the “*many*” or majority of the congregation that exercised this discipline as recorded in 2 Cor. 2:6.

Conclusion: Matthew 18:15-20 demonstrates that final authority rests in the congregation (“*tell it to the church*”) rather than any individual (Pope) or elder board, but the congregation is the final authority in the exercise of the keys which covers all areas of the discipling process in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20).

B. ACTS 1:15-27

Here is the first recorded congregation business meeting on record in the book of Acts (but not the last—Acts 6, 15:1-3; 5-26).

What we have is a leader taking the lead in simply presenting to the assembly what the Scriptures command, rather than arbitrarily claiming divine authority for their submission to his office. Moreover, Peter addresses the whole congregation, rather than addressing an elder body. His basis for authority is the Scripture, which he lays out for what they must do in order to obey the Scriptures—Acts 1:15-22.

It is the congregation that took the action as Luke says “*they*” responded accordingly in verses 23-26. The only contextual antecedent for the plural pronoun “*they*” are those described in Acts 1:15-16—or the 120 total names on the church roll. No elder rule or board decision.

Mathias was selected by casting lots, rather than by elder rule. Casting lots was the normal way to select city officials in ancient Greek cities where majority rule existed as the form of government. The thinking behind casting lots was to allow divine providence to determine the issue. When the church at Jerusalem cast their lots, it was joined with the prayer “*Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,*”—v. 24. With regard to other matters, the ancient Greek *ekklesia* determined what they would do by a simple majority vote.

Conclusion: The Scripture is the final basis of authority. An ordained man takes the leadership in presenting the Scripture and what it requires. No elder or elder board makes the final decision. The congregation seeks the Lord through prayer in making a determination. This is in perfect agreement with Christ’s words “*tell it to the church*” as the final administrative authority.

C. ACTS 6:1-7

In Acts 6 the *ekklesia* at Jerusalem had grown by thousands. If women and children are not counted, then by Acts 5 there were at least 8,000 male members alone. If women and children are included then that would easily include at least 16,000 members. Up to Acts 6 the precise numbers were “added” up. However, in Acts 6:1 the numbers became too many to add up and so Luke says the numbers were “*multiplied.*” If “*multiplied*” simply

means the previous minimum number was duplicated that would at least total 32,000 members. I am being very modest in my estimations.

G. Campbell Morgan estimated at least 60,000 members. B.H. Carroll estimated at least over a 100,000. Whatever the number, it was sufficient to cause the Sanhedrin to refrain from taking too severe of action against Peter and John.

The vast number of needy widows added to the congregation began to distract the twelve from their primary duties of prayer and ministering the word to the congregation in order to meet the physical needs of these widows. Hence, ministering to the *temporal* needs of the congregation was the purpose behind instituting the office of Deacon so that the elders could devote their ministry to the *spiritual* needs of the congregation (Acts 20:28).

However, the twelve did not make the decision and appoint whom they would. No ruling board of elders here. They simply presented the problem and recommended a solution. The solution was to select seven males of good standing with spiritual integrity that the apostles could ordain by the laying of their hands to this ministry—the ministry of meeting temporal needs of the assembly. Luke says that the solution “pleased” the “*whole multitude*” meaning the whole congregation. It is the congregation identified as “*they*” who “*chose*” and “*they*” who “*set*” the seven before the twelve for the laying on of their hands to this ministry.

Of course, it is necessarily implied that some kind of orderly procedure for this selecting and voting process had to be involved in qualifying and then selecting only seven members out of thousands. A.T. Robertson says of the Greek term translated “pleased” in verse 5:

Pleased (hresev). Aorist active indicative of areskw like Latin *placuit* when a vote was taken.—A.T. Robertson, **New Testament Word Pictures**, Acts 6:5, Online Bible

Conclusion: So again, we have ordained leadership simply presenting a problem and recommending a solution, thus taking the lead, while it is the “*whole*” congregation that made the determination if they were pleased or not pleased with the recommendation, and it is the whole congregation that determines who is qualified and who is not, and who would be placed before the twelve to be ordained to that ministry. No elder or board of elders made any legislative or administrative decisions. The final authority was the

congregation in keeping with Christ's words in Matthew 18:17—"tell it to the church."

D. ACTS 11:1-17

The vast majority of the members in the congregation at Jerusalem were Jewish. Peter was an apostle, and yet he felt obligated to explain his actions to these members in the congregation at Jerusalem. He did not claim Papal infallibility or absolute authority for his actions at the house of Cornelius. He submitted to these members in the congregation at Jerusalem and gave an account for his actions and then asked "*what could I do*" since God had directed him to take these actions rather than saying "*my office gives me that authority*." He even anticipated accountability to the church at Jerusalem because he took six brethren with him as witnesses to back up what he did. The whole inference is that even apostles are accountable to the congregation for their actions, as apostles are "*set in the church*" (1 Cor. 12:28) rather than set *over* the church.

E. ACTS 15

In Acts 15 we find two different congregational business meetings. The first occurs in the church at Antioch recorded in Acts 14:27-15:3. The second occurs in the congregation at Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15:4-22.

In Acts 14:25-15:3 the words "*church*" "*disciples*" "*brethren*" and the pronoun "*they*" are all synonyms for the congregation at Antioch: *And when they were come, and had gathered **the church** together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.*

*28 And there they abode long time with **the disciples**.*

*1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught **the brethren**, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*

*2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, **they** determined that*

Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

*3 And being brought on their way by **the church**,*

Paul and Barnabas are treated as members of this congregation and under its authority.¹⁷⁰ Paul was an apostle of Christ and yet this was a congregational decision in a called business meeting.

A. T. Robertson says of the Greek verb translated by the word “determined” in Acts 15:2 -

The verb εταξαν (τασσω, to arrange) suggests a formal appointment by the church in regular assembly.—Ibid., Acts 15:2—Online Bible

The subject of the congregational business meeting at Antioch was to determine who would go and represent their congregation at Jerusalem. “**They determined** that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other OF THEM” should go. Of course, some orderly procedure had to be followed in order to determine who would go. However, it is the “church” that determined it and brought them on their way.

No leading elder or board of elders is mentioned. Not even an apostle of Christ made this decision but rather Paul submitted to the authority of the congregation.

The second business meeting that took place in this chapter was conducted by the congregation at Jerusalem. This meeting consisted of invited guests from the congregation at Antioch and the whole church at Jerusalem consisting of a senior Pastor (James) and the apostles. Luke says,

*And when they were come to Jerusalem, **they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders**, and they declared all things that God had done with them.—Acts 1:4*

After there was an orderly discussion, the senior Pastor took the lead and then based on the testimonies (vv. 13-14) offered based upon scripture as final authority (vv. 15-18) he then offered his judgment concerning the matter:

¹⁷⁰ Hence, on the mission field they were still members of this congregation and acted as authorized representatives for this congregation.

19 *Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:*

20 *But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.*

He did not say “I will write” but “*we*” write this letter. Luke continues to describe the reaction of the congregation:

***Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church**, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; **The apostles and elders and brethren** send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:*

A.T. Robertson commenting on the word “*pleased*” in verse 22 says:

Then it seemed good (τοτε edoxev). First aorist active indicative of dokeō. A regular idiom at the beginning of decrees. This Eirenicon of James commended itself to the whole assembly. Apparently, a vote was taken which was unanimous, the Judaizers probably not voting.—Ibid., Acts 15:22

Therefore, the decree originated from the whole congregation rather than just the eldership. Again, the leadership took the lead in an orderly manner, which consisted of apostolic testimony along with the authority of Scriptures, but the ultimate decision, and therefore, the ultimate administrative authority rested in “*the whole church*” with its leadership carrying out the will of the congregation. Again, this is in perfect agreement with Christ’s words “*tell it to the church*” as the final administrative authority.

F. 1 COR. 5 AND 2 COR. 2:6

Matthew 18:17-18 provides the scriptural basis for Paul to direct the congregation to put into practice congregational discipline of the fornicating

member. Here we have Matthew 18:17-18 illustrated. Paul does not address the Pastor or a body of elders but directly addresses the congregation instructing them that when they assemble they should remove such a person from their fellowship.

*4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **when ye are gathered together**, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

*7 **Purge out therefore the old leaven, ... Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person.***

When writing the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul acknowledged that the majority of the church acted upon his counsel and the man had repented and needed to be restored:

2 Cor. 2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

Dr. A.T. Robertson says of the words “of many”

By the many (ὕπο τῶν πλειονῶν). By the more, the majority. If Paul refers to the case in 1Co 5, they had taken his advice and expelled the offender.—Ibid., 2 Cor. 2:6

This action was not taken by a body of elders, but when the congregation was “gathered together” and by “the majority” vote the offender was removed from congregational fellowship. After due repentance, Paul then counsels the congregation to receive the repentant offender back into fellowship. Satan had efficiently worked havoc in his life, turning him back to God in repentance. He was completely broken over his sin, and Paul did not want him to be overwhelmed by his punishment, as discipline was for the ultimate good of the offender.

G. 2 COR. 8-9

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the congregations;

*19 And not that only, but who was also **chosen of the congregations** to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind. 23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are **the messengers of the congregations**, and the glory of Christ.*

Paul is referring to the financial gift collected among the gentile congregations for the poor in the congregation at Jerusalem. Each congregation that contributed finances also appointed a special messenger to go with Paul to bring this gift to the congregation in Jerusalem. Dr. A.T. Robertson says of the Greek term translated “chosen”:

But who was also appointed (αλλα και χειροτονηεις). Anacoluthon. -- The -- first aorist -- passive -- participle χειροτονηεις is from χειροτονω, old verb to stretch out the hands (χειρ τεινω) and so to vote in public. The idea is that this brother was chosen by the congregations, not by Paul. Ibid., 2 Cor. 8:19

There was no separate central government (associational or convention organization) to supervise these missionary endeavors. The congregations appointed their own messengers independent from each other, but yet : in

cooperation with each other. Each congregation made known their needs and was made aware of the needs of other congregations (2 Cor. 8:1-5). Their cooperative efforts were entirely governed by their own congregation from start to finish. Centralized governments (associational organizations; convention organizations) are completely and utterly unbiblical and usurp the authority invested in the congregation.¹⁷¹

Conclusion: All these passages clearly indicate that congregational approval by vote was involved in qualifying, and selecting congregational officers (Acts 1, 6), in making doctrinal decisions (Acts 15), in overseeing the actions of their ordained representatives (Acts 11), in church discipline (Mt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2), and in selecting of messengers (2 Cor. 8). The ordained leaders took the lead with Scripture as their basis for counsel while the congregation was final authority in administering that counsel. These Scriptures support the congregational model of church government while opposing the Episcopal and Presbyterian forms of church government. The congregational form of church government is another characteristic mark of a true New Testament congregation.

In our next lesson we will deal with the arguments for Episcopal authority based upon apostolic commands found in the pastoral epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus).

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What are some characteristics of an Institution?
2. How does the *ekklesia* of Christ as the “house of God” fulfill some types in the two previous houses of God?
3. What is the “language of accommodation”?
4. Name the three basic types of church governments?
5. Give at least five reasons why “*the church*” in Matthew 18:17 is not merely a synecdoche for the elders in the congregation.

¹⁷¹ *I was a member and preacher in the Southern Baptist Convention for a few years. I attended a Southern Baptist Seminary for two years and worked every day in close association with the administration as the head of their printing and publishing department. Area missionaries often usurped the authority of local congregations, and the power and politics were ruthless at the higher levels of the Convention. The Convention would loan congregations money to purchase their property and building and if that church withdrew from the convention for any reason they would lose their property. No free gift of love. Like Uncle Sam money was used to control.*

6. Give three characteristics of New Testament church government found in Acts 1, 6 11,15; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 6; 2 Cor. 8-9 that support a congregational form of church government.
7. How does the apostolic office fail to support the idea of apostolic succession and/or Episcopal church government?
8. What sphere of ministry are deacons ordained for? (1) Spiritual needs; (2) temporal needs.
9. What is the Biblical basis for instituting the office of deacon in a congregation?

REQUIRED READING:

Baptist Church Manual, J.M. Pendleton, pp. 100-116



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 13 LESSON 2

The Institution—Part 2— Congregational Officers

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to identify the Biblical officers of the New Testament congregation and (2) to describe their function and authority within the congregation with special attention given to the office of apostle.

INTRODUCTION: The congregation does not cease to exist without officers. It existed at the time of its organization before it called a pastor. Many times, a Pastor has died, or resigned, or has been removed, and the congregation continues to exist without leadership until leadership can be found. However, a congregation is impaired without leadership. It is more efficient, healthy and safer with officers. God designed the congregation to have qualified leadership to assist in its spiritual growth, direction and protection.

But what are the offices in a New Testament congregation and what are their functions? There is an abundance of different types of officers in various different denominations. For example, in the Roman Catholic Church there is a Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Archbishops, Priests, Pastors, Deacons and Nuns. Titles of address range from Pastor, reverend, the very right reverend, the very most reverend, etc. Some believe in apostolic succession and base their form of church government upon apostolic authority. Some claim to have prophets. We need to seek the biblical view of congregational officers, their functions and authority. There are two primary passages that list congregational officers as gifted men (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:28). The office of Deacon is not found in either list, as that office is not designed for the ministry of the word and spiritual leadership in the congregation but is specifically designed to minister temporal needs of the congregation so that the Pastor can give himself wholly unto ministry of prayer and the word.

I. APOSTLES

We shall give special attention to the office of Apostle, as God set apostles first in the congregational institution (1 Cor. 12:28). This gifted office is not merely set “*first*” in numerical order, but “*first*” in priority.¹⁷² The priority of this office is due to its divine function and limited duration, but continuing impact. Understanding the function and purpose of this office is crucial for the proper understanding of many other things (congregational government, completion of Biblical canon, revelatory and sign gifts, plurality of elders, the faith once delivered, and the apostolic hedges that protect the congregational institution). In summary, the apostolic office was designed to provide the foundation (Eph. 2:20) upon which the congregational institution would be established. That foundation consisted of an authorized Christ-centered faith and practice. It was provided first in oral tradition and then finalized as the inspired written New Testament that completed the Biblical canon of Scripture. This foundation represented Christ, His doctrine and practice. While this foundation was being provided, the Apostolic office conveyed through laying on of their hands temporary revelatory and sign gifts to provide immediate and direct confirmable revelation. As the written New Testament revelation approached its completion, the temporary revelatory and signs gifts began to fade away as permanent abiding and confirmed written revelation provided final authority for faith and practice. With the completion of the Biblical canon of scripture the office of apostle ceased, as its primary purpose had been fulfilled.

A. THE TERM

The English term “*apostle*” is a transliteration¹⁷³ of the Greek noun *apostolos*. Hence, the KJV does not give us a translation of the term. The most ancient origin of this term is found in maritime language. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology says concerning its maritime usage:

¹⁷² Paul is prioritizing gifted men and spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12:28 from God’s perspective. The Corinthians had prioritized the gift of tongues above all other gifts and gifted men.

¹⁷³ Remember the difference between transliteration and translation is the difference between conveying the sound of the word from one language to another (transliteration) versus conveying the meaning of the word from one language to another (translation). To transliterate *apostolos* from Greek into English results in *apostle*, but to translate *apostolos* into English results in “sent one... authorized messenger, etc.).

All of its uses have two ideas in common (a) an express commission; (b) being sent overseas. Colin Brown, ed., **The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology**, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids MI, 1975) Vol. 1, p. 127

Therefore, it is an “authorized representative” as in an emissary or ambassador. In the New Testament the verbal form is used to describe those sent by the church to perform a task (Acts 9:30; 11:20). Such congregational commissioned men are called “apostles” (Acts 14:4, 14) or those called and sent by the congregation.

However, in the New Testament it has a more technical sense to describe twelve particular disciples chosen and called directly by Christ and sent to Israel to be witnesses of his resurrection (Lk. 6:12; 1 Cor. 12:28). In addition to these twelve who are sent to Israel, Paul is also called an Apostle of Christ, as he was personally chosen and called by Christ and sent to the Gentiles to be a witness of his resurrection.

B. THE “FOUNDATION” OF THE CONGREGATION?

Paul says that the “*apostles and prophets*” are the “*foundation*” and Christ is the “*chief cornerstone*” (Eph. 2:20). Peter says that Christ is the “*chief cornerstone*” (1 Pet. 2:6). But does not Matthew 16:18 demand that Christ is the “*rock*” or foundation upon which His congregation is built? Does not Paul say in 1 Cor. 3:11 with regard to the constitution of the church at Corinth that there is no other “*foundation*” which can be laid other than Christ? The answer is yes to all the above. How then are these texts reconciled?

In ancient times, when a builder began building a house, he began with the “*foundation*.” They did not pour a slab of concrete but built the foundation out of stones. The very first stone laid down for the foundation was the “*cornerstone*.” The cornerstone had to be perfectly square because all the other foundation’s stones were aligned with it. Jesus Christ is that perfect cornerstone! Thus, both Paul and Peter are saying that the New Testament apostles and prophets are in alignment with Christ and represent the doctrine and practice of Christ. In that sense, Christ is the “*foundation*” of the congregation as it is His doctrine and practice upon which the congregation

is built. Christ personally trained the apostles to represent Him, His doctrine and practice (Mt. 28:19-20). This is also what Hebrews 1:1-2 means when it says that God has spoken in these last days through his Son as the final prophet. Christ wrote no epistles. However, God spoke through Christ's authorized representatives—the apostles and prophets—who finalized His words in the written New Testament Scriptures and thereby completed the Biblical canon as predicted by Isaiah (Isaiah 8:16-20 with Heb. 2:3-4, 12). John concludes the New Testament Scriptures by claiming that what he is writing is the “*testimony of Jesus*” (Rev. 1:2) just as Isaiah predicted would be the completion of written revelation (Isa. 8:16). The New Testament Scriptures are the “*doctrine of Christ.*” It is in this sense that the apostles and prophets are the “*foundation*” of the institutional congregation as their teaching and practice represents Christ.

C. THE FUNCTIONS OF APOSTLE

The apostolic office was perfectly designed to initially provide all of the functions for all those offices listed in Ephesians 2:11 (prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers). For example, the Apostle Paul not only spoke and wrote by inspiration as a prophet but did the work of an evangelist in preaching the gospel, then baptizing and organizing baptized believers into congregations and then acted as their immediate pastor/teacher. Hence, the office of apostle was perfectly suited to immediately provide the full foundation for the establishment of the first new congregations.¹⁷⁴ The prophetic nature of the apostolic office was also another unique foundational function. They are explicitly told by Christ that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all things that Christ taught them, as well as reveal to them things to come, so as to bring them into “*all truth.*” Later generations of Christians would be brought to salvation through their words (Jn. 17:17-20) preserved as Scripture. This prophecy was in keeping with Isaiah's prophecy concerning Christ and his disciples in finalizing the Biblical canon

¹⁷⁴ *After the completion of the Old Testament scriptures, Jesus rejected the oral tradition as equal in authority to the written scripture but corrected the oral traditions by the written scriptures (Mt. 5: 15). Likewise, we are instructed to do the same (Isa. 8:16, 20; 2 Tim.3:16-17). The written are the inspired preserved oral teachings of Christ and the apostles.*

of Scriptures (Isa. 8:16-20). Paul knew that his writings were inspired by God and that he was involved with the rest of the apostles in producing New Testament Scriptures (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thes. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:15-17). He predicted when “*that which is perfect is come*” then incomplete revelatory and signs gifts would cease (1 Cor. 13:9-13).

Therefore, it is primarily through the apostolic office and under the direction of apostles that the Biblical canon was completed and the New Testament Scriptures were provided. This was a foundational function that stabilized the congregations.

However, the process by which the Biblical canon was completed deserves special attention. The Apostles first conveyed “*the faith*” or that body of essential doctrine to the congregations *orally* in order to quickly establish the congregations on the foundation of truth. As “*the faith*” was brought under attack by false teachers the apostles then began the process of putting “*the faith*” into written form that provided a hard copy as a context for defense. Therefore, the oral apostolic tradition was then preserved in written form gradually forming the New Testament Scriptures until the whole Biblical canon was completed.

As with former Old Testament prophets who provided first oral revelations from God and then preserved them in written Scriptures, the apostles were characterized by miracles, signs and wonders that authenticated their message (Heb.2:4-5) and set them apart from other Christians (2 Cor. 12:12).

While the New Testament Scriptures were being provided, the apostles communicated revelatory and authenticating gifts through the laying on of their hands (Acts 6:6; 8:17-19; 19:6). In that way, the congregations were able to have direct and immediate access to divine revelation until the Biblical canon was completed and provided unto the congregations.

This is particularly true in equipping elders within newly formed congregations (2 Tim. 1:9) at the beginning of the apostolic ministry. In newly formed early apostolic congregations there were no members that could fit the elder qualifications that are given later to the more matured congregations (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13). Indeed, all the members of such early congregations were novices in the faith. Also, these earlier new congregations had no body of Scriptures available to direct them with regard to New Testament congregational administration. Therefore, those elders

chosen by the congregations were then provided prophetic gifts and teaching gifts through laying on of hands by an apostle (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). Since the prophetic gift needed confirmation by at least two or three others with such gifts (1 Cor. 14:29), there was a need for a plurality of elders at this time even in the smaller congregations (Acts 13:1; 14:23; 28:17, 20). So, the plurality of elders was essential in early congregations due to the lack of written revelation, and in order that revelatory gifts could be authenticated. These gifted elders provided self-authenticating leadership within the congregations until God provided the completed New Testament Scriptures.

As the New Testament Scriptures were being furnished, and as the congregations matured in those Scriptures, the apostolic signs and wonders began to gradually cease and these matured congregations were given the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 to qualify those who would fill the office of Bishop without any mention of revelatory gifts. So, with the increase of Scripture and the diminishing of the sign and revelatory gifts, the need for a plurality of elders also diminished (except where size of congregations called for a plurality). Instead, a singular elder (1 Tim. 3:1) chosen and qualified by the qualifications provided in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 replaced the apostolic laying on of hands that conveyed revelatory gifts. The New Testament Scriptures made void the need a plurality of revelatory and authenticating gifted men within a congregational body (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The diminishing of signs and wonders can be seen in the New Testament. For example, late in the ministry of Paul (67 A.D.) he could not heal a fellow servant but left him sick at Miletum (2 Tim. 4:20). By the time the gospel of Mark was written the apostolic signs and wonders were seen largely as completed prophecy (Mk. 16:20). By the time Paul wrote Second Timothy nearly all the New Testament had been written with the exception of John's letters. Such miracles, signs and wonders ceased along with the cessation of the apostolic office and with the death of those upon whom the apostles had laid their hands. The last living apostle died around the beginning of the second century (101 A.D.). Therefore, supposing that the apostle John had laid his hands upon some living at the beginning of the second century then such sign and revelatory gifts would have ceased with the death of such individuals within the second century. Secular church history demonstrates such miracles, signs and wonders ceased in the second half of the second

century. Unless size demanded a plurality of elders, the plurality of elders also began to cease among smaller congregations as the New Testament Scriptures made void the need for a plurality of revelatory and authenticating gifted men within a congregational body.

Therefore, the functions of the apostolic office were in nature foundational, which were necessary to establish and protect the congregations in their embryo stage until the New Testament Scriptures were completed. The apostolic office having obtained that goal then ceased to exist due to the very nature of the qualifications required to be an apostle.

D. THE QUALIFICATIONS

In Acts 1:15-27 we have the first recorded congregational business meeting for the purpose to qualify and select a man to fill the apostolic office vacated by Judas Iscariot. Matthias was selected in keeping with God's Word and under the leadership by the Spirit of God as the Spirit of God confirms that he was one of the twelve (Acts 1:26; 6:2). In contrast, Saul of Tarsus (Paul) was chosen by Christ to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), while the twelve ministered unto Israel (Gal. 2:9).¹⁷⁵

Peter sets forth the qualifications clearly when he says:

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 1:20-21

The substance of Peter's qualifications is that the proper candidate must have been personally taught by Christ and an eyewitness of his resurrected body. He must identify with the baptism of John ("from the baptism of John") and with the congregation ("companied with us") of Christ. Paul met all these qualifications. Paul claimed that he was personally taught by Christ

¹⁷⁵ The reference to the twelve apostles in Revelation 21 is metaphorical for representing the institutional congregational house of God, while the reference to the twelve tribes of Israel is metaphorical for representing the Old Testament house of God. Therefore, the city represents the faithful in the "house of God" during both Testament periods.

through revelation (Gal. 1:11-12) and he was an eye witness of the physical resurrected body of Christ on the road to Damascus (1 Cor. 15:8).¹⁷⁶

He identified with the baptism of John (Acts 22:16) and with congregational membership at Damascus, and then with the congregation at Jerusalem, and finally worked through the congregation at Antioch (Acts 11:27; 13:1-4). Paul never claimed to be part of the twelve, but claimed to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-9; Rom. 11:13).

Paul claims that he was “*last of all*” to see the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:8). The term translated “*last*” is the Greek *eschatos* means last with none to follow. For example, in the very same chapter Paul says that Christ was the “*last [eschatos] Adam*” meaning there will be no other Adam to follow. Paul was last “*of all*” to see the resurrected Christ, meaning that Paul was the “*last of all*” to qualify as an apostle. This limits candidates to fill any vacated apostolic office to only those living previous to Paul who had seen the resurrected Christ. Among 120 members of the congregation listed in Acts 1:15 there were at least 70 preachers whom Christ had trained and had formerly sent out on the mission field previous to his death. Therefore, as apostles died, the only ones qualified to fill their office would be those eyewitnesses. Hence, the very nature of the qualifications to fill this office denies apostolic succession beyond those personally trained eyewitnesses. Paul says that the “*apostles and prophets*” were the “*foundation*” of the church (Eph. 2:20). These offices were designed to provide a foundational institutional need and not designed by God to continue as functioning offices. There is no promise of apostolic succession in Scripture. When Paul describes the makeup of the membership of the congregation at Philippi he divides it into three classifications of members (elders, deacons, and saints):

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: - Phil. 1:1

Of course, the bishops and deacons were saints, but they are distinguished apart from the rest of the congregational body. There is no mention of apostles as distinct officers. The same division is true when giving Timothy and Titus

¹⁷⁶ He may also have been an eye witness of the ministry of Christ in Jerusalem as he was in Jerusalem as a student under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

qualifications for officers in the congregations (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13). The twelve apostles were all members of the congregation in Jerusalem and Paul was a member of the Gentile congregation at Antioch. However, in the non-technical use of “*apostle*” as simply “authorized sent ones” both Paul, Barnabas, Silas and others acted as church called and ordained apostles or missionaries (Acts 14:4, 14; 2 Cor. 8:23[apostoloi] Phil. 2:25 [apostolon]).

Apart from the Anabaptists, only Rome has historical succession, but there are not twelve apostles in the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, the first century congregation at Rome was a gentile congregation and under the authority of the Apostle Paul, not Peter. Peter, James and John plainly tell Paul that their apostolic mission was to be to the “*circumcision*” or Israel (Gal. 2:9) not to gentile congregations. Furthermore, the claims by Rome that Peter was the first pope and preeminent apostle is contradicted by the fact that James rather than Peter presides over the church council in Acts 15 along with the other eleven apostles as members of that congregation at Jerusalem. Their claim is further contradicted by Peter’s own denial that he held any special office above elders of the congregations (1 Pet. 5:3).¹⁷⁷ From Matthew to Revelation 21 the apostles to Israel always number twelve and is never reduced to just one, but apostate Rome does not claim twelve apostles, but only one, and the wrong one, as Paul was the apostle over the church at Rome in the apostolic age.

The qualifications necessary to fill the office of apostle deny apostolic succession and therefore, all denominations/congregations which claim to have the apostolic office with living apostles are exposed as apostate denominations by their very claim.

E. AUTHORITY

There can be no question that the apostolic office had special authority and the congregations recognized that authority. However, the very fact that the apostolic office was limited to the first century demands apostolic authority could not have been passed on beyond the first century but was designed for foundational purposes.

¹⁷⁷ *Peter may have been instrumental in the formation of the church at Rome through teaching and sending back to Rome those who came from Rome and were saved and added to the congregation at Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:10 (“of Rome”). Paul was instrumental in the spiritual growth of the church at Rome in his letter to the Romans and his two visits to Rome.*

The foundational design for the apostolic office was to put into place abiding hedges or safety measures that would prevent the institution from completely apostatizing. Once these apostolic hedges were put in place, the need for that office ceased as it accomplished its foundational design. These foundational hedges included providing an oral body of essential doctrine first identified as “*the apostolic doctrine*” (Acts 2:41) and later identified as “*the faith*” along with other synonyms (the truth, the tradition, the doctrine, the doctrine of Christ, etc.). In lieu of the absence of written New Testament Scriptures this provided the congregations with immediate stability and a standard of truth to prevent apostasy. The congregations recognized the authority of the apostles to provide such a standard. Also, in lieu of the absence of written New Testament Scriptures they imparted special revelatory and authenticating gifts by laying their hands upon the ordained leadership, so that in their absence the congregations had direct divine leadership within their own congregations.

One of the first apostolic hedges provided in the earliest written apostolic Scriptures was congregational discipline (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thes. 3:6- 14) in order that the apostolic oral traditions would be protected from apostate members (2 Thes. 3:6) and external heretics (Acts 20:29-30). Apostles were given supernatural power to deal with heretics who would attempt to overthrow the faith once delivered.

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.—Acts 13:8-12

Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know,

not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?—1 Cor. 4:18-21

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.—3 Jn. 9-10

And yet the Apostles realized and admitted that their authority was limited:

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.—2 Cor. 1:24

*For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.
- 2 Cor. 13:8*

For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: - 2 Cor. 10:8

As in the case of all delegated authority, their limitation can be defined as “*follow me as I follow Christ.*” Only Christ has all authority (Mt. 28:18) and only Christ has legislative authority.

However, they were ultimately answerable for their actions to the congregation wherein their membership resided (Acts 11:1-17; 14:26-15:3; 18:21-22). Therefore, their authority and power peculiar to the apostolic office was designed by God for foundational purposes to establish the early congregations and protect them until they ultimately provided them a more permanent final authority in the written Scriptures of the New Testament. **The “foundation” of the apostles and prophets is preserved as New Testament Scriptures.** The completion of the New Testament Scriptures fulfilled the work and need of the apostolic office. It is through the New Testament Scriptures that God speaks through Christ in these last days (Heb. 1:1-2). Hence, all who claim apostolic succession or claim the

prophetic office are in reality denying the sufficiency and final authority of the Biblical canon completed by the New Testament Scriptures. Such claims are characteristics of predicted apostate Christianity (Mt. 24:24-25; 2 Thes. 2:9-12; Isa.8:16-18, 20).

Therefore, all forms of church government that claim the authority of the apostolic office for their eldership form of government are apostate forms of church government because there is no continuation of that office or its authority, as it is the New Testament that acts as final authority for faith and practice. The New Testament is their legacy and the abiding “*foundation*” of the apostles and prophets.

II. PROPHETS

In Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 12:28 “*prophets*” are very closely associated with apostles. However, prophets are placed after apostles and specifically called “*secondarily*” as being set in the congregation of Christ. The “*secondarily*” position demands these are not Old Testament prophets but New Testament prophets that included the apostles.

Prophets have but one special calling from God and that is to speak forth to God’s people whatever God has given them by special revelation (Heb. 1:1). The confirmation that their message is from God is by fulfillment of their prophecies (Deut. 18:18-20) and authenticated by miracles, signs and wonders which serve as visible proofs that God has sent them. However, the ultimate verification is that their message is always consistent with prophetic Scriptures already confirmed as God’s Word (Deut. 13:1-5; Isa. 8:20). Satan has counterfeited God’s authenticating system of miracles, signs and wonders for his false doctrines (2 Thes. 2:9) and therefore such are “*lying*” wonders as they attempt to confirm lies as truth, thus counterfeiting God’s authentication method. These counterfeiting signs and wonders are exposed by their teachings which are not in keeping with God’s written word (2 Thes. 2:15; Isa. 8:19-20). However, in regard to God’s prophets, God is with their mouth, placing in their mouth what he wants them to say and preventing them from saying anything that would violate the tests of a prophet. Hence, just violation one time of any of the Biblical tests of a prophet distinguishes a false prophet from God’s prophets.

In the New Testament we have examples of prophets in the congregation at Jerusalem (Acts 11:27) and in the congregation at Antioch (Acts 13:1)

and Corinth (1 Cor. 14:29). We also find a particularly named prophet in Acts 21:10 named “*Agabus*.”

As previously demonstrated, the apostles were prophets as they were promised by Christ that the Spirit would reveal “*all truth*” to them and speak through their mouth and their writings. Mark, Luke, James and Jude were obvious prophets who provided Scriptures. However, not all New Testament prophets provided written Scriptures. In the early stages every congregation prior to the completion of the Biblical canon had prophets (1 Cor. 14:28-29; Acts 14:1) in order to provide direct and immediate revelation unto the congregations until they were provided with the New Testament Scriptures.

Moreover, a distinction must be made between “*prophesying*” and the office of prophet in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 14, prophets are restricted to two or three speaking in a service due to the fact that prophetic revelations also had to be authenticated by other prophets by subjecting it to the tests of a prophet (1 Cor. 14:29). That took up a good amount of time. However, the term “*prophesying*” also had a secondary non-technical general meaning of simply “speak forth.” When anyone simply took up the Scriptures and preached, or taught the Scriptures, they were “*prophesying*” or speaking forth the Word of God. In this general sense all the members could prophesy one by one (1 Cor. 14:30) as this kind of prophesying provided the congregation with “*edification, and exhortation, and comfort*” (1 Cor. 14:3). This kind of prophesying was self-authenticated because it was merely speaking the Word of God already authenticated. Prophets provided the inspired revelation in oral and written form. Once provided, the ordinary church member can take it and “speak forth” that word.

Like the apostolic office, the prophetic office was temporary and foundational (Eph. 2:20). The purpose of the prophetic office was to provide the people of God with the inspired revelation from God. However, once the New Testament Scriptures were completed and authenticated, the completed Scriptures became the sufficient and final authority for all matters of faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17), thereby eliminating the prophetic office. Thus again, the office of prophet is correctly characterized as a foundational office (Eph. 2:11) that was not expected to continue beyond its ultimate purpose.

Evidence that the prophetic office ceased with the completion of the Biblical canon of Scripture is that none who have claimed the prophetic

office since the first century have been able to pass the Biblical tests that authenticate a person is the prophet of God. There are several well-defined tests to try a prophet whether they are of God. Failing just one of these tests, just one time, is proof of a false prophet (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:18-20).

III. EVANGELISTS

The only real clear example where the term “*evangelist*” is applied in the New Testament is to Philip the deacon in Acts 8. It would appear from the account of Philip that an “*evangelist*” is one who proclaims the gospel, baptizes the converts and forms them into new congregations. Today we would call them “missionaries” which is a synonymous for a congregational “authorized sent one.” Paul and Barnabas acted in the capacity as “*evangelists*” who did the same thing (Acts 13-14) as did Silas also (Acts 16-18). Paul instructs Timothy as the pastor in the congregation at Ephesus to “*do the work of an evangelist*” (2 Tim. 4:5 - preaching the gospel, baptizing and adding to congregation). The Great Commission begins with preaching the gospel (Mk. 16:15). These are ordained authorized congregational planters. They are members of New Testament congregations (Acts 6:5; 13:1-4) who work under the authority of their congregation. The only kind of free-lance evangelist found in the New Testament is Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). However, that was due to ignorance, but, after he received proper instruction, he worked under congregational authority (Acts 18:27; 1 Cor. 3:5-11). The New Testament congregation is God’s appointed way to serve and glorify Christ through (Acts 13:1-4; Eph. 3:21).

IV. PASTOR/TEACHER?

Some feel that only one office is in view in Ephesians 4:12 because of the Grandville Sharpe rule construction.¹⁷⁸ Also, in 1 Cor. 12:28 where “*teachers*” are mentioned there is no reference to “*pastor*” and so again they feel that one

¹⁷⁸ *The Grandville Sharp Rule states—“When the copulative kai connects two nouns of the same case, [viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description, respecting office, dignity, affinity, or connexion, and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill], if the article ‘o,’ or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle:i.e. it denotes a farther description of the first named person...”*

is inclusive of the other. It is true that qualifications for a Bishop is that they must be “*apt to teach*” (1 Tim. 3:2) as one of their primary responsibilities is to “*feed*” the church of God (Acts 20:28).

Although the Grandville Sharpe Rule may be applied to singular nouns, it may not hold true for plural nouns. The nouns in Ephesians 4:11 are plural nouns. Paul may be simply distinguishing between elders who are more gifted teachers than administrators (Pastors) as he makes such a distinction in 1 Tim. 5:17. This is the most probable meaning in Ephesians 4:11 between Pastors and teachers.

On the other hand, there are many gifted teachers in our congregations who do not fill the ordained positions. Like all the other terms used to describe the office of Bishop, the term “*pastor*” may have a secondary general sense of simply one who feeds the sheep. All gifted teachers do in fact feed the sheep God’s Word. That is true if they are Sunday school teachers, college or Seminary teachers. If “*pastor*” simply means one who feeds God’s Word to God’s people, then it could be applied to the office of Bishop as well as to those who do this work at various levels in the congregation. All “*teachers*” of God’s word do in fact “*feed*” the people of God.

There are some who see “*teacher*” in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28 as a distinct church office separate from Bishop. However, it is more likely that some elders are more gifted as teachers and others more gifted as administrators (1 Tim. 5:17) because there is no third office (“*teacher*”) mentioned when addressing congregations in Scripture.

How does one differ between being called as a Bishop versus being a Sunday school teacher? Many have suggested different ways to distinguish the two. The one called to the office of Bishop “*desires*” that office (1 Tim. 3:1) and fits all the other qualifications for that office. He is characterized by leadership abilities and claims a distinct experience with God in being called to that ministry. Finally, his calling is verified by the congregation through their interaction with him prior to being ordained. On the other hand, the teacher has no distinct experience of being called by God and is simply contented with the desire to know, understand and teach the Bible. Hence, the extent of his calling is the desire to understand and impart Biblical knowledge. His mission is to impart information to the mind with the hope that the Holy Spirit will apply it. However, the Pastor’s mission is far more complex than merely imparting Biblical information. His ministry

is sealed by the demonstration of the Spirit's power to motivate those who sit under his ministry unto heart obedience:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.—1 Cor. 2:1-5

V. PASTOR/ELDER/ BISHOP/OVERSEER

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: - Philip. 1:1

Here is a sample of the threefold division in the congregations organized by the Apostle Paul—(1) all the saints—laity; (2) with the bishops; (3) and deacons. The “bishops” are set apart in recognition from the members and deacons. When addressing the bishops in the congregation of Ephesus we find a variety of English and Greek terms that describe the very same persons holding the very same office:

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders [presbuterous] of the church... Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, [episkopous] to feed [poimavein] the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.—Acts 20:17, 28

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, [episkopos] he desireth a good work.—1 Tim. 3:1

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors [poimenas] and teachers; - Eph. 4:11

So, when we consider the variety of terms used in both English and Greek we find that all of these terms are applied to the very same office:

1. Elder = *presbuteros* (presbyters)
2. Overseer = *episkopous* (Bishops)
3. Feed = *poimanein* (Pastor)

Therefore, those called “*elders*” [*presbuteros*] in Acts 20:17 are also called “*overseers*” [*episkopous*]. Those who have the responsibility to “*feed*” the flock are called “*pastors*” in Eph. 4:11. The same term translated “*overseers*” [*episkopous*] is translated “*bishop*” in 1 Tim. 3:1 and Philippians 1:1. This demonstrates that *presbuteros*/elders and *episkopous*/overseers/ bishops and Pastors are descriptive of the very same office.

Why so many titles for the same office? The answer to that question is simple. The various titles describe the various characteristics and/or duties of that office. The man holding that office is called “*elder*” because the qualifications to fill that office require spiritual maturity. Timothy was a young man in physical age but he was an “*elder*” in spiritual age. The man holding that office is called “*Pastor*” because one of his chief duties is to “*feed*” the church. The man holding that office is called “*overseer*” or “*Bishop*” because the responsibility of that office is to watch over, lead and guide the flock (1 Pet.5:2 “*taking the oversight*”).

So, these are not five different offices (presbyters, elder, bishop, overseer, Pastor) in Acts 20:17, 28, and 1Tim. 4:1, but all five designations refer to just one office. Later, we will deal with the qualifications and ordination of the Pastor. However, neither Christ, nor his apostles instituted offices in the congregation called “*pope...cardinal...archbishop...priest...etc.*” Neither are “*elder... Pastor... Overseer... Bishop... Pastor*” five different offices but they all refer to the same office. Another mark of apostate Christianity is the creation of offices and distinctions that are not found in the New Testament.

A. PASTORAL AUTHORITY

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.... Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.—Heb. 13:7, 17

We now come to a topic that is very much debated in many circles. What authority does the office of Bishop have in the congregation? What does the word “rule” mean? It is the Greek term *hegeomai* which is a strengthened form of *ago* which means to “lead.”

They are made “*overseers*” by the Holy Spirit or put into the place of leadership. Their leadership is not by coercion, intimidation or power over anyone. They lead by presenting and rightly interpreting the Word of God as the revealed will of God, and by their own example in following the Word of God. In Hebrews 13:7, 17, the reasons given for obedience to their elders is found (1) in speaking to you the Word of God; and (2) their example (considering the end of their conversation) and (3) as ones who must give account to God for the spiritual development of your soul. God has committed the membership into their care. **If you are not the Pastor, he has not committed the membership into your care or leadership.**

The Biblical rule for all delegated authority is “*follow me as I follow Christ.*” That is true with regard to government authority (“*For he is the minister of God to thee for good*” Rom. 13:4). That is true with regards to the authority of Husband (“*as it is fit in the Lord*”—Col. 3:18). That is true with regard to the authority of parents over children (“in the Lord”—Eph. 6:1). That is true with regard to Masters over servants (“*that which is just and equal*”—Col. 4:1). Christ never delegates authority to anyone to violate His revealed will or to force anyone else to violate it. That means, when a Bishop is not following Christ, the members are under no obligation to obey or follow that Bishop in those areas which conflict with Christ and His Word.

They have no authority to make or force any member or the congregation to do anything. They have no authority over your family, your spouse or

children. The husband and father are the final authority over his own household and pastors should respect his authority and never attempt to usurp it.

One primary important role of the Pastor as “overseer” is to “rule” over the worship service in order that the content and order of the worship service is conducted in a manner that honors God. The Pastor is given authority by God to rebuke openly those who are disorderly (1 Tim. 5:20) or those who bring either wrong content or disorder into worship service that does not honor God.

Therefore, by virtue of his appointment to the office of Pastor, he is the authorized congregational representative to appoint and disappoint anyone who serves in capacities that affect the order and content of the worship service (song leader, ushers, teachers, players of instruments, etc.). He is the “overseer” of public worship. Authority in this area is vital to his overall position as “overseer” because the Pastor is the buffer zone between potential heretics and the congregation in public worship. What he preaches will naturally annoy and irritate potential heretics in the midst. His direction of the worship service will naturally irritate potential heretics in the midst. **So, remember, apostates who rise up within the congregation will be primarily manifested by focusing their attack on the Pastor (Acts 20:29-30) as he is the designated defender of the faith within the congregation and the buffer zone between the heretic and the congregation.** Therefore, the Pastor has Biblical authority to determine the order and persons that direct and affect the public worship service or else he cannot perform his function as “overseer” of the congregation. By virtue of the congregation calling him to this position, they have vested this right unto him.

B. RESPECTING THE PASTOR

And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.—1 Thes. 5:13. The Pastor is the only member of the congregation that is publicly called and ordained to “contend for the faith” and as such, he acts as the buffer between potential heretics and the congregation. **A heretic usually manifests himself/herself by finding some minor flaws in the Pastor or his interpretation and then attempts to openly challenge him before the whole congregation.** Any member openly opposing the leadership and

teaching of the Pastor should not be tolerated by the congregation and an eye should be kept on such members as they are showing signs of being a potential divisive person.

Paul commands members of the congregation to give “*honor unto whom honor is due*” (Rom. 13:7) and that an elder who is efficient in both leadership and doctrine is worthy of “*double honor*” (1Tim.5:17).¹⁷⁹ That means all elders should be treated with “*honor*” or due respect to their office and calling. He is God’s prophet in the sense he speaks forth the Word of God, and is God’s anointed in the sense that the Holy Spirit has called and gifted him. The Bible warns against mistreating God’s anointed:

Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. –Psa. 105:15

The ordained should be treated with respect due to their calling and office. It is dangerous to oppose the man of God if that man is doing the work of God. No deacon or individual member is called by God to be the watchdog or overseer of the Pastor, and those who act in that manner should be rebuked and carefully observed. Be careful not to rebuke an elder, as the Bible says, you should show him respect even if you think he is in error and to entreat him as though he were your father:

*Rebuke not an elder, but **intreat him as a father**; and the younger men as brethren;* - 1 Tim. 5:1

What does that mean? It means if you think the Pastor is in error, instead of openly rebuking him, you should seek to take him aside privately if possible and simply reveal to him how you view a particular teaching or matter and ask him to show you why your view is wrong. Keep the conversation objective and refrain from getting personal. Remember, no human being is perfect and one mark of a potential heretic is habitually nitpicking at the Pastor’s flaws in order to obtain preeminence before the eyes of the congregation.

Moreover, the Scriptures command that no accusation be received against an elder except there are two or three witnesses that can sustain that accusation (1 Tim. 5:19).

¹⁷⁹ This may be a reference to double pay. Roman Soldiers who performed special duties received “double pay.”

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.—1 Tim. 5:19

On the other hand, the congregation should not allow its leadership to openly teach false doctrine.

In order to obtain a proper check and balance many congregations have adopted articles of faith that list and define essential doctrines while omitting those areas of differences between congregations of like faith and order (e.g. wine versus grape juice, head covering, holidays, women's apparel, ambiguous or unclear teachings "washing of feet" etc.).

Such a confession of faith is then provided for every member that joins the congregation. This provides the congregation with a clear and objective basis to qualify proper candidates for church offices. It provides a clear and objective basis to identify and deal with potential heretics who may attempt to teach false doctrine in the congregation. It also provides a clear and objective basis to approach and deal with church leaders who attempt to preach, or practice things contrary to essentials of the faith.

One major advantage for having a confession of faith is that it can be used by the congregation to keep the ordained leadership in check and gives the congregation the basis for confronting any elder who openly preaches contrary to that confession of faith. The congregation appointed a man to that office, and they can disappoint him by removing him from that office, and if need be place him under congregational discipline just as they can any other member. Remember, it is ordained leadership that Paul warns that may rise up and lead others into error (Acts 20:29-30). Ordination is conditioned upon maintaining the qualifications set forth in Scripture for that office.

CONCLUSION: There are temporary foundational offices (apostles and prophets) that fulfilled their purpose contemporary with the completion of the Biblical canon of Scriptures. Therefore, all forms of church government that attempt to justify their form of elder rule government by citing the authority which belongs to the apostolic office are apostate institutions. Moreover, there is no Biblical support for offices in the congregation as "Pope, Cardinal, Archbishop or Priest." These are also indicators of apostate forms of Christianity. Evangelists are authorized church planters who go preaching the gospel, baptizing converts and organizing them into New Testament congregations. Pastors take up the more permanent role of

leadership over newly formed congregations. Teachers characterize one of the Pastor's primary responsibilities to "feed the flock" but may also characterize members as gifted teachers within the flock underneath the office of overseer.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What does the term "apostle" mean?
2. How is its verbal form used in the N.T.?
3. In what sense are apostles and prophets the "foundation" of the institutional church?
4. What foundational functions does the office of apostle provide?
5. How do signs, wonders and miracles set apart the apostles from others (2 Cor. 12:12)?
6. Give two reasons for plurality of elders in early congregations?
7. What is the function of prophets?
8. Are the prophets in Eph. 2:20 and 1 Cor. 12:28 Old or New Testament prophets?
9. What prevents God's prophets from failing the tests of a true prophet?
10. What is an "evangelist"?
11. How can you demonstrate the terms Pastor, Elder, presbyter, overseer, bishop all refer to the very same office?
12. What is the Biblical limitation for all delegated authority?
13. What two primary principles characterize their "rule" over the congregation?
14. Are you to rebuke an elder?
15. How are you to treat an elder you believe is mistaken?
16. How many witnesses are required to accept an accusation against an elder?
17. Why Does Paul tell members that they are to honor and respect the Bishop in 1 Thessalonians 5:13b?

REQUIRED READING:

Baptist Church Manual by J.M. Pendleton, pp. 22-40

WEEK 13 LESSON 3

The Institution—Part 3— Qualifications for Ordination

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to define the areas of Biblical qualification for ordination to positions of leadership and service in the Lord's congregations and, (2) to demonstrate such qualifications are designed to protect and preserve the Lord's congregations from apostasy.

INTRODUCTION: There are many online sites where one can receive ordination papers for a sum of money. No experience necessary. Can you imagine going into the operating room in a hospital and have the nurse tell you not to worry because the doctor obtained his degree online for \$200?? The safety and efficiency of a ship is determined by the qualifications and experience of its captain and officers serving under him. The same is true with any army or business. Leadership defines the character, beliefs, goals and procedures of any religious institution and that is especially true concerning the Lord's congregation. The qualifications of congregational leaders are a major concern of the Lord in His Word. The Pastor's office is a line of defense against error entering into the congregation.

I. WHY QUALIFICATIONS?

One must ask why God even has qualifications that must be met to be ordained to such an office. Are not all members just sinners saved by grace and therefore none better than the other? Yes, but it is the grace of God that prepares and makes some qualified and others not. For example, Jeremiah was ordained for his calling from his mother's womb (Jer. 1:5) just as John the Baptist. God's grace providentially prepares and sustains those whom

God has called to high offices. So, the congregation should expect that those called, can and do meet these high qualifications as their preparation and calling by God is not accidental.

So, God calls to such offices those whom he has providentially prepared, sustained by grace for that purpose. There are different measures of grace and different measures of faith that distinguish his children from one another (Rom. 12:4, 7).

What purposes do such high qualifications serve? First, members need examples or patterns of what God approves in order to motivate them to become more like Christ in every area of their lives. Significantly, every qualification demanded for ordination is the same standard that every member is to pursue, as every qualification is a Christlike quality.

Second, the congregation needs to be protected from harm, and such qualifications joined with God's calling and gifting provide the congregation with leaders that protect the congregation from division and apostasy and who bring order and peace. Third, such leadership keeps the congregation on track to carry out God's revealed will for His congregations.

II. TWO PRIMARY PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING QUALIFICATIONS

PAGETURNER

A. THE PRINCIPLE OF POSITIVE EXAMPLE OR PATTERN

***In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works:** in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, - Tit. 2:7*

*Let no man despise thy youth; but **be thou an example of the believers,** in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.-1 Tim. 4:12*

*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so **as ye have us for an ensample.**-Philip. 3:17 Not because we have not power, but to **make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.**-2 Thes. 3:9*

*Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but **being ensamples to the flock.***—1 Pet. 5:3

Τυπος - If you pressed your fist into a wall of soft clay and withdrew it, what you would have is an imprint or “pattern” of your fist. This is the idea behind the Greek term translated “ensamples.” Scriptures provide both positive and negative patterns or examples. Negative examples are set forth in Scripture in order for God’s people to know what to avoid or what not to follow or be like. Positive examples are set forth in Scripture for God’s people to know what God actually approves and what they should imitate or follow.

Qualifications for ordination are about providing the membership with a positive pattern to imitate and follow. This is one of the most crucial principles you will ever learn concerning the purpose of ordination qualifications. Those ordained must be positive role models or patterns in each designated area (beliefs, behavior, and practice) of qualification that God would have his people imitate, follow and become. If the area is marriage, home or public life, then qualifications for that area is to be the positive example or pattern that God approves and would have every member imitate and follow.

So, a simple principle to evaluate any interpretation of any of the listed qualifications is does that interpretation promote the pattern or example that God would have every member attain, follow, practice, emulate and imitate, or does it fall short of being an example of what God approves as the example to follow? If any qualification is interpreted to be less than what God provides as the Biblical role model for that area then it is a wrong interpretation.

B. THE POSITIVE PRINCIPLE OF BLAMELESSNESS

Ανεπιλημπτον. Another general principle for interpreting qualifications is the principle of blamelessness. Paul says that a candidate for ordination “*must be blameless.*” The term translated “*blameless*” is the Greek term *anepilempton* which is a term borrowed from the wrestling arena and refers to providing your opponent a grip on your person that can be used to pin you to the mat. In political language it would refer to skeletons in your closet that can be justly used against you to disqualify you from running for office. The proper candidate should not be a person that anyone can find

justifiable causes that would discredit him as an example for others. He is one that should live manifestly above approach or suspicion. A negative example of this would be the man at Corinth who as a believer had been publicly known to have committed fornication, or publicly known to have been characterized by any of those sins listed in 1 Corinthians 5:11:

*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a **fornicator**, or **covetous**, or **an idolater**, or **a railer**, or **a drunkard**, or **an extortioner**; with such an one no not to eat.—1 Cor. 5:11*

Both lost and saved people at Corinth knew this man should not be in any position of example or leadership. This was his public reputation, regardless, if afterwards he repents and receives forgiveness. It is a skeleton that remains with you so that the reaction would be “they ordained you?”. In direct contrast, the one who is qualified comes as no surprise to those who know him but is something they would expect. Think carefully about what I just said. **Any person being considered for a position of leadership should be one that surprises nobody but everyone would be expect to be promoted to leadership.**

It is the congregation who ultimately determines whether the candidate is fit for ordination. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 we find a list of minimum qualifications. In these lists we find two categories of qualifications; (1) what the candidate for Pastor must be and (2) what the candidate for Pastor must **not** be.

III. HE MUST BE “THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE”

μίας γυναίκος. This qualification is hotly debated and many are divided over the proper interpretation. Congregations that are sound in the faith differ on this issue. The debated issue is about whether a divorced man meets this qualification. Those who claim he does interpret this qualification as forbidding a polygamist from being a Pastor.

This obviously forbids choosing a man that has more than one wife. Although, the New Testament epistles address many problems, however, polygamy is never listed. Polygamy was an issue in the second century among

the Jews. Hence, we see no grounds to restrict this to polygamy, although it naturally disqualifies men who are polygamists. Furthermore, church discipline would equally exclude members who are living in polygamy as much as those living in fornication or adultery (1 Cor. 5:11) and so a polygamist would be no more a consideration for leadership than a fornicator. Therefore, the polygamist interpretation should be rejected. Again, we must apply the two basic principles (1) Positive Example and (2) blamelessness. The positive pattern for marriage is clearly spelled out in the Scriptures—one man and one woman until death do they part (Rom. 7:1-4). Upon death, it is lawful for the living spouse to marry as death annuls the previous marriage. No one can honestly argue that divorce is the positive Biblical pattern of marriage that God approves and sets forth as the Biblical pattern or norm to be followed.

As a matter of fact, the Bible clearly says that God hates divorce and that divorce is not the positive pattern God approves to be followed. Even though God permits divorce and allows for remarriage under certain conditions, even a properly divorced and remarried man can hardly be set forth as the positive example for God's idea of marriage for every member to imitate. Furthermore, living spouses and/or children, alimony payments, and child support from a previous marriage are obvious skeletons in this department of life that should be considered.

The positive example is set forth by Christ with his institutional congregation as a metaphor of husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-27). Christ is not a divorcee but a one-woman type man under whose nurture his espoused wife will not be a divorcee.

Finally, the Greek phrase "*husband of one wife*" is anarthrous construct and conveys the idea of a one-woman kind of man. Not one woman at a time, but like the example of Christ to His bride. I think any objective person would admit that it is a successful marriage between one man and one woman that is the divine pattern that God would have all members strive for rather than any lower grade of marriage.

There are also practical reasons for restricting it to a man who sets forth the positive example. Suppose members have marriage problems and stand in need of marriage counsel? What kind of trust factor is there when a divorced pastor attempts to give marriage counsel?

It is the sincere conviction of this writer, that polygamist and divorced men are equally disqualified from Biblical ordination. Gifts do not determine

calling as there are many gifted lost persons and saved persons who are not qualified for many other reasons. Just because a man has gifted abilities for leadership and speaking does not mean they are qualified to be ordained to such offices in the congregation.

However, that does not mean that such men can't serve in many other areas where ordination is not necessary (Sunday School teachers, Home Bible studies, Bible college and Seminary professors, etc.).

“Vigilant”

Νηφαλεος - He must be alert and watchful against any form of intemperance, food, pleasure, drink and any other immoderate example. Moderation in all things must characterize him. Moderation is the key thought. Balance is the key idea. The man of God must be sensitive to how others perceive him as his example is the basis for trust by his members and others.

“Sober”

σωφρονα. The idea is that he is a prudent man, who has a sound mind and one who follows sound reason and is mentally stable rather than a person who is tossed to and fro by passions or feelings. Stability is the key. Is this man stable? Does he make sound and reasonable decisions?

“Of Good Behavior”

Κόσμιος. He must be orderly and well mannered. He must be a gentleman, and given to politeness, and be courteous. The candidate for Bishop must not be a rude or an inconsiderate man.

“Given to Hospitality”

Φιλοξενον. More literally the term means a *“lover of hospitality.”* If you are not a people person or equipped with a wife that can help you in this area, you should not seek the office of bishop, or deacon; because these offices are all about ministering to the spiritual (Bishop) and temporal needs (deacon) of people. This man **must** enjoy serving and being with people.

“Apt to Teach”

Διδακτικον. This describes a man who is both qualified and able to teach. A person who is not qualified or not able to teach should never seek the office of Bishop. Others may be better qualified and more gifted teachers; but, if this man isn't well trained and capable of teaching doctrine, he should

not even be considered for Bishop as one of his primary responsibilities is to “*feed*” the flock and defend it from error (Tit. 1:10-13). One primary purpose of a presbytery is to make sure this man knows the essentials of the faith and is sound in “*the faith*.”

“Not given to Wine”

Παροτιος. He must not be controlled by alcohol. It literally means to “linger with” or “beside” (para) “*wine*” (*oinos*). By usage it refers to the attitude and actions that would characterize one who has had too much wine rather than merely drinking wine in moderation. When this phrase is compared to “*not given to much wine*” in 1 Tim. 3:18 and “*not given to much wine*” in Tit. 2:3, it conveys nothing more than excessive drinking. What is excessive drinking? It is when wine manifestly controls his speech, walk and reasoning. Again, the idea is whether this man has his own life under control. Wine was a necessary staple both then and today at most meals in the common household in the Near East as it protected the family from bacteria from spoiled food and impure drinking water. Also, wine is a symbol of joy in the Bible and used at weddings (Jn. 2). The idea of non-alcoholic versus alcoholic wine is pure myth based upon poor scholarship and abuse of historical resources. Wine in the Bible and in Ancient classical Greek literature is always alcoholic in nature. The Bible nowhere condemns drinking wine in moderation but always condemns the abuse of wine. Personally, I am a teetotaler by my own choice because in our culture wine is not necessary to protect us from spoiled food or poor drinking water. Also, I choose to totally abstain so that it will not be a stumbling block to the lost or Christians with weaker conscience. The cause of Christ must always be preeminent above pleasing self. In a society of excess and where families are being destroyed by alcohol it is best that the one seeking the office of Pastor refrain from personal and social drinking altogether. A candidate for Pastor is not to be “*self-willed*” (Tit. 1:6) but seeks the best for others and the testimony of Christ.

“No Striker”

μη πληκτην. He is not one who resolves personal issues by fighting. He is not a quick-tempered person who loses control (“*not soon angry*”)—Tit. 1:7). He is not one who comes to blows or the use of fits to settle disagreements. This applies to his tongue as a weapon to kill the character of others. Again, he characterized by self-control.

“Not greedy of filthy lucre”

αἰσχροκερδής. He does not view the ministry as a business to obtain base gain or profit. He is not one that takes financial advantage of his position. He is not looking at his position, circumstances and opportunities as means to obtain personal profit by making the excuse that he is helping others. The ministry is not viewed as an occupation for his own personal advancements. He is not in the ministry for the money but because he is called to minister to others.

“But Patient”

Επιεικῆ. In contrast to the striker, he is a modest, mild and gentle as a man, or one with a kind demeanor who is not soon angry (Tit. 1:7). This Greek term and its translation is not to be confused with *hypomone* which also is translated “*patience*” in the KJV and means to *persist under pressure* or under trials and tribulations. The idea here is that this man is not a bull in china closet when it comes to tact in dealing with people and sensitive situations.

“Not a brawler”

μη παροινον. Not contentious. He is not one that looks for a debate or wears a chip on his shoulder. He does not love arguing just to argue. He does not promote strife and divisions. In contrast, he would exhort others to “*avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain*” (Tit. 3:9). He is not eager to engage in strife. However, that does not mean he is not ready and willing to defend the faith when necessary.

“Not Covetous”

Αφιλαργυρον. More literally, he is not a lover of money. His ministry is not money motivated but is motivated by the leadership of the Spirit, the glory of God, the sake of truth and love for God’s people in spite of sufficient or insufficient money. Indeed, this man is more willing to give than to receive as his primary interest is to help others instead of being helped by others. Money does not influence his final decisions or how he treats one member over another. He is not a man that can be bought for a price. He does not determine his field of service by its monetary value. Where God sends God provides is his rule of direction.

“One that ruleth well His own house”

Οικου καλωσ κπροπενον. One who cannot manage his own home certainly cannot manage the house of God. The character of his leadership skills will be seen in how his wife and children respond to his leadership and respect his person. There should be discipline and order, balanced with love and affection that characterize his house. Don't ordain any man whose house is not in order and is not an example of a godly home.

The text does not demand a man must be married or must have children. It only demands that a married man with children have his house in order. If his children are unruly and disrespectful toward him, or their mother, the fault lies with him and demonstrates he lacks the administrative skills of a leader.

There are no perfect children; but, if there is an accusation (“*accused*”) that children living under his roof are irreverent in their behavior (“*riotous*”) and do not respect or respond to authority (“*unruly*”), then he is disqualified from being considered for ordination. If he has children, his discipline should be manifest in their reverence for the things of God and in respect for authority. The demand they should be “*faithful*” does not mean they must be saved. No child is born saved, neither can they be saved for several years after birth until at least they can understand they are sinners and the need of salvation. Even then, no minister can achieve that goal. The idea is that they be “*faithful*” in reverence for God and respect for authority due to the disciplinary administration by this man over his house. They are disciplined to follow his leadership. The Bishop must be of strong character and sufficiently wise to know how to rebuke those that sin openly in the congregation. The common member is directed to personally “*admonish*” other members who are in error (Rom. 15:14). The term translated “*admonish*” literally means “to place before the mind” and conveys the idea of personal confrontation with the view to correct that person. The pastor is also directed to “*admonish*” those who are in error (1 Thes. 5:12) within the congregation and sometimes when called for, he is to openly admonish or confront a disorderly member in the public congregation. However, such admonishment must be administered in wisdom so that it is effective (Gal. 6:1-3).

If his wife does not respect or obey him he is not qualified to be ordained. She knows him better and is closer to him than any other person on earth. If she has no respect for him that does not speak well of him or his leadership in

sustaining close relationships between the Pastor and members or resolving membership relationship problems.

“Not a Novice”

νεοπτητων -Newly saved unexperienced Christians cannot in any sense be qualified to be called an “*elder*” in spiritual matters. No one can lead until they have learned how to follow. Candidates for leadership in the congregation must be spiritually mature individuals who are well taught and able to communicate and defend “*the faith*.” They must be saved long enough to be regarded by the congregation, by the community in which they live, and by their family as mature stable and wise persons. It takes time and experience to make wise decisions and deal with the difficult circumstances of the ministry. Even the Apostles were not let loose until at least after three years of intense training by Christ. Maturity takes time and no man should be considered for ordination that has not had sufficient time to become an example in all of these qualifications. Being lifted up too quickly unto a position of leadership over others only produces pride instead of humility, and that creates more mistakes than wise decisions (“*lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*”). Many congregations require those being considered for ordination to be first taken under the wings of the Pastor and trained for a period of time in order to prove himself before ordaining him because Paul instructs Timothy not to lay hands on any man too quickly (1 Tim. 5:20a)

“Good report from them without”

Καλην ματυριον (literally a “good witness”). If he does not promote respect from those without he is not fit to represent the congregation to those without. If the guys on the job during the week days know him to be different than the members of the congregation on Wednesday night and Sunday’s, then the man is not qualified. It does matter what those without think about your church leaders, especially if they have a just basis to think poorly of such leaders. They may not like his doctrine, but they should like his person and should not have any just basis to disrespect his person. The ordained leadership ministers to the community and the community must not have any just basis for disrespecting the leaders of the congregation or their ministry to the community is doomed to failure, and Christ is dishonored (“*fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*”).

“A lover of Good men, just and holy”

φιλαγαθον δικαιον οσιον. Jesus associated with sinners, but his close companions were saints. The man who is properly qualified is not one whose close associates are ungodly people. His close associates are those who are “good” just (righteous) and holy (separated) persons. A man is known by the company he keeps. The old saying is “birds of a feather stick together.” He is not biased but “just” in his dealings with others. His life is “set apart” (holy) unto the revealed will of God.

“Sound Doctrine”

Διδασκαλια υγιαινυση. Apart from “*sound doctrine*” he cannot be “*apt to teach*” as “*sound doctrine*” is the basis for right teaching and practice. His “*rule*” over the flock is determined by his ability to know, understand and apply “*sound doctrine*.” His ability to protect the flock from false teachers and confront heretics depends upon “*sound doctrine*.” He must not be a “*novice*” in the faith but one who is skilled in the use of the Word. Any person who cannot answer questions given him by the presbytery with regard to basic doctrine should never be ordained.

IV. DEACONS

The office of deacon is not found in the lists of gifted leadership (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:28-30). This may be due to the fact that deacons were introduced not for the sake of *spiritual* leadership over the congregation, but to minister in the *temporal* matters of the congregation (Acts 6:1-5) as helpers of the ordained ministry.

The Greek term *diakonos* is used within the New Testament in a general sense (translated “minister”) to describe anyone who serves others whether in a secular or religious sense. Its etymological meaning is one who “stirs up the dust.” This meaning was due to the fact that most floors consisted of dirt and servants moving about being busy in serving would literally “stir up the dust” with their feet. This is a person busy about serving others.

The work of the deacon is distinctly different than the Bishop. The Bishop is a minister (*diakonos*) in *spiritual* matters, whereas the Deacon is a minister (*diakonos*) in *temporal* matters. When Paul addresses the congregation at Philippi, he addresses the “*elders and deacons*” (Philip. 1:1) thus distinguishing between those who minister in *spiritual* matters (“*elders*”) versus those who minister in *temporal* matters (“*deacons*”).

The institution of the office of Deacon is for the express purpose to relieve the congregational leaders from temporal matters relating to the physical needs of the congregation so that the leaders can give themselves to prayer and ministry of the Word (Acts 6).

However, because they are assistants to the spiritual leaders of the congregation, there is a close relationship that exists between them and must exist in order to facilitate the work of both offices. Nearly the same qualifications for the office of Bishop (1 Tim. 3:1-7) are given for the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Again, this shows the close working relationship between the two offices demanding the same spiritual maturity between those men who fill these offices and same qualifications as they must also be proper examples as they work with the membership.

However, this close relationship should never be allowed by the congregation to be equal to or usurp authority over the office of Bishop. Deacons have no business in leading the congregation in spiritual affairs. The office of deacon is designed to assist and serve the Pastor. As such they can assist in the administration of the ordinances and at times when the congregation is without a Pastor they can help guide the congregation as spiritual mature leaders to select and qualify another Pastor. They can assist the congregation in administering the ordinances and help guide the congregation as spiritual mature leaders to select and qualify another Pastor.

Deacons properly serve Christ and the congregation by serving the Bishop in such a manner that the Bishop is made freer to give himself wholly to the word and prayer. That is their ultimate goal and when anything else replaces that ultimate goal they cease serving according to their Biblical role and design as a Deacon. God has not designed the office of Deacon to be a body of elders that govern the spiritual affairs of the congregation nor as a watchdog over the Pastor. A good deacon is a good servant. Any member who does not enjoy serving the Pastor and other members should not be ordained to this office.

Deacons are not a necessity, unless circumstances demand them. In other words, it was the size and problems in the congregation at Jerusalem that made them a necessity. It is as foolish for a small congregation to have seven deacons, or to have a plurality of elders. Deacons are qualified and selected when the size and/or problems of a congregation warrant that office to be filled.

Finally, some feel there is scriptural warrant for female deacons for the purpose of ministering to the needs of the female members. Phoebe is given as an example in Romans 16:1-3. Also, the elderly women above the age of 60 in first epistle of Timothy are given as an example. So, the argument is made that female deacons are necessary to meet the needs of the female membership.

However, in Acts 6 there are seven men chosen for the express purpose to meet the needs of “*widows*”. Moreover, it is the responsibility of all the elderly women in the congregation to teach and minister to the needs of the younger (Tit. 2:3-5). The financial support given widows over 60 is only because they have no family members to support them, and their ministry is to men and women alike. With regard to Phoebe, she was a faithful servant in the congregation at Cencrea whom Paul knew would be alone in a strange city. Paul knew her very well, as she had ministered unto him. Not that she had authority over him, but most likely as an aged widow she had ministered to his needs when he was at Corinth. Paul was concerned about her wellbeing and wanted the congregations to give her aide and support her while she was among them. Today, the same response would be shown an elderly widow if she was visiting a strange city and her pastor knew of a congregation in the city and was writing that congregation about other things. Finally, the qualification for the office of deacon is that he, too, must be the husband of one wife and that totally dismisses the idea of female deacons.

However, there is a need for well qualified elderly women to minister to the needs of younger women in our congregations. There is nothing unbiblical about a women’s ministry to women in our congregations. We need more qualified women to teach the women and small children in our congregations.

Qualifications for the office of Deacon

*8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued,
not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;*

9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

*10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the
office of a deacon, being found blameless.*

11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

13 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.

Much of the qualifications are the same as those of the Bishop as the deacon is to be characterized by the very same two principles—(1) an example and (2) Blameless. However, there are some qualifications that are different from the office of Bishop that deal with the nature of that office. One noticeable difference is that the qualifications for the office of Bishop make no demands upon his wife, whereas, the qualifications for deacon demand that his wife also meet certain standards. The implication is that the wife of the deacon will be involved in helping her husband especially in meeting the needs of the female members. More preachers and deacons have fallen due to becoming intimately involved in the needs of female members. Here is where the deacon's wife has a significant role as an elderly woman within the congregation (Tit. 2:3-5).

Moreover, the Deacon and his wife will be exposed to the needs of all the members. Hence it is important they are “grave” or serious-minded showing respect for those in need and not treat the needs of members with levity or contempt. Nothing can rip a congregation apart more than insensitive attitudes toward those members in need as they are very vulnerable in seeking help from the congregation. Moreover, they may be literally going house to house and exposed to private information; and, therefore, they must be in control of their tongues when going house to house or when fellowshiping with other members. The Deacon's wife is in a perfect position to spread gossip and slander as she is exposed to the personal lives and needs of the members. She must be “faithful in all things” or one who can be trusted in all things she is made privy to.

The Deacon must be careful to guard his tongue from being “double tongued” or saying one thing to one member and another thing to another member or being inconsistent in ministering to the needs of the members.

Because of the sensitive nature of their work in the personal and private affairs of the congregation such candidates must “first be proven” or shown

to be men and wives with integrity that can be trusted in such a sensitive area of responsibility.

They are to “*hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*” The term “*mystery*” refers to what was previously hidden but now revealed. The apostles were the instrumental means through which Christ revealed to the congregations His doctrine and practice. They should be sound in “*the faith*” both in doctrine and in practice so that their conscience would be pure and undefiled by false doctrine and practice.

Those godly men who serve well in the office of Deacon will be bold “*in the faith*” now, and in the future will have great reward in heaven: “*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*” (1 Tim. 3:13). Such godly men will be a blessing to the Pastor and congregation they serve.

The Lord must have loved Preachers, because He ordained the office of Deacon to lighten the pastor’s load. God bless every one of our godly deacons. And let all pastors say Amen!—Davis W. Huckabee, **Studies on Church Truth** [Old Paths Tract Society, Shoals, IN, 2004] Vol. 1, p. 164.

V. ORDINATION

The noun *ordination* cannot be found in Scripture. However, its verbal form can be found. The verb “*ordain*” is derived from the Greek noun *kathistemi*, which is composed of the preposition *kata* and the noun *istemi* and literally means *to put into place*. It refers to the official act by the congregation of putting a man into the place of Bishop, Deacon, or Evangelist (missionary).¹⁸⁰

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set

¹⁸⁰ Remember, an evangelist is not an office within the congregation, but rather an authorized elder who is sent into the mission field to evangelize, baptize the converts and organize such into a New Testament congregation. He acts under the authority of the sending congregation. As an authorized sent one, he is an “apostle” in the general sense of the term, as was Barnabas and Silas. On the other hand, Paul was an “apostle” of Christ and in addition an “apostle” of the congregation at Antioch in the sense of an authorized sent missionary.

in order the things that are wanting, and ordain [katasteses] elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: - Tit. 1:5

So, the noun *ordination* refers to the official act of putting a man into the place of Bishop, deacon or evangelist (missionary) by the congregation. Notice that Paul qualifies this command to Titus by the words “*as I appointed thee*” or in keeping with my previous instructions on how to do this.

Some imagine that Paul is acting as an Archbishop exercising authority over a bishop (Titus) who in turn exercises authority over the congregations under him—thus an Episcopal form of government. However, that is pure assumption that is not only without any Biblical support but contrary to the examples in Scripture and the practice of Paul.

In Acts 1 and 6 it is the congregation in a called business meeting for that purpose to select and qualify candidates who are finalized by majority vote and then presented to the elders as a presbytery to visibly and formerly install them into that office. In Acts 14:22 it is the congregations in a called business meeting that select and qualify candidates finalized by majority vote that puts them into office in connection with a presbytery (1 Tim. 4:14). In 2 Corinthians 8:23 it is the congregations in called business meeting that select and send representatives to act in their behalf and attend Paul to Jerusalem.

Hence, for Titus to “*appoint elders. . . . As I had appointed thee*” would be following the very same pattern. He would provide these qualifications given him by Paul and lead these congregations to select qualified men by majority vote to be bishops. Titus would act in their behalf as an ordained elder in the presbytery who would then lay his hands upon the candidate giving visible expression to that congregational authorized choice.

However, although congregational selection and authorization ultimately is manifested in laying on hands by a presbytery, it does not mean that man has been called of God. Many men have obtained congregational approval and ordination that have never been called by God.

The congregation does not call men to the ministry. God calls them. However, God calls them in connection with His congregations (Acts 13:1-4). When a man claims he has been called to God to the office of Bishop, or deacon or missionary, God uses the congregation to confirm that person is scripturally qualified and then formerly ordains them to that calling because the way to glorify God is through the church (Eph. 3:21). Those who do not

meet the qualifications set forth in Scriptures should not be recognized by the Lord's congregations as genuine God-called men to the ministry. God has never called cultic men (JW's, Mormon's, SDA, etc.) to the ministry. God has never called Paedobaptists, or sacramentalist to the ministry, as he has never called anyone to preach another gospel, to administer another baptism or teach another faith and order. God's word never returns void, and so he may use such men to accomplish His own purposes within the professing kingdom of God; but that does not mean he called or sent them.

VI. THE PRESBYTERY

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.
-1 Tim. 4:14

What function and authority do the presbytery have with regard to ordaining men into office or to the mission field? We have already established that it is congregational authority that qualifies and selects the candidates to be presented to a presbytery. Therefore, the laying on of hands by the presbytery merely acts as the visible expression that formerly and publicly signifies the man has been put into office with full blessings. Therefore, the presbytery has no authority at all but simply serves to express the will of the congregation.

However, the presbytery cannot be forced by the congregation to lay their hands on any man, especially any man the presbytery believes to be not qualified. Paul instructs the Pastor in the congregation at Ephesus (Timothy) to be not too hasty in laying their hands on any man:

Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.-1 Tim. 5:22

Therefore, the happy medium which has been the traditional practice among Baptist congregations is for the congregation to select, prove and approve the candidate and allow the presbytery to publicly examine the candidate as a public confirmation of his fitness. Thus, publicly confirmed, the presbytery in good conscience can lay their hands upon him signifying their approval of the congregation's selection.

The congregation can form the presbytery from ordained men from within their own congregation (elder and deacons) as well as invite ordained representatives from other congregations of like faith and order to sit on the presbytery. If a congregation has no ordained men it would be wise to invite such men from other congregations. Paul and Barnabas served as the presbytery for the congregations in Galatia (Acts 14:22-23).

The laying on of hands by an Apostle conveyed spiritual gifts prior to the completion of the Biblical canon (2 Tim. 1:6). Apostolic laying of hands should not be confused with ordination to the ministry by the presbytery. The laying on of hands by a presbytery consisting of Bishops and Deacons simply symbolizes the congregational authorization of ordination.

VII. THE ORDINATION SERVICE

Since only the major steps are revealed in Scripture (congregational selection and authorization visibly manifested by the actions of the presbytery) but there are no detailed step-by-step procedures, then congregations have the freedom to determine the detailed steps in keeping with the principles and precepts of Scripture (*“let all things be done decently and in order”*).

The general procedure among Baptists has been for a man to make known to the congregation that God has called him to a specific calling (Pastor, deacon, missionary). The congregation votes to allow this man to exercise his gifts among them for a period of time to confirm in their own minds that this man is called of God and is qualified to serve in that capacity. They approve or give license to a man to exercise his gifts under the supervision of the Pastor and congregation. This is consistent with the Scripture that demands the congregation should know such man is qualified before ordaining him. After a sufficient time, the man has proved himself to the congregation; and, when God has opened up a door, opportunity or need to have such a man to fill, then the congregation votes to officially ordain him and sets a date for the ordination. Usually letters are sent out to congregations of like faith and order inviting them to attend and or their ordained membership to take part in the presbytery. This is wise, as it makes other congregations of like faith and order acquainted with this man.

Upon the set date, then the congregation will convene for the purpose of

ordaining that brother to the ministry. Usually the service is opened like any other service with songs and prayer and then Pastor brings the meeting to order with the formal reading of the date and time of the business meeting wherein the congregation authorized the ordination of the man in question. Usually at this time, the ordained elders are called to privately assemble and agree among themselves which elder will be the moderator and which elder should give the charge and consider any other procedural issues. After the presbytery has finished questioning the candidate, they will retire in private and discuss among themselves whether they can approve or disapprove of the candidate. If the majority of the presbytery determines they cannot advise the congregation to ordain the man in question, they should give precise reasons and then not participate in laying their hands on this man. At this point the moderator leads the congregation in a formal vote to accept or reject the counsel by the majority of the presbytery. Normally, it is not wise to reject the counsel of a presbytery. If the congregation chooses to accept the counsel of rejection by the presbytery the ordination process stops. If the congregation rejects the negative recommendation by the majority of the presbytery, then they can proceed with any elders who wish to participate by laying their hands on his head while asking God to bless this man and his ministry.

If the congregation chooses to continue, then those elders who approve of the ordination begin to come one by one and place their hands upon the head of the candidate and ask the Lord to bless the candidate according as they are individually led by the Spirit. After laying on of hands by the presbytery, the elder who has been chosen to preach the charge to the newly ordained man will come forth and give his charge. If that elder has refused to lay hands on the man, then the Pastor or one of the elders who affirmed the man must preach the charge. The charge is usually given by one of the more experienced and older elders who can warn the newly ordained man against the pitfalls of the ministry and exhort him with wisdom gained only by experience.

The biblical basis for preaching a charge is found when Moses gave a charge to Joshua (Deut. 3:28) who was chosen to take the place of Moses. Giving a charge is in keeping with the charge given by Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

After the charge has been given, the newly ordained man will be asked to come to the front of the congregation and, after a closing prayer, the

members are invited to come forward and shake his hand and give him their words of encouragement. Some may choose to follow the ordination service by a fellowship dinner.

VIII. ORDINATION IS CONDITIONAL

When an ordained man, whether he be a minister over spiritual things (a preacher) or over temporal things (a deacon), violates the qualifications so that he is no more an example in those areas and/or obtains skeletons in his closet that give the world a just cause to accuse him, he should voluntarily remove himself from that ministry; and, if he does not remove himself, he should be removed by the congregation he serves.

Davis Huckbee rightly says,

*Here a lot of congregations are in deep ignorance. Many Christians do not realize that a minister, whether he be over spiritual things (a preacher) or over temporal things (a deacon) can and should be disciplined if ungodly the same as any other church member. Ordination is conditional. It can be revoked by the church of which he is a member any time it is abused or violated. To allow a man to retain his standing as a preacher or a deacon when his life or teaching is in direct violation of Christian principles is the height of folly. A church has authority over its ministers no less than it has over the rest of its members and is just as responsible for its conduct before the world—Davis W. Huckabee, **Studies on Church Truth** (Old Paths Tract Society, Shoals IN, 2002) Vol. 1, p. 133.*

However, the Bible explicitly warns that an accusation against an elder is not to be received unless it is supported by at least two or three witnesses.

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.—1 Tim. 5:19

Neither should it be received if it is simply nitpicking or fault finding based on inconsequential matters. There is no one who is a perfect example in all these areas, but we are speaking of serious flaws that leave a lasting

reproach upon his ministry so that he is no longer able to recover his example or continue blameless before the congregation and/or the public.¹⁸¹ Examples of serious flaws would be divorce, drug addictions, extra-marital affairs, bankruptcy due to negligence, serious false doctrine, medical conditions that change his moral behavior, or any other flaws that would provide the lost world with just accusations that dishonor Christ and tarnish his reputation with the congregation he represents.

IX. ORDINATION DOES NOT FREE THE ORDAINED FROM CHURCH AUTHORITY

Many believe that ordination frees a man from church authority so that he becomes an independent authority somewhat like Apollos before he was instructed more perfectly. That is, some believe it is a general license for him to preach where he pleases as he pleases without accountability to any specific congregation. That is simply not true and is unbiblical. Ordination simply allows for a man to act as the authorized representative in a specific calling for the congregation which he serves and is a member. He has no Biblical authority over any other congregation, whether they have or have no ordained leader. Other congregations are free to recognize or not to recognize the ordination of a member of another congregation. If a man is in good standing with his congregation, it is customarily the practice of congregations of like faith and order to recognize his ordination as valid. However, if that man moves and seeks membership in another congregation, the receiving congregation is under no obligation to accept his ordination or recognize him as an authorized leader in their congregation. If they have need of another ordained member, they may choose to prove to themselves he is qualified before using him in the capacity of an ordained leader among them; or, if they have any cause for concern they may choose to call a presbytery and verify his qualifications and act upon the recommendation of the presbytery.

In any case, the ordained man is answerable to the congregation

¹⁸¹ *It is possible that a fully repentant man can be used of God again in another location by another congregation outside the geographical area where he tarnished his reputation.*

where his membership resides and never has any authority to act apart from congregational approval. His ordination does not make him a leader in any other congregation or give him the right to act for any other congregation.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Give three reasons why there are qualifications for ordination?
2. What are two primary principles for interpreting qualifications for ordination?
3. Should anyone who knows the candidate for ordination be surprised?
4. Who ultimately determines whether or not a man is qualified?
5. How do the words “spiritual” and “temporal” characterize the primary focus of ministry that distinguishes the office of Bishop from that of the Deacon?
6. What was the primary purpose for establishing the office of deacon?
7. What significant differences in qualifications are there for the Deacon not found listed for the Bishop?
8. Does Paul’s command to ordain elders in every city conflict with congregational authority?
9. What distinction is there between an Apostle’s laying his hands on a ministerial candidate versus the ordinary elder’s laying his hands on a candidate?
10. What function does the presbytery provide?
11. Write out a step-by-step Ordination procedure beginning with how the congregation is made aware and deal with one who claims God’s calling.
12. Is ordination irreversible?
13. Can the ordained become unqualified for their office?
14. Can the ordained be placed under congregational discipline?
15. How many witnesses are required to confront an elder, and how serious must those accusations be?
16. Does ordination free that person from congregational authority and accountability?

WEEK 14

LESSON 1–The Institution–
Part 4–Baptism–Part 1

LESSON 2–The Institution–
Part 5–Baptism–Part 2

LESSON 3–The Institution–
Part 6–The Lord’s Supper

WEEK 14 LESSON 1

The Institution—Part 4— Baptism—Part 1

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this present lesson and the following lesson are (1) to establish the difference between simply getting wet and scriptural baptism which are: (a) The right mode; (b) The right candidate; (c) The right design/purpose (d) The right administrator and, (2) to establish that baptism is a filter, or an apostolic hedge to protect the congregation from apostasy; and, (3) to establish that where there is no scriptural baptism there can be no scriptural New Testament congregation of Christ.

INTRODUCTION: In all of our English Bibles the words “baptize” and “baptism” represents the Greek root βαπτίζω and its cognate forms. We must remember there is a translation problem with the Greek verb βαπτίζω and its cognate forms. The KJV translators were forbidden to translate this Greek term and so they merely transliterated it into the English language. That means, they simply provided equivalent sounds into English rather than equivalent meaning. They simply dropped the final omega (“w”) ending and replaced it with an “e” and thus we have “baptize” from βαπτίζω). Why were they forbidden to translate βαπτω and its cognate forms into English? They were forbidden because church traditions allowed for sprinkling, pouring and immersion of infants. However, the only lexicographical meaning for βαπτίζω is to immerse, plunge or dip. More blood has been shed over the doctrine of baptism than any other doctrine in human history. Some estimate that the Church of Rome and her Protestant daughters put to death as many as 50,000,000 Anabaptists in the Dark Age and Reformation Periods over the issue of baptism.

I. THE RIGHT MODE OF BAPTISM

There are Greek terms that mean pouring (*epicheo*) and sprinkling (*rantizo*) but these terms are never once translated “*baptism*” in the New Testament. Furthermore, with regard to the Greek term that is translated “*baptism*” in the New Testament, no Greek lexicographer, no Greek scholar has ever suggested or implied that this Greek term has ever been translated “pour” or “sprinkle” in any ancient or contemporary New Testament document. Let the student carefully ponder and carefully digest what I have just stated as this is the crux that ought to forever settle the entire debate over the mode of baptism if objective evidence is the true criteria for forming a theological position.

Are there some lexicographers and Greek scholars that deny *baptizo* can mean immerse in the New Testament? Yes!

*“Baptizo in various forms is used 112 times in the New Testament, always meaning pouring” - E.J. Berkey, **The Bible Mode of Baptism** (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1945) p. 15.*

*Neither John’s nor any other baptism mentioned in the New Testament was administered by immersion. All the evidence is to the contrary... (R. C.H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles**, (Minneapolis, MN; Augsburg Publishing House, 1961) p. 112.*

However, these claims are all theological based claims rather than linguistic based claims. There are some older Paedobaptist lexicographers that make the assertion that *baptizo* and its cognate forms can be understood to mean sprinkle or pour, but again these are all theological assertions rather than any lexicographical based claims. Dr. A.T. Robertson said concerning some of these older Paedobaptist lexicographers:

*When one quotes an antiquated and partisan lexicon in favor of sprinkling, he should be sure to give the date. No modern Greek lexicons give any other meaning for **baptizo** than dip. . . . A man today who argues that **baptizo** means to sprinkle or pour throws suspicion on his scholarship and is on the defensive*

- A. T. Robertson, *Modern Scholarship and the Form of Baptism*, (Nashville, TN; Sunday School Board, SBC) date unknown, p. 4.

The unanimous opinion of all modern standard Greek lexicographers is that *baptisma* and its cognate forms all have the historical meaning of plunge, submerge, dip, immerse or other synonyms for these words.

- *Baptizo*: “To make a thing dipped or dyed. To immerse for a religious purpose” (**A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament**, *E. W. Bullinger*)
- *Baptizo*: “Dip, immerse, mid. Dip oneself, wash (in non-Christian lit. also ‘plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm. . .’)” (**A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**, *Arndt and Gingrich*, p. 131).
- *Baptizo*: “immersion, submersion” (**A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**, *Grimm-Thayer*, p. 94).
- *Baptizo*: “to dip, immerse, sink” (**Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament**, *Abbott-Smith*, p. 74).
- *Baptizo*: “dip, plunge” (**A Greek-English Lexicon**, *Liddell & Scott*, p. 305).
- *Baptizo*: “consisting of the process of immersion, submersion and emergence (from *bapto*, to dip)” (**Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, *W. E. Vine*).
- *Baptizo*: “immerse, submerge. The peculiar N. T. and Christian use of the word to denote immersion, submersion for a religious purpose” (**Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament Greek**, *Cremer*).
- *Baptizo*: “to dip, immerse; to cleanse or purify by washing” (**The New Analytical Greek Lexicon**, *Perschbacher*, p. 66).
- *Baptizo*: “to dip, to immerse, to sink. . . . There is no evidence that Luke or Paul and the other writers of the New Testament put

upon this verb meanings not recognized by the Greeks” (Greek and English Lexicon, Sophocles).

- *Baptizo: “Bapto is the basic verb. It means ‘to dip in’ or ‘to dip under.’ It is often used of dipping fabric in a dye... Baptizo is an intensive form of bapto. From early times it was used in the sense of immersing” (Expository Dictionary of Bible Words, Lawrence O. Richards, pp. 100–101).*
- *Baptizo: “Baptizo, immerse” (Word Study Greek-English New Testament, Paul. R. McReynolds, p. 907).*
- *Baptizo: “The meaning of bapto and baptizo. bapto, ‘to dip in or under,’ ‘to dye,’ ‘to immerse,’ ‘to sink,’ ‘to drown,’ ‘to bathe,’ ‘wash.’” (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, One Volume, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, p. 92).*
- *Baptizo: “Baptizo 77x pr. to dip, immerse; to cleanse or purify by washing; to administer the rite of baptism, to baptize” (Greek and English Interlinear New Testament, William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, p. 1028).¹⁸²*

The only other implied or inferred ancient meaning for *baptizo* is that of *identification by association*. This inferred meaning comes from one of its earliest uses. One of the earliest uses of *bapto* is in the ancient dyeing industry when the cloth is submerged into the dye so that it takes on the color the dye. So, by inference it conveys the idea of *identification by association due to submerging*.

However, there are some apologists today that attempt to argue that *baptisma* can mean sprinkle, wash or pour. Matt Slick the President of Christian Apologetics and Christian Research ministry sets forth the following argument:

¹⁸² Quoted from “The Meaning and Purpose of baptism” by Todd Weiner - http://christianproofs.org/free_articles/Historical_Meaning_Purpose_of_Baptism.doc - accessed 06/13/2018

- **Pour upon with the Holy Spirit**

- *Isaiah 44:3, “I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants.”*
- *Joel 2:28, And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind . . .”*
- *Joel 2:29 “And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”*
- *Acts 2:17, “And it shall be in the last days,” God says, “That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind.”*
- *Acts 2:18, “Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.*

- **Baptized with the Holy Spirit**

- *Matt. 3:11 “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*
- *Mark 1:8, “I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*
- *Luke 3:16, “John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*
- *John 1:33, “And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’”*
- *Acts 1:5, “for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

Mr. Slick is attempting to show that “pour out” and “baptize” are synonyms by his comparison of these texts. However, the giving of the Spirit by the Father resulted in a variety of different consequences. Immersion of the congregation of Christ is just but one of those consequences:

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it **filled all the house where they were sitting**.—Acts 2:1-2*

However, in addition to being immersed in the Spirit, the same congregation was additionally “filled” by the Spirit (Acts 2:4) and then the Spirit “poured out” spiritual gifts that were both seen and heard:

*Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he **bath shed forth** [ekcheo—pour out] **this, which ye now see and hear**.—Acts 2:33*

What they saw were Galileans, and what they heard were men speaking in tongues.

*Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man **heard them speak in his own language**. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, **Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?**—Acts 2:6-8*

They did not see or hear the immersion of the congregation in the Spirit. They did not see or hear the congregation being “filled” with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). What they saw and heard was the spiritual gift that had been poured out upon these Galileans. Furthermore, the Old Testament passages quoted by Mr. Slick refer primarily to the regenerating work of the Spirit being expanded beyond Jewish boundaries “upon all flesh” with regard to the Gentiles. Therefore, this promise of the Spirit being “poured out” is not to be considered as a synonym for the “immersion” or “filling” or “regenerating” work of the Spirit but simply an expression of the Spirit being given by God from heaven that would include this whole variety of different purposes.

However, as one old Baptist preacher told a Methodist, “*I believe sprinkling and pouring are just fine for baptism if you pour and sprinkle enough water to bury the candidate, as we are ‘buried together with Christ in baptismos.’*” The “pouring out” of the Spirit on the congregation at Pentecost was sufficient to immerse them in His presence.

Mr. Slick continues to make his argument that baptism not only includes pouring, but also includes sprinkling and washing in spite of the fact that distinctly different terms are being used. He says:

Washings and Sprinkling

If that isn't enough to show that the word baptize does not always mean immersion, there are derivations of the word that also show it can mean washing and sprinkling. But first, let's take a very short look at the word "baptize" in the Greek. In Greek, nouns change their spelling depending on their usage. In English, for example, we have the word actor, actors, actresses, actresses. These words are "cognates"; that is, they are related to each other in form. The word "actor" changes form and with-it plurality and gender is expressed, but the root of the word is "act." The same thing goes with baptismois, baptismon, baptismous, etc. The root of the word is bapt, and the word as a whole changes form depending on usage. Here are a few cognates.

- βαπτίζω, *baptidzo, baptize* (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:7; John 1:25; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3)
- βαπτιστής, *baptistas, baptist* (Matt. 3:1; 14:2; Luke 7:20; 9:19)
- βάπτισμα, *baptisma, baptism* (Matt. 3:7; Mark 1:4; Luke 12:50; Acts 1:22; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12)
- βαπτίζοντες, -- *baptizontes, -- baptizing --* (Matt. -- 28:19; -- John 1:25; 3:22; 4:1; 10:40)
- βαπτισμῶν, *baptismon, washings* (Heb. 6:2)
- βαπτισμοῖς, *baptismois, washings* (Heb. 9:10)

So, that is how Greek works. The one word has different forms, the same as English: baptize, baptizing, baptized, baptist, etc. This is important because we find a baptism cognate in two particular verses that cannot mean immersion but instead means washings and/or sprinkling.

Hebrews 6:2, “of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.”

The word “washings” is baptism in the Greek. Here is another.

- *Heb. 9:7-13, “but into the second only the high priest enters, once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. 8 The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly, both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, 10 since they relate only to food and drink and various washings [baptismois], regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,*

*If you read the context, you will see that the “washings” (baptisms) refer to the Old Testament rituals which included the sprinkling of blood (v. 13). That is the context. This makes sense since anointings and **atonements were done by sprinkling-- not by immersion.** - <https://carm.org/does-word-baptism-mean-immersion-or-sprinkling>*

However, Mr. Slick is again incorrect. First his illustration of cognate forms does not support his view. The term “act” never loses its basic inherent meaning in all cognate forms as actors, actresses and acting. The same basic inherent meaning remains in all cognate forms, but Mr. Slick tries to argue that *baptisma* loses its inherent meaning (immerse) in its cognate forms by

inferring that the KJV translation of “washings” is inclusive of “sprinkling” in Hebrews. 9:12-13. Both of these assumptions by Mr. Slick are wrong!

The KJ translators ought to have translated *baptismois* in Hebrews 9:10 as “immersions” because there is clear and abundant historical evidence they immersed such things for ceremonial cleansing. The Mishnah, is the written record of the traditions of the elders which the Pharisees in the time of Christ regarded as final authority upon the Law of Moses. Up to the second century A.D. the traditions of the elders were communicated orally from one generation to the next. However, due to the dispersion of the Jews after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 they feared the oral traditions would become lost and so they put it in written form called the Mishnah. The Mishnah accurately portrays the traditions of the Pharisees in the first century. The Mishnah records the ceremonial cleansing rites of the Pharisees. With regard to the ceremonial cleansing of the human body, there were pools in Jerusalem constructed for these ceremonial immersions. In the Mishnah under the chapter entitled “*Mikwaoth* (immersion-pools)” requires the pools not only to be a minimum amount of water sufficient for immersion but in section 2:1 it states:

*If an unclean person went down to immerse himself and it is in doubt whether he immersed himself or not; or if, even though he immersed himself, it is in doubt whether there was forty seahs [of water] or not; or if there were two pools, the one holding forty seas but not the other; and he immersed himself in one of them but he does not know in which of them he immersed himself, his condition of doubt is deemed unclean.—Danby, Herbert, trans. **Mishnah**, (Oxford University Press, Oxford England, 1933), p. 733*

These immersions of persons were for all manners of ceremonial defilements but also for the immersion of defiled utensils and other things needing ceremonial cleansing by immersion only. Under the chapter entitled “*Tbul Yom* (he that immersed himself that day)” we read in section 4:3-4.

*If a kneading-trough had been immersed the self-same day (because of uncleanness that had befallen it) they may knead dough therein and cut off the Dough-offering.... If a flagon had been immersed the selfsame day....” **Ibid.**, pp. 779, 780*

The Jewish Encyclopedia commenting upon ancient and modern practices of the Jews with regard to ceremonial cleansing of persons states:

Immersion of the Whole Body.

The washing of the whole body is the form of Ablution most frequently ordained in Scripture, and for the greatest number of causes. According to rabbinical interpretation, this is only valid when performed by immersion, either in a natural fountain or stream or in a properly constructed mikweh, or ritual bath, containing at least forty seahs (about one hundred and twenty gallons) of water (see Baths). The following are the cases in which the Mosaic Law requires immersion of the whole body, the object being either purification or consecration: - Jewish Encyclopaedia.com 09/04/2016

The KJV translators translated *baptismois* as “washing” not due to the meaning of the term but to describe the Jewish ceremonial purpose of the act—ceremonial cleansing from defilement. Also, the KJV translators were baptismal regenerationists who believed that the defilement of sin was removed in the act of baptism. Hence, this gave them opportunity to express their own theological purpose for baptizing people. However, the meaning of the Greek term has nothing to do with the purpose for immersion but is descriptive only of the act of immersion being used in ceremonial rituals.

Hebrews 9:10 describes ceremonial rituals by immersion. Matt Slick is also in error when he attempts to make “*sprinkling*” in Hebrews 9:12- 13 inclusive of “*washings*” in Hebrews 9:10. Sprinkling had to do with the blood of the sacrifices that was applied to the inner sanctuary and its furniture with regard to atonement, whereas *baptismois* had to do with immersion in water with regard to ceremonial cleansing.

Only theological bias (Pedobaptists) or an attempt to reconcile different Christian denominations that have been fractured over this ordinance (Matt Slick) attempt to define *baptizo* and its cognate forms by any other meaning than immersion or synonymous terms (submerge, dip, plunge, etc.).

How do early versions in other languages prior to 1600 translate *baptizo*?

<i>Version</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Syriac	<i>amad</i>	to dip, immerse ¹
Coptic	<i>tomas, oms</i>	to dip, immerse ²
Sahidic	<i>baptize</i>	(untranslated)
Old Latin	<i>baptize</i>	(untranslated) ³
Ethiopic	<i>tamaka</i>	to dip ⁴
Gothic	<i>daupian, daupjan</i>	to dip
Armenian	<i>mogredil</i>	to dip, immerse ⁵
Arabic	<i>amad, tsabagha</i>	to dip, immerse
Georgian	<i>nathlistemad</i>	to immerse
Lower-Saxon	<i>doepen</i>	to dip
Augsburg (Germany)	<i>taufen</i>	to dip
Luther's Version	<i>taufen</i>	to dip
Dutch	<i>doopen</i>	to dip
Swedish	<i>doepa, dopa</i>	to dip or plunge
Danish	<i>doebe</i>	to dip
Welsh	<i>bedyddio</i>	to dip

- (a) Every translation of the New Testament made during the first six centuries after Christ employs a word for baptize which primarily means *to immerse*.
- (b) No other translation of the Bible into other languages prior to 16th century has ever employed a word for baptize which signifies any other mode than immersion, or which is not in harmony with the practice of immersion.¹⁸³

Even in the KJV when the *bapto* and its derivative *embapto* are found in texts not dealing with the ordinance of baptism, it is consistently rendered “dip” or “dipped”

- “He who **dipped** his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me” (Matt. 26:23).

¹⁸³ Quoted from “The Meaning and Purpose of baptism” by Todd Weiner - http://christianproofs.org/free_articles/Historical_Meaning_Purpose_of_Baptism.doc - accessed 06/13/2018

- “It is one of the twelve, one who **dips** with me in the bowl” (Mark 14:20).
- “. . . send Lazarus so that he may **dip** the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue” (Luke 16:24).
- “Jesus then answered, ‘That is the one for whom I shall **dip** the morsel and give it to him.’ So when he had **dipped** the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas” (John 13:26).
- “He is clothed with a robe **dipped** in blood” (Rev. 19:13a).

It can be seen that in all six occurrences, the Greek term *bapto* is translated as “*dip*.” This is confirmed by various Bible translations of Luke 16:24:

- “. . . that he may **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (KJV).
- “. . . to **dip** the end of his finger in water” (RSV).
- “. . . to **dip** his finger in some water” (TEV).
- “. . . to **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (NIV).
- “. . . to **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (JB).
- “. . . to **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (NEB).
- “. . . so that he may **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (NASB).
- “. . . to **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (Phillips).
- “. . . to **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (NRSV).
- “. . . that he may **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (NKJV).
- “. . . to **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (Translator’s NT).
- “. . . so that he may **dip** the tip of his finger in water” (Simple English)¹⁸⁴

So, in passages where there are no theological issues, the term *bapto* is consistently interpreted according to its historical meaning. So, it is pure theological bias based on ecclesiastical traditions that refuses to acknowledge that *bapto* and its cognates mean “immerse, dip, plunge, and submerge.”

¹⁸⁴ Quoted from “The Meaning and Purpose of baptism” by Todd Weiner - http://christianproofs.org/free_articles/Historical_Meaning_Purpose_of_Baptism.doc - accessed 06/13/2018

II. THE RIGHT CANDIDATE FOR BAPTISM

Many will argue that killing of millions of Christians by Roman Catholicism in the Dark Ages and by her Protestant Pedobaptist daughters in the Reformation period was primarily due to the issue of the proper candidate for baptism rather than the proper mode of baptism, because the primary mode for baptism of infants and adults was immersion. From the time of Constantine in the fourth century A.D. laws were passed to prosecute those who practiced Anabaptism right up into the Reformation period. These laws were included in what is known as the Laws of Theodosius and the Justinian Code.

SILENCE: Although there are many accounts of baptism in the New Testament there is not one account of the baptism of any infant—not one! Infant baptism is based entirely upon silence and inferences. However, the New Testament is not silent about the prerequisite of repentance and faith prior to baptism. The New Testament condemns proxy faith as both John the Baptist and Christ condemned the Pharisees for believing that since Abraham was their father, therefore their salvation was secure, just as Pedobaptist justify infant baptism on the proxy faith of the child's father or parents.

FOUR BASIC INFERENCES: The whole basis for Pedo-baptism rests entirely upon four basic inferences: (1) Circumcision of infants under the Old Covenant and the inference that baptism replaces circumcision under the New Covenant and thus baptism is applicable to infants; (2) Passages where Jesus uses children as illustrations of true believers; (3) Household baptisms in Acts 10-16. (4) Baptism and the Lord's Supper are said to remit sins and save—Mk. 16:16; Acts 22:16.

A. CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM:

The first problem for this Pedobaptist argument is that Paul presents Abraham as the “*father*” or pattern source for “*all who are of faith*” when he was “*in uncircumcision*” while flatly denying justification was in any way dependent upon or associated with Abraham while he was “*in circumcision*” (Rom. 4:9-11).

The second problem for this Pedobaptist argument is that the Old and New Testament Scriptures when describing the New Covenant salvation claims that God directly reveals himself internally to all, even “*from the least unto the greatest*” under the New Covenant so that no man needs to teach them about knowing God as Pedobaptists do in what they call “confirmation.”

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.—Jer. 31:33-34

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.—Heb. 8:7-12

However, Paedobaptism must teach baptized infants to know God and they call it “confirmation.”

The third problem is that only males were circumcised under the Old Covenant and therefore that would exclude females.

The fourth problem is that circumcision even under the Old Covenant is clearly taught to be a type of spiritual circumcision of the heart (Ezek. 44:7, 9) and so it is not a type of baptism under the New Covenant but a type of regeneration. In the New Testament circumcision is revealed as a type of the new birth or circumcision of the heart (Col. 2:11-12) and only in that respect would baptism be equal to circumcision as an outward “sign or seal” (Rom. 4:11) of an already regenerate condition.

The fifth problem is that the Old Testament rites are symbolic of Salvation under the New Covenant (Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:14-16). Paul explicitly states that circumcision is nothing more than an outward “sign or seal” of salvation already obtained by faith without works (Rom. 4:9-11). Therefore, these external rites under the Old Covenant are pictures of internal spiritual realities under the New Covenant. For example, the male infant was circumcised at 8 days old. The physical infant and the numerical number 8 all picture the spiritual reality of new birth or being born into the kingdom as child (*teknia*) of God under the New Covenant. So, in the sense of an outward symbol or sign, baptism is equal to circumcision under the New Covenant.

Finally, we are not under the Old Covenant but under the New Covenant. Therefore, we are not under a covenant of works but a covenant of grace. The Old Covenant was about external conformation to the Law and inclusive of external profession and external conformation as the people of God. The Old Covenant was designed to address sin from an external point of view and lead external professed people of God to see an internal problem and need of a Savior in order to become a spiritually professed people of God (Gal. 3:19-25). The New Covenant is about the internal work of God to produce spiritual children of God (Heb. 8:7-12).

The theological designation for those who argue for infant baptism on the basis of Old Covenant circumcision of infants is called “Reformed Covenant Theology.”

B. ILLUSTRATIONAL USE OF CHILDREN BY JESUS

The first problem for Pedobaptists is that every passage they point to where Christ uses children to illustrate believers are dry passages (no mention of baptism).

The second problem for Pedobaptists is that it is not infants, but children old enough to volitionally choose to come to him that Jesus says don't hinder from coming to him.

The third problem for Pedobaptists in many of these passages is that Jesus is clearly referring to childlike characteristics that also characterize true believers.

The fourth problem for Pedobaptists is those infants and those incapable of reasonable decision making and/or who die in that state do not meet the Biblical criteria for eternal damnation. Repeatedly, the scriptural criteria for eternal damnation is "*according to their works*" (plural "works" rather than the singular race sin or work of Adam). Infants and those without decisional ability don't meet that criterion for eternal wrath. What then is the basis for their salvation? Many theologians believe that "*where sin abounded grace did much more abound*" (Rom. 5:20) and that those in heaven will outnumber those in hell due to the fact that all who are represented "*in Adam*" who suffer physical death without any individualized deliberate act of sin are represented "*in Christ*" (Rom. 5:12-20). Meaning, not before or after, but at the point of death they are regenerated directly by God, thus coming to full faith in Christ as God reveals himself in them through the gospel revelation in their heart (2 Cor. 4:6). This is plausible because John the Baptist as an infant, still in his mother's womb was "*filled*" with the Spirit and made capable of responding in "*joy*" at the announcement of Mary the mother of Jesus, thus proving, that God can enable infants with understanding even before birth. Moreover, we have the case of David with his infant son who said that his son would not return to him but that he would go to him (2 Sam. 12:23). That is not consolation at all if it merely refers to being buried in the grave and there is no evidence David was buried in the same grave as his infant son. David expected to go to glory after this life (Psa. 73:23-25) as he expected to dwell in the house of God "*forevermore*" after walking through the valley of the shadow of death (Psa. 23). Therefore, if infants while still incapable of decisional sin are safe until they intentionally commit sin then there is no reason to baptize them as the Paedobaptists administer baptism in order to keep them from going to hell at death. The point of willful sin is theologically referred to as "the age of accountability."

C. HOUSEHOLD BAPTISMS:

There are four examples used in the New Testament by Pedobaptists to insist infants were included in baptism; (1) The house of Cornelius—Acts 10; (2) The house of Lydia—Acts 16; (3) the house of the Philippian Jailer—Acts 16; and (4) The house of Stephanus—1 Cor. 1.

The first problem for Pedobaptists with regard to all of these texts is that they are all silent about any infants being included.

The second problem for Paedobaptists who depend entirely upon inference with regard to all of these texts, is that all contextual inferences deny infants are included. None of these texts say that either Cornelius, or Lydia, or the Philippian Jailer or Stephanas believed “for” his household but rather all say they believed “*with*” their household.

Lydia was a business woman who travelled and was quite wealthy. Her “*house*” most likely included her servants who worked with and for her. These servants may be the other women who were meeting with her at the riverside for worship as Jews. The Jews required at minimum ten men to form a synagogue and therefore there were not sufficient Jewish men in Philippi to form a synagogue and that is why these Jewish women assembled at the riverside for worship.

With regard to the house of Stephanas in first Corinthians chapter one Paul immediately says:

And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.—1 Cor. 1:15-18

It is inconceivable that Paul would say this immediately after mentioning baptizing the “*household of Stephanas*” if baptism were essential to salvation, especially the salvation of the most helpless of humans—infants.

Take note that he is making a contrast between baptism and the gospel with regard to saving power. So, he is not denying that Christ sent him to baptize, but he is denying that the saving power of the gospel is inclusive

of baptism. It is in that relationship with the gospel he denies that Christ sent him to baptize. Therefore, if we go back to Paul's account of him being sent by Christ to preach the gospel, we discover the inherent saving power of the gospel when we read:

*Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now **I send thee**, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.—Acts 26:17-18*

It is this descriptive saving power of the gospel that Paul denies is inclusive of baptism. Therefore, if we compare the two we draw the following conclusions with regard to the saving power of the gospel in contrast to baptism:

1. Christ sent me to “*open their eyes*” but he “*sent me not to baptize*”, and therefore their eyes can be opened without baptism.
2. Christ sent me to “*turn them from darkness to light*” but he “*sent me not to baptize*”, and therefore they can be turned to light without baptism.
3. Christ sent me to “*turn them... from the power of Satan unto God*” but he “*sent me not to baptize*”, and therefore they can be turned from Satan to God without baptism.
4. Christ sent me “*that they may receive forgiveness of sins*” but he “*sent me not to baptize*”, and therefore, they can receive forgiveness of sins without baptism.
5. Christ sent me “*that they may receive... inheritance among them that are sanctified*” but he “*sent me not to baptize*”, therefore they can receive inheritance among the sanctified without baptism.
6. Christ sent me “*that they may be... sanctified by faith that is in me*” but he “*sent me not to baptize*”, therefore, they can be sanctified by faith in Christ without baptism.

CONCLUSION: Water administrated by pouring or sprinkling and/or to infants and unbelievers simply gets them wet and is no more the ordinance of baptism than going swimming, or taking a bath, or standing in the rain.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the translation problem with the English terms “baptized... baptism...baptists”?
2. What are the Greek terms for sprinkling and pouring?
3. Are the Greek terms for sprinkling and pouring ever used for the ordinance of baptism?
4. Theologians who deny the Greek root *bapto* and its cognate forms mean immerse or dip, is their denial based on lexical or linguistic evidence or on theological bias?
5. What meaning for the root *bapto* and its cognate forms do the weight of lexical or linguistic evidence demand?
6. Even if Romans 6:4-5 and Col. 2:13 are wrongly interpreted to refer to a metaphorical spiritual baptism how does the term “buried” in these passages demonstrate a metaphorical spiritual **immersion** is in view?
7. Is there a multiple variation of actions by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost?
8. If the Holy Spirit is “poured out” in a room so that the whole room is “filled” with his presence, are those in that room immersed in His presence?
9. What is the Mishnah?
10. According to the Greek term (baptismois) mistranslated “washings” in Hebrews 9:10 and according to the Mishnah how were ceremonial cleansing rituals (washings) administered?
11. Did the KJV translators use “washings” to define the action or the ceremonial intent of the action of immersing in Hebrews 9:10?
12. Does “sprinkling” refer to the application of the blood or the ceremonial cleansing in water in Heb. 9:10-13?
13. How do the KJV translators translate *bapto* in passages that do not refer to the ordinance of baptism?
14. Is there any passage in the New Testament that describes or commands the baptism of infants?
15. Is there any evidence that infants were among the “household” baptisms in Acts and in 1 Corinthians?
16. What four inferences are used by Paedobaptists to support infant baptism?
17. List six problems to these Paedobaptist inferences.

WEEK 14 LESSON 2

The Institution—Part 5— Baptism—Part 2

LESSON GOALS: The goals of this lesson are (1) to establish the difference between simply getting wet and scriptural baptism which are: (a) The right mode; (b) The right candidate; (c) The right design/purpose (d) The right administrator and (2) to establish that baptism is a filter, or an apostolic hedge to protect the congregation from apostasy; and (3) to publicly identify the believer with Christ, his gospel, his doctrine and his congregation; and (4) to establish that where there is no scriptural baptism there can be no scriptural New Testament congregation of Christ.

INTRODUCTION: We are called “Baptists” not merely because we believe in immersion of true believers but because we demand that scriptural baptism does not exist apart from the right mode, right candidate, right design and right administrator. Anything short of these prerequisites is merely getting wet regardless of what one may call that wetting. Scriptural baptism actually identifies with every major aspect of Theology. Scriptural baptism will publicly identify the believer with the gospel of Christ, the doctrine of Christ and the congregational body of Christ or it is not scriptural baptism.

I. THE RIGHT DESIGN

In our last lesson where we considered the house of Stephanas and Paul’s response in 1 Corinthians 1:17-18 with regard to his commission to preach the gospel. We discovered that baptism is without salvational power. Therefore, the design of baptism cannot be to convey saving grace.

Moreover, throughout the New Testament baptism always without exception follows gospel repentance and faith (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:35-37; 10:43-48; Acts 16:30-31). A clear case that repentance and faith precede baptism is found in the account of the Ethiopian Eunuch:

*Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, **See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?** And Philip said, **If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.** And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.—Acts 8:35-38*

Another account that demonstrates literal remission of sins is obtained by faith without divine rites is Paul's account of Abraham justified by faith without works: (Rom. 4:6-12).

Paul defines justification as inclusive of imputed righteousness and remission of sins:

*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, **Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.**—Rom. 4:5-8*

Paul describes the man with imputed righteousness and sins forgiven as the “blessed” man. In Romans 4:9-10 Paul inquires at what point in time did this state of blessedness with regard to circumcision occur?

*Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? **when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.**—Rom. 4:9-10*

Since many believe that baptism under the New Covenant replaces circumcision under the Old Covenant, Paul's conclusion that the blessed state of remission of sins occurs before circumcision is very significant in two important ways.

First, Abraham defines the true character of circumcision as a merely an outward “*sign*” and “*seal*” that does not obtain remission of sins but only declares Abraham was already in that state of blessedness previous to circumcision by faith.

*And he received **the sign** of circumcision, **a seal** of the righteousness of the faith which **he had yet being uncircumcised**:
- Rom. 4:11a*

So, if baptism replaces circumcision than baptism is nothing more than an outward sign or seal of the completed justified state rather than instrumental in obtaining that blessed state. Therefore, the issue is not whether or not baptism saves or washes away sins, but rather how does it save and wash away sins, literally or figuratively? Peter definitely answers this in 1 Peter 3:21 when he says “*the like FIGURE whereby baptism doth now also save us...*” It is the outward sign or seal of salvation already obtained.

Second, Paul claims that this pattern where imputed righteousness and remission of sins (justification) by faith occurs prior to obedience to external divine rites is what characterizes “*all who are of faith*” regardless if they are circumcised (Jew), or uncircumcised (gentile), and regardless if they lived before Moses (as did Abraham), or after Moses (as did the Romans unto he writes).

*that he might be **the father of all them that believe**, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, **which he had being yet uncircumcised**..... 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. 4:11b-12, 16*

The term “father” is used in Scripture to convey either (1) source of physical or spiritual birth; (2) Metaphorical of instrumental means or (3)

some conveyed likeness. Paul uses it in the sense of conveyed likeness here with regard to the pattern of justification by faith that he has laid out in Romans 4:1-22.

In other words, regardless of when God's elect live, they are all justified by faith (imputed righteousness and remission of sins) the very same way in keeping with the pattern/likeness of Abraham's justification as he is the "father of all who are of faith."

Peter declares this to the house of Cornelius:

To him give all the prophets witness that whosoever believeth upon his name shall receive remission of sins—Acts 10:43

This is also self-evident in the case of the thief on the cross as an absolute proof that salvation is obtained by faith without baptism.

This is revealed as the true meaning of the case with sacrifices in the Old Testament which were always characterized with the same redemptive language that accompanies baptism and the Lord's Supper:

*And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them upon the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: and the priest **shall make an atonement for his sin** that he hath committed, and **it shall be forgiven him**.—Lev. 4:35*

Yet when God instituted sacrifices in Genesis, the writer of Hebrews explains the design of the sacrifice was not to literally obtain righteousness but rather was merely the external witness of an already righteous (forgiven) state:

***By faith** Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which **he obtained witness that he was righteous**, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.—Heb.11:4*

This is illustrated in the instructions given by Christ to the one he had cleansed from leprosy. He told the cleansed leper to go offer a sacrifice "for thy cleansing." Not in order to be cleansed, because he had already been cleansed literally by faith, but in order to provide a "testimony" of his cleansing:

*And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: **be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.** And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and **offer for thy cleansing,** according as Moses commanded, **for a testimony unto them.**—Lk. 5:12-15*

Therefore, the sacrificial system was not instituted to literally remit sins but rather as an outward symbol of faith in what did literally remit sins. Therefore, sacrifices could never literally remit sins:

*For the law having **a shadow** of good things to come, and **not the very image of the things,** can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. . . . **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.** - Heb. 10:1, 4*

No external divine rite can literally remove sin. However, they can figuratively remove sin. Such rites are like a “*shadow*” rather than the actual “*image*” or substance that does remit sin literally. A “*shadow*” only serves to provide a likeness or image but is empty of any reality. It is like a picture of you but the picture is not really you only a representation of you.

Likewise, baptism and the Lord’s Supper are external divine rites that are described with the language of redemption because they are like an external “*shadow*” or picture of redemption. They save and wash away sins figuratively but not literally.

Some mock at the idea of external rites being only figurative when the violation of these rites results sometimes in sickness and even death (1 Cor. 11:30-32). Hence, they demand that such rites must be more than merely a figure.

However, let the student realize what is the true value of a figure. **The purpose of a symbol is to convey a visible likeness or to give truth a visible form. If you pervert the visible form of that truth, you are also perverting the truth that the form is designed to convey. Therefore, to pervert a gospel symbol is to pervert the gospel truth that it is designed to convey**

and turn it into “another gospel” which is a serious error. How serious is it to pervert the truth of the gospel? Paul says:

*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, **let him be accursed.** As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, **let him be accursed.**—Gal. 1:8-9*

The seriousness of perverting a gospel symbol is seen in the case of Moses and fetching water from the rock. Paul tells us that the rock was a symbol that represented Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).

Twice Moses was commanded to fetch water from a rock in the wilderness. The first time he was specifically instructed to strike the rock to obtain water. However, the second time he was specifically commanded to speak only to the rock to obtain water. However, Moses lost his temper at Israel and struck the rock. For this act of disobedience Moses was forbidden to enter the promise Land.

The rock represented Christ. Striking the rock once symbolized the death of Christ once for all. By striking the rock again, Moses violated the initial gospel symbolism that Christ’s death was sufficient but that he needs to die again. For violating this gospel symbol, Moses was forbidden to enter the promise land, which was a symbol of heaven. Hence, the symbolic consequence was equal to the symbolic perversion.

Therefore, the proper design for baptism is to provide an external witness, testimony, or sign that one has already been justified by faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here is where the secondary meaning of *bapto* applies to the gospel of Christ. In ancient times the term *bapto* was used in the dyeing industry. Cloth would be submerged into the dye until the cloth identified with the color of the dye. Likewise, the design of baptism is to publicly identify the believer with the gospel of Christ (Rom. 6:4-5), and the doctrine of Christ (Mt. 28:20; Acts 2:41), and the congregational body of Christ (Acts 2:40-41).

II. THE RIGHT AUTHORIZED ADMINISTRATOR

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.—Mt. 28:19-20

The above passage is where Christ authorizes baptism to be administered. There are three different kinds of people included in this commission. There is the lost world (“*all nations*”). There are those being authorized to administer baptism (“*ye... you*”). There are those baptism is to be administered unto (“*them*”).

Obviously, Christ did not give authority to the lost (“*all nations*”) to administer baptism. Neither did he give authority to those identified as “*them*” to administer baptism. Those identified as “*them*” are those who were previously lost or included in “*all nations*” that responded to the gospel. We know this, because Mark defines the command to “*go*” to all nations preaching the gospel (Mk. 16:15) and that baptism is to be administered to those that believe the gospel (Mk. 16:16). Therefore, those identified as “*them*” are gospel believers who are yet unbaptized and have not been taught how to “*observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded*” by those who are authorized to administer baptism.

The administrator of baptism is being identified and authorized in the above passage. In that passage there are three distinctly different groups of people. There is the lost world (“*all nations*”). There are those being authorized to administer baptism to others (“*ye... you*”). Finally, there are those who are the proper subjects of the administration of baptism (“*them... them*”).

The administrator of baptism is being identified and authorized in the above passage. In that passage there are three distinctly different groups of people. There is the lost world (“*all nations*”). There are those being authorized to administer baptism to others (“*ye... you*”). Finally, there are those who are the proper subjects of the administration of baptism (“*them... them*”).

Therefore, he neither authorized the lost world nor unbaptized people to administer baptism. He authorized those who already had been through the whole three step process (*“have commanded you”*). He authorized who had already been evangelized, baptized and had been gathered into a teaching/observing assembly where they had already been taught how to observe all things He commanded. He authorized those who were like faith and order with him in the same gospel, same baptism and same faith and order. Those being addressed were members of the church that he had established in his own personal ministry which had been assembling with him “from the baptism of John” right up until his ascension into heaven (Acts 1:21-22).

A. BAPTISM AS A CONGREGATIONAL FILTER

Therefore, baptism identifies you with the proper administrator who is like faith and order with Christ’s church and doctrine. The other three requirements for scriptural baptism identify you with the truth of the gospel. The right candidate must be a person who professes faith in the truth of the Gospel. That truth requires immersion alone, as immersion publicly identifies you with the truth of the gospel - substitutionary death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Hence, baptism identifies you with the right motive – public identification with the gospel rather than a means of obtaining salvation.

It is these requirements of scriptural baptism that act like a filter to filter out those who should not be baptized and therefore should not be received into membership of a New Testament church. It filters out infants. It filters out baptismal regenerationists. It filters out those who have received pouring or sprinkling. It filters out those whose immersion has not been administered by an authorized administrator or a church that is like faith and order in the same gospel, same baptism, and same faith and order

B. BAPTISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT CONGREGATION

Where there is no scriptural baptism there can be no scriptural New Testament congregation of Christ. I did not say where there is no scriptural baptism there can be no true Christian. The thief on the cross was a scriptural

Christian without baptism. I said where there is no scriptural baptism there can be no scriptural congregation of Christ. By “scriptural” baptism, I mean it is by immersion of a professing believer in Christ for the purpose to publicly identify with the gospel, doctrine and congregation of Christ and which has been administered by the congregation of Christ through an appointed representative. If an action called baptism fails in any of these points the person simply got wet and is still in need of baptism. If a congregation of professed believers are without this kind of baptism they simply got wet and cannot be recognized as a true congregation of Christ because:

1. *The Command to baptize precedes the command to bring the baptized into a teaching observing assembly—Mt. 28:19-20*

Baptism precedes being gathered into a teaching/ observing assembly in Matthew 28:19-20. Baptism precedes being “added” to the congregation in Acts 2:40. You cannot reverse the order in the Great Commission. Hence, without baptism there is no existence of a New Testament assembly as baptism is the prerequisite for membership.

2. *There is no example of any unbaptized congregation in the New Testament:*

There are no examples of congregations composed of sprinkled or poured infants or professing believers. There are no examples of congregation composed of unbaptized believers. There can be no true congregation of Christ according to scriptural example without baptism.

3. *Unbaptized congregations are in disobedience to God:*

Baptism precedes being gathered into a teaching/ observing assembly in Matthew 28:19-20. Baptism precedes being “added” to the congregation in Acts 2:40. You cannot reverse the order in the Great Commission. Hence, without baptism there is no existence of a New Testament assembly as baptism is the prerequisite for membership.

4. *It is not Christ like to begin public service without baptism:*

Christ began his public ministry by submitting to baptism (Mt. 3:15- 17). The congregation of God is all about public ministry that glorifies Christ (Eph. 3:21). Hence, the congregation of Christ cannot exist apart from the prerequisite of baptism for membership. Where there is no baptism there is no congregation of Christ.

C. BAPTISM AND PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

The earliest known use of the Greek root *bapto* is found in the dyeing industry. Cloth was submerged in dye so that it identified with the color of the dye. In the New Testament Lydia was a “*seller of purple*” (Acts 16:14). She either sold purple cloth and/or purple dye or both. However, the root *bapto* conveys the idea of identification in connection with immersion of cloth into dye, thus identifying with the color.

In the New Testament baptism publicly identifies the believer not only with the gospel of Christ (Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 6:4-5) but with the doctrine and congregation of Christ. Indeed, baptism is identified with every major doctrine in Scripture:

1. Theology proper—Mt. 28:19 “*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost*”
2. Soteriology
 - a. The gospel—Mk 16:15-16; Rom. 6:4-6
 - b. Repentance—Mt. 3:8
 - c. Regeneration—Col.2:11-13
3. Pneumatology—1 Cor. 3:5-16; 12:13
4. Ecclesiology—1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:40-41
5. Eschatology—1 Cor. 15:29

The Holy Spirit uses the definite proper noun “*The Baptist*” in order to identify the mission, message and method of John prior to him administering baptism to a single person (Mt. 3:1). His prophetic mission was to “*make a people made ready*” for the Messiah to assemble around him as the first church (Lk 1:17; Acts 1:21-22). His message was the clear gospel message

(Jn. 1:29; 3:36). His method was threefold, evangelize, baptize and teach them how to observe the word. By this threefold method he made disciples and that is “*the Baptist*” method. The Holy Spirit did not use a verb as in “John the baptized” or a participle as in “John the Baptizing one” or an adjective as in “John the baptizer” but a proper noun “*The Baptist*”. Jesus submitted to “*The Baptist*” method of ministry and then commissioned the same pattern (Mt. 28:19-20) unto the end of this age. This “*Baptist*” pattern produces Baptist congregations. In history, those who followed this “*Baptist*” pattern have always been identified with the name “*Baptist*” by their enemies (Anabaptists, Catabaptists, Sabians, Baptists).

In the Great Commission baptism identifies with the gospel that precedes it (Mk. 16:15-15) and membership in the teaching/observing assembly that follows it (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:40-41).

III. THE REFORMED BAPTIST ARGUMENT

Reformed Baptists like John MacArthur, John Piper, and Alistair Begg, all receive members into their congregations who have been sprinkled, poured, immersed, or without any kind of baptism.¹⁸⁵ Why? Because they reason that if the so-called “true” church consists of members that are sprinkled, poured, immersed or unbaptized then no local congregation should demand more as the so-called “true” church is the pattern for local congregations.

It is true the New Testament congregation is to be the visible expression of the gospel. Indeed, the Great Commission is all about the true visible gospel order. We are to go preaching the true gospel, followed by a visible expression of the gospel in baptism and in the Lord’s Supper. The membership of the congregation should express the true gospel order. Indeed, congregational discipline is designed to correct and/or remove all that is contrary to the true visible gospel order.

Although, Reformed Baptists and Paedobaptists boast that their congregations conform to the truth of the gospel, in reality they repudiate the gospel by their visible congregational order. They admit that the ordinances are not salvational but symbolic, but yet it is at this very point they pervert

¹⁸⁵ *John Bunyan’s church practiced “mixed” membership or members which had been sprinkled, poured or immersed. However, the Particular Baptist congregations of England disfellowshipped his congregation for that very practice.*

and repudiate the visible expression of the gospel contained in the mode of baptism by including those who either pervert the gospel truth by sprinkling or pouring or deny it by remaining unbaptized.

The congregational body is a metaphorical body of Christ. Christ submitted his own physical body to baptism prior to entering public service. Therefore, their (Reformed) congregational body is visibly misrepresenting Jesus Christ as they repudiate the necessity of baptism prior to public service. Reformed Paedobaptists intentionally administer the ordinances and bring into their membership unbelieving infants and children. Such congregations are visibly proclaiming another gospel by their perversion of baptism and by its misapplication to known unregenerate persons.

As previously stated, congregational discipline is designed to correct and/or remove everything that is not consistent with the true visible gospel order. If they were consistent with their “true” church conformity argument they would not practice church discipline as their so-called “true” church (which in reality is the family of God) also includes heretical brethren, excluded brethren in addition to unbaptized, poured or sprinkled brethren. Hence, if the so-called “true” church consists of such members, so should their congregations if they would remain consistent with their conformity argument.

However, when we refuse to recognize such organizations as true New Testament congregations, they accuse us of being uncharitable toward other true children of God over non-salvational rites.

First of all, let us make a clear distinction between “individual” and “congregational” fellowship. As individuals we can fellowship with any true child of God regardless of their church relationship. However, we cannot be consistent with our own practice of demanding individuals first submit to baptism in order to become part of our own “church” fellowship and at the same time extend “church” fellowship to whole organizations of unbaptized believers.

Moreover, if within our own congregations there existed members that were teaching these very same Reformed and Paedobaptist errors they would be confronted, corrected and if they did not cease they would be excluded from our congregational fellowship as they are in open defiance of our own articles of faith. We cannot be consistent in our practice of church discipline and at the same time embrace into our “church” fellowship whole organizations of believers which we would exclude if they were members of our own church fellowship.

Membership into the family of God cannot be the sole basis for sustained membership in the Lord's congregations simply because the congregation demands more than mere salvation but observation of all things whatsoever Christ commanded. If that were not the case, then we could not place any "brother" under church discipline (2 Thes. 3:6) if merely being a "brother" was the sole requirement for entrance and for sustaining membership in a New Testament congregation.

IV. ALIEN BAPTISM AND ALIEN IMMERSION

Alien baptism is the acceptance of pouring and sprinkling as acceptable forms of baptism. In a previous section of this book alien baptism was thoroughly repudiated (see pages 840-849).

Alien immersion is immersion administered by a group of people who are not like faith and order with the receiving church. However, some interpret "like faith and order" to be restricted to gospel truths alone. They would agree with the following four essentials for scriptural baptism:

1. Right Candidate - born again person
2. Right Purpose - symbolic identification of the gospel
3. Right Mode - immersion
4. Right Authority - church of like faith and order

However, when asked what is the right authority? This view says the "right authority" is any group of people who practice the first three points, regardless of what they believe concerning the nature of the church, or regardless if they practice open communion and receive alien baptism. Some who hold this view demand the church administering baptism must wear the label "Baptist" while others do not care what label the church wears. For them, "like faith and order" simply means the right gospel and ordinances consistent with the right gospel.

They argue that such groups of people should still be recognized as true churches because there are churches found in the New Testament with much worse problems and yet still recognized by the apostles and Christ as true churches of Christ (e.g. the church at Corinth, Pergamos, Thyatira, etc.).

Is this position correct? This position is not correct for the following reasons.

1. The erring churches in the New Testament were without scriptures that addressed their particular errors but that is not the case with Post-New Testament churches. Much of the New Testament was written to address and correct such errors. If they had refused apostolic correction they would have been disfellowshipped by other churches according to the principles set forth in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; Acts 20:30-31; Romans 16:17-18 and had their candlestick removed by Christ (Rev. 2:5). It is one thing to be in error due to ignorance because of the lack of scripture and quite another thing to be in error while in possession of full written revelation.
2. The Great Commission is a closed reproductive system of like faith and order (see pages 388-424). By a “closed reproductive system” it means that Jesus is commissioning to go with the SAME gospel, administer the SAME baptism and teach the SAME faith and order He has practiced and commanded. He is commissioning to reproduce “disciples” or followers of the same faith and order rather than innovators who depart from that faith and order. Hence, the “right authority” in the administration of baptism is a church of “like faith and order” produced within the boundaries of this closed reproductive Great Commission system.

However, the doctrine of the universal invisible church, open communion and alien immersion are all working parts of an open system inclusive of diverse faiths and orders. These things are by doctrine and practice complete repudiations of a closed reproductive system of like faith and order. The very nature of the universal invisible church doctrine is inclusive of members found in diverse faiths and orders. Open Communion by its very practice includes persons of diverse faiths and orders at the same table. Receiving alien baptism is incorporating unbaptized persons coming from a diverse faith and order. Such doctrines and practices are the acts of apostasy from this closed system of like faith and order. They subvert and repudiate the closed reproductive system of the Great Commission and define those assemblies that embrace and practice such things as churches not like faith and order with New Testament churches.

3. If they repudiate the true nature and Biblical identity of the New Testament church both in doctrine and practice how can they be regarded “like faith and order” unless your church also repudiates the truth of the church in doctrine and practice OR you consider church truth not an essential of “like faith and order”?

However, the New Testament church is not only part and parcel of this Great Commission “*teaching*” (see Matt. 16:18; 18:15-18) but is inseparable from the administration of this commission as it is impossible to teach anyone to observe all things commanded without actually assembling together with baptized believers as one body in covenant relationship toward observing all things commanded? This is proven by its first application by the church after the ascension of Christ in Acts 2:40-41 where “*added unto them*” occurs prior to the words “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.....*”

Moreover, the doctrine of the New Testament church is inseparable from “*like faith and order*” as the New Testament church is said to be “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15) rather than a mere peripheral or non-essential to “*the truth.*” The church is the authorized vehicle (Mt. 18:17-18) for administering the Great Commission and it is not completed until baptized believers are incorporated into such an assembly. Hence, gospel truth and ordinances consistent with the gospel do not exhaust the meaning of “*like faith and order*” and therefore do not equal “*right authority.*” The universal invisible church theory and open communion is a doctrinal and practical repudiation of what the Bible defines as the “*right authority.*” The universal invisible church doctrine is a repudiation of a church whose membership consists of those who are like faith and order. Open communion is the doctrine and practice that includes rather than excludes those who are diverse in faith and order from the table. Hence, why should they be recognized as the very thing their doctrine and practice openly repudiate?

4. The “*right authority*” for administering the Great Commission is the New Testament church. New Testament churches are inclusive of their ordinances, officers and government all of which originate with the Great Commission administered by that right authority (church of like faith and order), and therefore administer the Great

Commission, ordain men and constitute churches that have been taught to observe “all things” Christ commanded? Ignorance of such things (as the nature of the church, essentials of the ordinances, officers, church government, etc.) indicates they were not constituted by the right authority and therefore cannot be the right authority to administer this commission. Repudiation of such things indicates they have apostatized from the very doctrines that define right authority. Hence, either way, how can such churches be recognized as the “right authority”? This is like a monkey claiming to be a human. Sure, they have similarities but they are not LIKE KIND and they are not a product of the same reproductive process.

We cannot look into the heart of person and claim we know they are or are not a true Christian. However, that is not our responsibility to do that. Our responsibility is simply to RECOGNIZE what we believe to be a true or false professor. If they don't even know what it is to be a Christian, or if they repudiate in doctrine and practice the very essence of what it is to be a Christian then why should they be RECOGNIZED as such?

Likewise, we cannot claim that the Lord has removed the “*candlestick*” from a group of professing Christians (Rev. 2:5). However, that is not our responsibility to do that. Our responsibility is to simply to RECOGNIZE what we believe to be a true or false church. If that group of people don't even know what is a Biblical church, and/or repudiate in doctrine and practice what is the Biblical church, then why should they be RECOGNIZED as such? Their ignorance is proof they were not organized by a church which was the product of the “right authority” to administer the Great Commission as they would have been taught such things (“*teaching them to observe all things*”). If they were constituted as a true church, and now embrace the universal invisible church theory and open communion, that is proof they have apostatized from the Great Commission closed system of like faith and order. They are doctrinally repudiating the “right authority” for administration of the Great Commission. This should be self-evident concerning those churches who receive alien baptism. Such churches should not be recognized as the “right authority” when they repudiate it by their very doctrine and practice.

5. What about a church that administers baptism correctly, but is also receiving into their own membership those who were not baptized according to the right mode (alien baptism)? Is not that practice an open admission that they do not believe immersion is essential to scriptural baptism but is only preferable as they actually are receiving poured and sprinkled believers into their membership? How can such a church be regarded as the “right authority” when their practice repudiates the very conditions that define the right authority? Churches that are like faith and order with the New Testament Great Commission do not teach or practice such things which openly repudiate the very essence of the Great Commission process (reproducing like faith and order).
6. The Biblical mechanisms to maintain “like faith and order” are closed communion and disfellowshipping any “*brother*” that departs from “*the faith*” (2 Thes. 3:6,14; 1 Cor. 5:11; Acts 20:30- 31; Rom. 16:17-18). Closed communion examines the public and private state of the membership. Church discipline removes unfit and/or unrepentant erring members. That would include any group of erring brethren that assembled together and called themselves a church. New Testament churches are defined by their Biblical nature, membership, ordinances, government, doctrine and discipline. That means we are not to RECOGNIZE such brethren as the “right authority” when they are not “like faith and order” with us in those major areas.
7. The label “Baptist” does not make a group like faith and order, but it is the CONTENT of their doctrine and practice. Take two cans of vegetables, one can of carrots and one can of beets. Switch the labels on the cans. Does the label determine the contents? No! Common sense dictates that it is the CONTENTS that should determine whether the label is correct or incorrect. Like faith and order determines if the label “Baptist” is correct or incorrect.

The “right authority” is equal to “like faith and order” and “like faith and order” is the result of administrating the Great Commission as a closed reproductive process. This position is not the product of human reasoning or philosophical speculation but based completely upon a proper exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20 in connection with the overall teaching of the New

Testament. This has been demonstrated previously (see pages 377-424).

Churches who embrace the universal invisible church, open communion and alien baptism practice a system that is open to diverse faiths and orders. The open system is inherent in the doctrine and practice of the Great Harlot of Revelation. The open system is called by Christ “*the broad way*” (Mt. 7:13-14) as it is inclusive of all “*ways*” repudiating the “*narrow way*” of a closed system.

The New Testament knows of no such thing as an unbaptized congregation of Christ. Baptism is both the command and example set forth in the Scripture as a requirement for congregational membership and therefore baptism prior to membership **is the normative rule** of Scripture. Where there is no scriptural baptism there can be no true New Testament congregation of Christ. It is just that simple.

CONCLUSION: This lesson concludes our study on scriptural baptism. In this lesson our goals have been to establish (1) the difference between simply getting wet and scriptural baptism are: (a) The right mode; (b) The right candidate; (c) The right design/purpose (d) The right administrator and (2) and to establish that baptism is a filter, or an apostolic hedge to protect the congregation from apostasy; and (3) and to identify the believer with the gospel, doctrine and congregation of Christ and finally (4) to establish that where there is no scriptural baptism there can be no scriptural New Testament congregation of Christ.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Cite a clear scriptural example where gospel repentance and faith preceded baptism.
2. How does the pattern of justification by faith in Abraham demonstrate baptism cannot be instrumental in obtaining justification (imputed righteousness and remission of sin) before God?
3. How does Hebrews 11:4 demonstrate that sacrifices were not instituted to literally obtain remission of sins?
4. Is the issue about whether or not baptism saves and remits sins or about whether it saves and remits sins literally or figuratively?
5. What is the value of a symbol?

6. How does the case of Moses with striking the rock give seriousness to violating gospel symbols?
7. Identify three characteristics of the plural “ye” who are authorized to administer baptism in Matthew 28:19-20?
8. Name three ways baptism acts like a filter to weed out unqualified subjects for baptism.
9. Name four reasons why a congregation of Christ cannot exist apart from scriptural baptism.
10. What is the normative rule of the New Testament with regard to baptism as a prerequisite for membership in a New Testament congregation?



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 14 LESSON 3

The Institution—Part 6— The Lord’s Supper

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to establish the New Testament doctrine of the Lord’s Supper as opposed to false views and, (2) to demonstrate how the Lord’s Supper acts as a filter to protect and preserve the Lord’s congregation and (3) to discuss differences between congregations of like faith and order over the elements used, the administration of the cup and, (4) determine whether it is a Christian, denominational or local congregational ordinance.

INTRODUCTION: Nicholas Thomas Wright is the retired Bishop of Durham an Episcopalian priest. He has turned the Reformed world upside down with his new perspective on Pauline Justification. He has simply taken Scriptural terms and redefined them to ultimately teach justification by works. He is a covenant, sacramental, post-millennial theologian. However, he defines his overall theology as “Sacramental Theology.” There are many Baptists who use the terms “ordinance” and “sacrament” as synonyms when they are actually theological antonyms. Sacramentalists often refer to the Lord’s Supper as the Eucharist. The term “Eucharist” comes from the Greek noun εὐχαριστία (*eucharistia*), meaning “thanksgiving”, but this term is not used in the New Testament as a name for the Supper. However, the verb form is found in connection with the Supper in 1 Cor. 11:23-24 translated “*he gave thanks.*”

I. ORDINANCE OR SACRAMENT?

The **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** gives the following origin of the term “sacrament:

*The word “sacrament” comes from the Latin **sacramentum**, which in the classical period of the language was used in two chief senses: (1) as a legal term to denote the sum of money deposited by two parties to a suit which was forfeited by the loser and appropriated to sacred uses; (2) as a military term to designate the oath of obedience taken by newly enlisted soldiers. Whether referring to an oath of obedience or to something set apart for a sacred purpose, it is evident that **sacramentum** would readily lend itself to describe such ordinances as Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In the Greek New Testament, however, there is no word nor even any general idea corresponding to “sacrament,” nor does the earliest history of Christianity afford any trace of the application of the term to certain rites of the church. Pliny (circa 112 AD) describes the Christians of Bithynia as “binding themselves by a **sacramentum** to commit no kind of crime” (Epistles x.97), but scholars are now pretty generally agreed that Pliny here uses the word in its old Roman sense of an oath or solemn obligation, so that its occurrence in this passage is nothing more than an interesting coincidence.*

*It is in the writings of Tertullian (end of 2nd and beginning of 3rd century) that we find the first evidence of the adoption of the word as a technical term to designate Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and other rites of the Christian church. This Christian adoption of **sacramentum** may have been partly occasioned by the evident analogies which the word suggests with Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; but what appears to have chiefly determined its history in this direction was the fact that in the Old Latin versions (as afterward in the Vulgate) it had been employed to translate the Greek **mysterion**, “a mystery” (e.g. Eph. 5:32; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:20; 17:7)--an association of ideas which was greatly fostered in the early church by the rapidly growing tendency to an assimilation of Christian worship with the mystery-practices of the Greek-Roman world.*—**International Students Bible Encyclopedia** - <http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/S/SACRAMENTS/> 09/15/2016

Moreover, the term *sacrament* carries additional theological baggage that repudiates the Biblical doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone without works. Therefore, the term conveys “*another gospel*” and should not be used by Baptists.

The KJV uses the term “*ordinances*” to introduce the Lord’s Supper. The term “*ordinance*” in the Old Testament had a ceremonial significance. The KJV translators properly understood that 1 Corinthians 11:2 referred to ceremonial or symbolic rites (head covering; Lord’s Supper) and used the term “*ordinances*.”

The Greek term *paradoseis* is translated “ordinances” in 1 Corinthians 11:2 by the KJV. The Greek term *paradosis* literally means *things handed down*, and in this context refers to the commandments of Christ handed down to the apostles as Paul a little further describes the Lord’s Supper in the following way:

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: - 1 Cor. 11:23

The Lord handed this down to Paul who in turn handed it down to the congregation at Corinth and thus it is a *paradosis*. The term *paradosis* in the singular with the definite article (2 Thes. 3:6) when used for ordinances handed down from Christ to the congregation through the apostles is a synonym for “*the faith*” or “*the doctrine*” of Christ. Negatively when it refers in context to human teachings that are handed down from one generation to another it is translated “*traditions*” as in the “*traditions of the elders*.” However, the KJV translators rightly understood 1 Corinthians 11:2 in its context to refer to the ceremonial rites that were handed down from Christ to the congregations through the apostles.

So, the more scriptural designation for the Lord’s Supper is “*ordinance*” rather than “*sacrament*” especially since “*sacrament*” takes on the additional meaning of a rite that actually imparts saving grace and thus is a repudiation of the Biblical doctrine of salvation.

II. THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION

The Roman and Orthodox Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation refers to the idea that the physical substance of bread and wine cease to exist at the

moment of consecration and are replaced by the actual physical body and physical blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, the actual substance (substantiation) is transformed (trans) into another substance. Although the bread and wine continue to appear to be bread and wine after the consecration, that appearance is explained by what Catholics call *accidents*. *Accidents* is based upon Greek philosophy that distinguishes substance from appearance. In other words, Rome must depart from the Scriptures and adopt Grecian philosophy to explain what it calls a *sacrament*.

This doctrine is based upon the Catholic interpretation of John 6:51-58 and a strict literal interpretation of the phrases “*this is my body.... this is my blood*” which Christ uses to introduce the Lord’s Supper.

Furthermore, they believe it is a *sacrament* that actually imparts justifying grace that is essential for salvation.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF CONSUBSTANTIATION OR “SACRAMENTAL UNION” OR “REAL PRESENCE”

There are variations among Anglican’s Lutherans, Methodists and others but the central idea is that the “real presence” of Christ accompanies the bread and wine and is conveyed spiritually when the bread and wine are partaken. This view denies that the wine and bread are changed into the actual flesh and blood of Christ or that the wine and bread are replaced by the actual flesh and blood of Christ. Instead, this position claims the “real presence” of Christ’s blood and body are present and spiritually conveyed as these elements are partaken.

Those who embrace variations of this view of “real presence” also esteem it as sacramental in nature as the actual presence of Christ is imparted.

IV. THE SYMBOLIC VIEW

Most Evangelical denominations believe the wine and bread symbolize the body and blood of Christ. They deny that the “real presence” of Christ is found in the physical bread or wine and therefore, they deny it is sacramental or imparts saving grace. They believe it is a very solemn symbolic act that signifies the observers are in unity with each other and with Christ and are

without known sin prior to observing the supper. They believe there can be serious consequences for willfully violating the symbols of this supper. For example, they cite the violation of the symbolism in the wilderness in connection with the God providing water out of the rock. The first time Moses was instructed to strike the rock to obtain water. The second time Moses was told only to speak to the rock. The rock symbolized Christ (1 Cor. 10:4) and striking it symbolized his death through which the water of life comes. The next time Moses was commanded only to speak to the rock in order to obtain water. That symbolizes the previous death of Christ was sufficient and now access to the water of life is through prayer. However, when Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it, the symbolism of the sufficiency of the death of Christ was repudiated, thus, a symbolic perversion of the gospel was the result. In keeping with this symbolic perversion of the Gospel, Moses was forbidden to enter the Promised Land, which in this case, symbolized heaven. There were serious temporal consequences for violating God's symbols. Remember, the essence of a symbol or type is exact adherence to its correct form as it is its correct form that is designed to convey that truth.

V. THE METAPHORS OF EATING AND DRINKING IN JOHN 6

Those who embrace any of the sacramental "real presence" theories usually attempt to defend their position from John chapter six.

John chapter six identifies the true source of saving faith to be the work of God and why mere profession is not always the product of God's work.

A. WRONG REASONS FOR COMING TO CHRIST—JN. 6:1-26

John 6:1-26 provide three wrong reasons why some came to Christ:

1. Some came to him because of miracles - v. 2 "*because they saw his miracles*"
2. Some came to him because they wanted civil power - v. 15 "*by force, to make him a king,*"
3. Some came to him for food - v. 26 "*because ye did eat of the loaves*"

None of these came to Christ by faith for eternal life. All of these were unbelievers, especially the third group who admitted they were unbelievers when they said, “*that we may... believe*” (v. 30) and were pronounced as unbelievers by Christ “*ye also have seen me, and believe not.*” (v.36).

B. COMING TO CHRIST BY FAITH IS THE WORK OF GOD—JN. 6:29-37

Jesus asserts in John 6:29 that believing in him for eternal life is “*the work of God.*” His unbelieving audience demanded they could do the works of God including believing in Christ if Christ provided sufficient miracles (vv. 26-35) but Christ denied that visible miracles can produce saving faith (v. 36). He then provides a series of proofs to support that assertion:

1. The Father’s work of giving is the cause for all who truly come to Christ by faith—vv. 37-39
2. The Father’s work of drawing is the cause for all who truly come to Christ by faith—vv. 44-45
3. False professions are proof that the Father never drew such—vv. 64-65
4. Coming to Christ by faith is as repulsive to the natural man apart from the Father’s work as being commanded to eat Christ’s flesh and drink his blood.
5. This work of God is not limited to Jews only but to “all” classes of mankind—Jn.12:20-32

C. THE METAPHORS OF SAVING FAITH—EATING AND DRINKING

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

The self-confessed unbelievers thought faith in Christ could be self-induced by seeing Christ perform a miracle. Remember, it is these same unbelievers who had come to Christ for food (v. 26). However, Christ reminded them that bread which came down from heaven in the time of Moses was physical and only temporarily sustained physical life. In direct contrast Jesus claims that God had sent him down from heaven as the true bread that provides eternal life. They asked Jesus to give them that bread and Jesus replied:

Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

He first introduces the metaphor “*I am the bread of life*” which is a similar metaphorical expression to the following metaphorical expressions:

1. “*I am the light of the world*” - Jn. 8:12
2. “*I am the door*” - Jn. 10:9
3. “*I am the true vine*” - Jn. 15:1

The fact that Christ is neither literal “*bread*” nor a literal “*light*” nor a literal “*door*” nor a literal “*vine*” demands he is speaking metaphorically or else we have complete nonsense.

They had asked him—“*give us this bread*” and he then proceeds to tell them how they can partake of this **metaphorical** bread by **metaphorically** eating and drinking which he defines as believing in him or coming to him by faith for eternal life - “*he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*”

He first asserts the metaphor “*I am the bread of life*” and then he explains the metaphor “*he that cometh to me shall never hunger*” and thus eating of him is metaphorically the same as coming to him. However, it is not coming to him for any reason, such as those reasons already given in the preceding context (for miracles, for power, for food), but “*he the believeth on me*” for eternal life is the reason for coming to him. Physical life is sustained by literally eating and drinking literal food. Eternal life is obtained by metaphorically eating

and drinking or partaking of Christ by faith. This is the meaning, as he immediately applies it negatively in the very next verse “*But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not*” meaning they metaphorically refused to eat or drink of him, and thus metaphorically refused to partake of Christ by faith. However, later he explains why they refused—“*no man can come to be except the Father draws him*” (Jn. 6:44) and thus saving faith is “*the work of God.*” Now we come to the primary abuse of this text by Sacramentarians.

Jesus uses this same “*bread of life*” metaphor and its literal explanation of how to partake of him by faith when introducing the very passage used as a proof text by Sacramentarians:

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth upon me hath everlasting life.

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

Eating and drinking had already been used as metaphors (v. 35) and explained to mean coming to him or believing in him for eternal life. Verse 47 gives the intended meaning of those eating and drinking metaphors once again before introducing the “*I am that bread of life*” metaphor and then again after verse 50 Jesus demands that they must partake of Christ as “*bread*” Christ goes on to say:

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

The unbelieving Jews were offended because they failed to perceive the repeated explanation of the eating and drinking. However, he goes on to provide further explanation that any quickened child of God should have been able to see what Christ really meant:

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

He explains that those who eat him shall live by him even as the Son lives by the Father. The Son did not literally eat and drink the Father in order to live by him and neither do we literally eat and drink the Son to live by him. Jesus is speaking of something spiritual not physical. The physical simply illustrated the spiritual.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.—v. 63

The only “*flesh*” Christ had referred to in the immediate context is his own flesh or his own physical body. Literally eating his flesh would profit them nothing. The life he was speaking about was spiritual and it was received through his words not his physical substance. It is his words that “*are spirit and are life.*” Indeed, if they had literally obeyed this command there would have been no cross, no resurrection and thus no actual atonement. Peter understood exactly what Christ conveyed metaphorically as shown by his response to Christ:

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 *Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

69 *And **we believe** and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*

It was by faith in the gospel he preached that brought eternal life. That gospel simply declared that anyone who partook of him or believed in him by faith would have eternal life:

35 *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: **he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.***

Sacramentarians interpret his words exactly as these unbelievers and false professing disciples interpreted them—literally and physically, instead of metaphorically and spiritually.

Moreover, the very phrase that has been used consistently to describe the latter end of all those coming to Christ by faith is later attached to the metaphor of eating and drinking of him.

54 *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; **and I will raise him up at the last day.***

In the previous context this same phrase is used only to describe those coming to Christ by faith for eternal life:

1. John 6:37, 39

37 *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that **cometh to me** I will in no wise cast out.*

39 *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but **should raise it up again at the last day.***

2. John 6:40

40 *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and **believeth on him**, may have everlasting life: and **I will raise him up at the last day.***

3. John 6:44

*44 No man can **come to me**, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and **I will raise him up at the last day.***

Finally, the blood was still running in the veins when Christ spoke these words, as well as, when he instituted the Lord's Supper later. Therefore, it was not possible for those listening to Christ in John 6 to obey this command apart from killing him if it was to be understood literally. The only possible way to obey his command was for it to be understood metaphorically. Likewise, in Matthew 26:12-30 when the Lord actually instituted the Supper there was no possible way for them to properly obey such a command if they had to literally eat his flesh and literally drink his blood as literal blood was still flowing in the veins of his literal body at the time he instituted the Supper. The only possible way that first Supper could be scripturally observed was by understanding these terms metaphorically instead of literally. It is by faith in him that remission of sins and eternal life are received (Acts 10:43).

VI. THE SCRIPTURAL PREPARATION FOR OBSERVING THE SUPPER

*“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ **our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**” - 1 Cor. 5:6-8*

We know that the Lord's Supper is the application intended by Paul in these verses as the only Christian “*feast*” we are to “*keep*” that can be identified as “*Christ our Passover*” wherein Christ is “*sacrificed for us*” with the use of “*unleavened bread*” is the Lord's Supper. So, it is clear that Paul has the Lord's Supper in view. However, why is Paul dressing the Lord's Supper in the language of the Old Testament Passover?

7. Congregational House Cleaning

First, the Lord's Supper was instituted during the Passover observance and so there is a natural correlation between them. Second, Paul dresses the

Lord's Supper in the language of preparation for the Old Testament Passover in order to show the church how to prepare themselves to observe the Lord's Supper "*worthily*." God commanded each family to purge out all leavened food products from their house in order to partake of the Passover worthily.

*Ex 12:15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day **ye shall put away leaven out of your houses**: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.*

*Ex 12:19 Seven days shall there **be no leaven found in your houses**: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.*

In the New Testament it is the congregation that is identified as the "*house of God*" which observes "*Christ our Passover*" or the Lord's Supper:

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

1 Cor. 3:9 *For we are labourers together with God: **ye are** God's husbandry, **ye are God's building**.*

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

1 Tim. 3:15 *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.*

Therefore, the "*house*" which needs to be cleansed of leaven before partaking of the "*unleavened bread*" of the Supper is the congregation at Corinth. There was the "*leaven*" of a fornicating member, and there was "*leaven*" of their sinful boasting in that fornicating member that had to be removed.

*1 Cor. 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth **the whole lump**? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that **ye may be** a new lump, as **ye are** unleavened.*

Purging the Lump

1 Cor. 5:7 Purge **out** therefore the old leaven, that **ye may be** a new lump, as **ye are** unleavened. :8 Therefore let us keep the feast, **not with old leaven**, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The proper congregational preparation in order to keep the Lord's Supper requires cleaning out all leaven from the observing "house" which Paul now identifies metaphorically with the "whole lump" or the "unleavened bread" used in the Passover.

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that **ye may be** a new lump, as **ye are** unleavened.

Notice how Paul directly identifies the church body at Corinth to the "lump" of "unleavened" bread - "**ye may be**" and "**ye are**." When Paul says "**ye may be**" and "**ye are**" he is using the language of a metaphor which conveys representation and is the same thing as saying "**ye may represent a new lump**" and "**ye represent unleavened**" bread. Therefore, the observing congregational body of members is representative of that "whole lump." They are not *part* of the lump but representative of the "whole" lump. What kind of congregational body considered as a "whole" can remove leavened attitudes and members from its midst in order to become a "new" lump? Can a universal invisible church do that? No, because that would require casting out or removing saved people from the state of salvation. How does this metaphor deny both open and close communion if the observers are inclusive of the "whole" lump as metaphorical body of Christ? Neither "open" nor "close" communion can fit this metaphor as the observers are confined within the metaphor of the "whole" lump singular. The metaphor demands "closed" communion or communion restricted within the boundaries of the "whole" lump.¹⁸⁶

Indeed, in verse 8 he actually makes the transition from the unleavened bread dough to the actual baked unleavened bread used in the Supper:

¹⁸⁶ "Open" communion refers to the practice of allowing non-members of your church to observe from outside your congregation and denomination. "Close" refers to allowing members outside of your congregational body to observe as long as they are members of congregations which are like faith and order. "Closed" restricts it to the membership of the observing congregational body.

1 Cor. 5:8 Therefore ***let us keep the feast***, *not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; **but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.***

Hence, the “***unleavened bread***” used in the Lord’s Supper **represents** the proper condition of *the observing congregational body*, as well as, symbolizing the literal body of Jesus Christ. This fact repudiates both open and close communion.

Therefore, they are not only a metaphorical “***house***” that must first remove all leaven but this is applied directly to the observance of the Lord’s Supper as he says, “*let us keep the feast*” which he identifies as “***Christ our Passover***” which that observing body is not “*to eat*” the “***unleavened bread***” with any leavened “*brother*” (vv. 8-11).

Therefore, this properly prepared “***whole lump***” as the “***unleavened bread***” has a dual application. It represents the “*whole*” metaphorical congregational body that is partaking of the Supper in addition to representing the literal body of Christ “*sacrificed for us.*”

1 Cor. 12:27 Now ***ye are the body of Christ***, *and members in particular.*

Therefore, as the representative visible body of Christ at Corinth they must first purge out all known leaven of sin from their membership in order to “*worthily*” partake of the symbol of Christ’s literal body “*sacrificed for us.*” The unleavened bread in the Lord’s Supper represents the affinity and unity existing between Christ’s sacrifice without sin and the **public** condition of the observing congregational body (1 Cor. 12:27 - “***ye are the body of Christ...***”) which partakes of that bread. Therefore, the observing church body must “***keep the feast not with old leaven...***”

8. The Individual Member—1 Cor. 11

The Congregational body is responsible to remove from its membership those living in known sin before it can observe the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 5). This demands also that the whole body rid itself of the sinful attitude of pride described in 1 Cor. 5:1-4 before it could observe the Lord’s Supper. 1 Corinthians 5 deals with the public preparation, but 1 Cor. 11:27-34 deals with personal and private preparation for observing the Lord’s Supper. The

individual member is to remove known sin from their life before observing the Lord's Supper or there could be serious consequences. Stop reading this lesson and read 1 Corinthians 11:27-33 right now. After reading the Scripture go on line and read my book "**Who is invited to the Lord's Table**" ([http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/ Lord s Supper Book. pdf](http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/Lord%20s%20Supper%20Book.pdf)) before continuing with this lesson.

VII. THE ELEMENTS OF THE SUPPER

Good brethren and congregations of like faith and order disagree about some issues. One such issue is the proper identification of the element used in the cup for the Lord's Supper. There is no disagreement that the cup used liquid from "*the fruit of the vine*" or from the grape.

However, in this lesson I will present my view with all due respect toward those brethren and my students who may disagree with my conclusions.

Unbiased objective scholarship will not support the theory of fermented and unfermented wine. That is simply pure myth invented during the time of prohibition and is based solely upon superficial scholarship and complete distortion of the true historical data. William Patton's book "*The Wines of the Bible and the Laws of Fermentation*" is widely responsible for the complete misinformation and distortion of the true historical data. It is difficult to find any historical data in Patton's book that has not been jerked out of its historical context. As a graduate student, I was accepted for the Master degree program for Ancient Languages at the University of Kentucky in Lexington Kentucky in the early summer of 1978. The first classes would begin in the fall quarter. Having the summer free and having access to the libraries at the University of Kentucky and Lexington Theological Seminary I set about to research the historical accuracy of William Patton's book. By the end of the Summer I had discovered that hardly a single statement could be found in Patton's book that was historically accurate. Even a rudimentary knowledge of the Greek classics exposes the faulty scholarship of this book. For example, Patton gives as evidence for unfermented wine the phrase "sweet black wine" that the Cyclops requests from Ulysses in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Homer (Odyssey, book ix) tells us that Ulysses took in his boat "a goat skin of sweet wine, a divine drink, which Marion,

*the priest of Apollo, had given him—it was sweet as honey—it was imperishable, or would keep forever; that when it was drunk, it was diluted with twenty parts water, and that from it a sweet and divine order exhaled.” – Nott, London, Ed. P. 55–
William Patton, **Bible Wines or the Laws of Fermentation**,
(Little Rock: Arkansas, no date), – p. 36*

Patton argues that the fact that it is called “sweet” proves it was unfermented wine or grape juice but any student of Homer knows that it was this “sweet black wine” requested by the Cyclops and provided to him that made him completely intoxicated in so much that Ulysses was able to poke his eye out while the Cyclops was under complete intoxication due to drinking that “sweet black wine.” A.M. Wilson who was a Classical Greek scholar, and a self-professed teetotaler (nondrinker—like myself) wrote a book in response to the source materials¹⁸⁷ ultimately abused and misused by Patton that completely exposed the shoddy scholarship behind the unfermented wine theory. Wilson simply provided the more complete historical context for the statements jerked out of context by those who promoted the unfermented wine myth. No advocate for the myth of unfermented wine has ever attempted to refute Wilson’s book.

Spurgeon considered Wilson’s book irrefutable and that unfermented wine was pure myth and admitted that the element used in the cup at the Passover was wine. However, Spurgeon chose to use grape juice over wine in the Lord’s Supper because of the wide abuse of alcohol around him. So, his choice was not based upon Biblical data but due strictly to pragmatic reasons.

“The fact is — there is not, and there never was, and never can be such a thing as unfermented wine, though it suits some men to call their messes by that name. At the same time, it should be observed that much which is called wine in this country is not worthy of the name, and it is a shame to remember our Lord’s death by drinking such vile decoctions. Let it be really wine, as pure and good as can be had, and no communicant has then any Scriptural right to object. As the slightest word on

¹⁸⁷ Patton’s primary sources were F.R. Lees, Moses Stuart and the other contributors to the *Temperance Bible Commentary*.

*this subject generally brings a flood of angry letters, we beg to intimate that our columns are not open to discussion, and that our own mind is made up. We are at one with those temperate temperance friends who forbear to divide congregations and mar the unity of the saints upon this point: to them we wish God speed, and we hope ever to cooperate with them. They have their own sphere of action, and a very important one it is; and when pursued in subservience to the gospel, for the noble object of preventing and curing the great and crying sin of drunkenness, their work is philanthropic in the highest degree; nay, more, it is Christ like, and tends to benefit the souls as well as the bodies of men. To make men sober is one thing, to make them quarrelsome is another: we are content with the former.—C.H. Spurgeon, **The Sword and the Trowel**, Vol. 4.—emphasis mine*

C.H. Spurgeon upon reading Wilson's book said:

*'UNFERMENTED wine' is a non-existent liquid. **Mr. Wilson has so fully proved this that it will require considerable hardihood to attempt a reply.** The best of it is that he is a teetotaler of more than thirty years' standing, and has reluctantly been driven **to conclude that, so far as the wines of the ancients are concerned, unfermented wine is a myth.**'**Mr. Wilson has written the thick volume now before us to settle the matter, and we believe that he establishes beyond reasonable debate that the wines of the Bible were intoxicating, and that our Lord did not ordain jelly or syrup, or cherry juice to be the emblem of his sacrifice.**" - Charles Haddon Spurgeon - emphasis mine*

With regard to the Biblical evidence, it is indisputable that Jesus employed the elements commonly used in the Passover at the time he instituted the Lord's Supper (Mt. 26:12-15).

Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to him, Where will you that we prepare for you to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city

to such a man, and say to him, The Master said, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at your house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.—Mt.28:17-19

In the section of the Mishnah where it gives instructions on the prayer or benediction given over wine it says:

*What Benediction do they say over fruits? Over the fruit of the trees a man says [Blessed art thou....] who created the fruit of the tree', except over wine, for over wine a man says '..... who creates **the fruit of the vine**.....? They do not say the Bendiction over the wine until **water has been added to it**.—Herbert Danby, trans. **The Mishnah** (Oxford Press,1977) pp. 6, 8—emphasis mine*

Jesus uses the exact same Jewish phraseology when instituting the Lord's Supper:

*And he took the cup, and **gave thanks**, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink from now on of this **fruit of the vine**, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.—Mt. 26:27-29*

The Mishnah, which is the written record of the oral “traditions of the elders” at the time Christ lived clearly states that the element used in the cup in the Passover was wine mixed with three parts of water in order to avoid intoxication due to the fact that the custom of the Passover during the New Testament period required a minimum of four cups of wine to be drunk by every Jew. The Passover was divided into four segments and each segment begun with a prayer and a cup of wine. The first segment began with a prayer over the wine being drunk and in that prayer the wine is specifically called “*the fruit of the vine*.” In the third segment, which is when the Lord instituted the Supper, the prayer that begins this segment blesses the food and so the cup of wine for that segment is called “*the cup of blessing*.”

§ 1. *It is not lawful for any individual to eat aught on the eve of the Passover, from about the time of **החנני** till after dark; even the meanest in Israel shall not eat until they have arranged themselves in proper order at ease round the table; **a person shall not have less than four cups of wine**, even if they be given to him from the fund devoted to the charitable support of the very poor.*

§ 2. ***When the first cup has been poured out**, the blessing of the festival must be said, before that on the wine is said. Such is the dictum of Beth Shammai; but, according to Beth Hillel, the blessing on the wine is to be said before that on the festival.*

§ 3. *Herbs and vegetables are then to be brought: the lettuce is to be immersed, and part eaten thereof, until the eating of the unleavened-bread; then **הצני**, or unleavened cakes, are to be placed before him, as also lettuce, **תסורח** 1 and two kinds of cooked food, although the **תסורח** is not strictly obligatory; but R. Eleazar bar Zadok says it is obligatory. During the existence of the Holy Temple, the paschal sacrifice was then also placed before him.*

§ 4. ***A second cup of wine is then poured out**; and the son shall then enquire of his father [the cause of this ceremony], and when the son's mental faculties are insufficient, the father is bound to instruct him in the following manner: "Wherefore is this night distinguished from all other nights? That on all other nights we may eat either leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night it must be all unleavened; on all other nights we may eat any kind of herbs, but on this night we must eat bitter herbs; on other nights we may eat meat, either roasted, boiled, or cooked in different ways, but on this night we must eat roasted meat only; 2 on all other nights we immerse what we eat once, but on this night twice." And according to the powers of comprehension of the child, thus his father is bound to teach him: he shall first inform him of the dishonour [of our ancestors], and conclude with the reading of the favourable and laudatory*

passages; he shall explain the passage, “*Laban, the Syrian, had nearly caused my father to perish,*” &c. (*Deut. xxvi. 5*), till the end of that section.

§ 5. *Rabbon Gamaliel says, “Whosoever does not mention [explain] three things on the Passover, has not fulfilled his duty. These are, —the Paschal sacrifice, the unleavened-cakes, and bitter herbs. The Paschal sacrifice is offered because the Lord passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt; the unleavened-bread [is eaten] because our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt [before they had time to leaven their dough]; and bitter herbs are eaten, because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt. It is therefore incumbent on every person, in all ages, that he should consider as though he had personally gone forth from Egypt, as it is said, ‘And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did for me in Egypt’ (Exod. xii. 27). We are therefore in duty bound to thank, praise, adore, glorify, extol, honour, bless, exalt, and reverence Him, who wrought all these miracles for our ancestors and us; for He brought us forth from bondage to freedom, He changed our sorrow into joy, our mourning into a feast, He led us from darkness into a great light, and from servitude to redemption,—let us therefore say in His presence, Hallelujah! [sing the Hallel].”*

§ 6. How far is the Hallel then to be said? According to *Beth Shammai*, till “*He maketh the barren woman,*” &c. [*the end of Psalm cxiii.*]; but *Beth Hillel* say till “*the flinty rock into a fountain of waters*” [*end of Psalm cxiv*], and they are to close with a blessing for redemption. *R. Tarphon* says, “*This is the form. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hast redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt,*” without any further closing blessing. *R. Akivah* says [*in continuation to the preceding*], “*Thus mayest thou, O Lord our God, and the God of our ancestors, bring us to the peaceable enjoyment of other solemn feasts and sacred seasons which approach us, that we may rejoice in the rebuilding of thy city*

and exult in thy service, that we may there eat of the paschal and other sacrifices,” &c. until, “Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast redeemed Israel.”

§ 7. ***A third cup of wine is then poured out***, and the grace after meals is said. ***After pouring out the fourth cup*** he shall finish thereon the Hallel, and say the blessing on the songs [of praise] 3 A person may drink as much as he likes between the first [two] glasses, but not between the third and the fourth.

§ 8. *It is unlawful to conclude the eating of the paschal sacrifice with a dessert. If any of the company fall asleep during the meal, they may eat of the paschal sacrifice afterwards; but when the whole company have fallen asleep, they may not eat again thereof [when they wake]. R. Jose says, “If they are only drowsy, they may eat it, but if they fall fast asleep, they may not eat of it [afterwards].”*

§ 9. *The paschal offering does, after the hour of midnight, render the hands unclean. 4 Sacrifices which are rejected [לוגב], or that have remained beyond their prescribed time [רתור], do also render the hands unclean. Whosoever has said the blessing on the paschal offering, is not bound to say that on the [festive] offering, but whoever has said the blessing on the festive offering is bound to say it on the paschal offering also. Such is the dictum of R. Ishmael; but R. Akivah says, “Neither of these absolves from the obligation of saying the other blessing.”—The Mishnah, “Pesahim” chapter 10*

There is a Jewish synagogue in Lexington Kentucky and there were Jewish Rabbis in the doctoral program at the liberal Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington. In using the library at the seminary, I got acquainted with the Jewish rabbi's and I asked them if the Jews had ever used grape juice in the Passover. Their immediate response was laughing at me. They then told me as a matter of fact that the Jews had never used grape juice in their entire history as a people in the Passover but only used red wine. The Jewish Encyclopedia supports their assertion. Recorded history of Jews from the present day as far back as one can trace supports that assertion.

The Biblical use of wine supports that assertion. In Romans 14 wine is specifically listed as something that could cause a brother to stumble and yet Paul denies it is evil in and of itself and the use of wine is a matter of Christian liberty. Grape juice has never been a stumbling block and makes no sense in this passage. In 1 Corinthians 11 it is the abuse that is condemned but nothing is said against the element being used. In fact, the only condemnation found of wine in Scripture is its abuse not its use. In John 2 at the wedding of Cana, there is no such thing as a better grade of grape juice, but there are better grades of wine as that is what aging wine is all about. Jesus is not supporting intoxication by supplying wine as the proper use of wine is the individual responsibility. The wine ran out due to the number of guests.

The Bible only forbids leavened (*chametz*) food (not drinks) during the Passover; in fact, they were to make sure there was no leavened food at all in their house. However, *chametz* only refers to foods made from particular grains, not to wine. Wine perfectly symbolizes the blood of Christ in washing away sin or the filth of the flesh as wine was the common antiseptic and disinfectant of that day. The Good Samaritan would have never poured grape juice into an open wound as that would have increased the infection. The fermentation process of wine is a perfect type of the power of the blood overcoming the leaven of sin. Wine perfectly symbolizes the “joy” of our salvation based on the blood of Christ.

However, grape juice is consistently used in Scripture to symbolize the blood of evil men when Christ comes and destroys the armies at Armageddon which destruction is symbolized by grapes being freshly trodden in the winepress of God’s wrath.

Priests who are on the job in the temple service are forbidden to drink wine for the very same reason that the person under the Nazarite vow is forbidden to drink anything coming from the fruit of the vine because both the priest and Nazarite served as types of Christ who was acquainted with grief and a man of sorrows, whereas wine is a symbol of joy. However, strong wine is used in the worship service in the temple in the wine offering.

*And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shall you cause the **strong wine** to be poured to the LORD for a drink offering.—*
Numb. 28:7

Finally, being “*drunken*” with wine is not merely drinking wine, but it is drinking wine to excess, and excess is when the person is no longer controlling his body, speech and actions but wine controls them and that is evidenced by the way that person walks, talks and behaves. Indeed, it is that very type of excess that is used by Paul to explain what filling with the Spirit is like (Eph.5:18). Just as drunken to excess is wine controlling his speech, walk and thinking, so being filled with the Spirit is the Spirit controlling your speech, walk and thinking. One can drink wine without being drunken and retain complete control of his faculties.

In the under developed nations in the Near East both now in ancient times wine was a necessary disinfectant at the dinner table to maintain good health due to poor water quality and heat that quickly spoils food by producing bacteria in food. Those who have visited and ate in some parts of Mexico have learned this by trial and error. In that hot climate food spoils quickly and the locals drink tequila with their meals in order to kill bacteria in the food.

VIII. THE SYNECDOCHE- “WINE PRESS”

The expression “*wine press*” does not mean that wine is the immediate product when grapes are being crushed in the press, but rather the intent of the press is to produce wine as the end product. The same language is used when describing the wine in the grape on the vine. The wine makers would consider the juice in the grape as “*wine*” because of their intent for the use of those grapes. This is the common use of language. The ancients would partially ferment the juice in the vats and then finish the fermenting process in wine bags made from the skins of animals. The liquid that had been partially fermented in the vats but then placed into the bags was called “*new wine*” which had alcohol content and could make one drunk:

Prostitution and wine and new wine take away the heart.—Hos. 4:11

Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.—Acts 2:13

Putting “*new wine*” that had gone through the initial stages of fermentation into already used wine skins would burst those skins.

And no man puts new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.—Lk. 5:37

IX. MY PERSONAL USE OF WINE

However, with the exception of the Lords' Supper, I completely abstain from the use of wine or any other alcohol as a beverage for the sake of witness, and the conscience of weaker brethren, and because of the excessive abuse and problems it causes in our society. In the final analysis both wine and grape juice are derived from "*the fruit of the vine*" and brethren on both sides should agree to disagree agreeably and not make it an issue of fellowship. Brother Al Gormley the great pastor of Bryan Station Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky was a strong advocate for grape juice in the Supper and strongly opposed wine. However, Brother Gormley knowing full well that I advocated wine in the Lord's Supper led Bryan Station Baptist Church to financially support me as a missionary in the state of Montana between 1978-1980. Later, he asked me to consider being their missionary to Honduras which I declined because I did not believe that was the Lord's will for me at that time (Bro. Ted Tweet was eventually led to accept that calling). We mutually respected each other though we did not agree on this topic. We did not allow this difference to affect our fellowship because we agreed with each other on far more many other things than we disagreed with each other. You will not be tested with regard to what element in the cup is to be used.

For further study on this issue, both my book and A.M. Wilson's book can be found at the following website address: <http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/baptistordinances.html>

X. ONE CUP OR CUPS?

There is a disagreement over the use of the cup in the Lord's Supper. Some argue that one cup was used and then passed to each person and thus all drank from the very same cup. Others argue that "the cup" was the one sitting in front of each one at the table rather than a singular cup passed from person to person. The Jewish practice seems to support the latter position that each person had their own cup of wine.

Those who argue for the singular cup passed from person to person believe it better represents the unity of the congregation by drinking from the same cup. However, it is the one bread that is specifically designated to symbolize the unity of the congregational body observing it, whereas the wine symbolizes the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. Individual cups of wine do not violate the intended symbolism of the wine.

The middle ground is represented by those who bless the bread unbroken and the drink in one cup and then break the bread and divide it and pour the drink into separate cups to divide it among the congregation.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What Greek term is translated “sacrament” in the Latin New Testament?
2. What Greek term is used for the Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor. 11:1?
3. What is the origin of the term “sacrament” according to ISBE?
4. What is the soteriological meaning imposed upon “sacrament” by Paedobaptists?
5. What is the doctrine of Transubstantiation?
6. What is the doctrine of Consubstantiation?
7. What is the value of a symbol?
8. How are the terms “eat” and “drink” defined by Christ in John 6?
9. What is the Old Testament background of 1 Cor. 5:6-11?
10. How do we know preparation to observe the Lord’s Supper is the application in 1 Cor. 5:6-11?
11. If the “unleavened bread” represents the universal invisible body of Christ how can a “little” leaven, leaven the “whole” lump?
12. If the “whole lump” represents the universal invisible body of Christ how can leaven be purged from that kind of body if it consists only of the saved?
13. Is the “leaven” in the context a “brother” (1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Cor. 2:6)?
14. Who does Paul say this “whole lump” is?
15. What literal body, and what metaphorical body does the “unleavened bread” symbolize?
16. Does the observing congregation have responsibility as a body to remove known sinners before observing the supper?

17. Do individual members have responsibility to deal with known sin in their lives before observing the Supper?
18. How does this symbolism and purging determine if the Lord's Supper is (1) open; (2) close or (3) closed communion?
19. Does Matthew 26:12-15 indicate the traditional Jewish Passover was being prepared?
20. What is the Jewish "Mishnah"?
21. How was the traditional Jewish Passover divided?
22. At what part of feast was the blessing said over the wine which contained the words "fruit of the vine"?
23. At what part of the feast does the words "cup of blessing" refer to?

REQUIRED READING:

Who is Invited to the Lord's Table, by Mark W. Fenison



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 15

LESSON 1–The Institution–
Part 7 - Congregational Discipline

LESSON 2–The Institution–
Part 8 - The Faith–Part 1

LESSON 3–The Institution–
Part 9 - The Faith–Part 2

WEEK 15 LESSON 1

The Institution—Part 7— Congregational Discipline

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are: (1) to understand the true meaning of congregational discipline and, (2) to understand its various applications and, (3) to understand its proper goals.

INTRODUCTION: Congregational discipline is an indispensable mark of a true New Testament Congregation. Indeed, without congregational discipline apostasy is certain. Church discipline of heretical members and disfellowshipping heretical congregations preserve the Great Commission reproductive cycle within the framework of “like faith and order”.

Unfortunately, when the subject of congregational discipline is brought up in a conversation the only idea that comes across the mind of most people is the exclusion of a member from the congregation. However, the term “discipline” is directly related to the term “disciple” and in its broader sense the term “discipline” can mean:

“activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill; training: the rigor or training effect of experience, adversity, etc...behavior in accord with rules of conduct; behavior and order maintained by training and control”—
Dictionary.com

In the Biblical sense, becoming a child of God brings you under the direct discipline of Christ (Heb. 12:5-10). Additionally, discipline is administered by Christ through membership in one of his congregations (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:40-41) as a normal process of the Christian life.

Congregational discipline consists of instructive, corrective and if necessary purgative discipline.

I. INSTRUCTIVE DISCIPLINE

*Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **Teaching them to observe all things** whatever I have commanded you: and, see, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen.—Mt.28:19-20*

The command “*teaching them to observe all things*” means to train congregational members how to be obedient to Christ. Of course, this is impossible apart from working in relationship with the Holy Spirit in and through the congregation. The Holy Spirit uses the external means (preachers, teachers, members, and circumstances) to bring the truth to the external eye and ears of the disciple, but He alone enables the mind and heart to understand and embrace it. Significantly, the Holy Spirit works in and through the congregation to glorify Christ (Eph. 3:21; Acts 13:1-4; 15:28; 1 Cor. 3:16).

Such informative discipline comes by a variety of ways: (1) Primarily this external training comes by way of public and personal instruction in God’s Word. The public congregational services are designed to provide instructional discipline in the things of Christ. (2) It is provided in the preaching and teaching of God’s Word from the pulpit and in the Sunday School Classroom. (3) Such education is provided in the lyrics of the songs that are sung. (4) It is provided by personal interaction/fellowship with the membership (Rom. 15:14). (5) It is provided by the example of qualified leadership. Assembling together is indispensable for Christian discipline (Heb. 12:25). (6) Personal prayer and Bible study provides instructional discipline. Instructive discipline is essential for Christian growth. Instruction disciplines the conscience to discern between good and evil.

II. CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE

There are two primary schools of thought concerning discipline. There is the school of learning by listening, observing, and conforming to instruction, and then there is the school of learning by hard knocks.

In the Scriptures, corrective discipline comes in various ways. Ultimately it comes from God (Heb. 12:5-10). It may come directly from God through providential intervention (sickness, circumstantial problems, etc.). It may come through simply reading or hearing God's Word as the Word is like a mirror that shows us our errors (James 1:23-25) and rebukes and corrects us in our errors.

However, corrective discipline may also come by way of personal and/or public admonishment.

*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brothers, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to **admonish** one another.—Rom. 15:14*

The Greek term translated “*admonish*” in the above passage literally means “to place before the mind” and carries the idea of direct confrontation. It is the Greek term “*noutheto*” from which “Nouthetic” counseling is named.

A. PERSONAL ADMONISHMENT

In Scripture, Matthew 18:15 provides an example of *nouthetic* counseling or placing before the mind of another brother or sister what needs to be corrected. With regard to personal offenses the matter must not be shared with anyone else (not by pious prayer request or in the guise of seeking counsel) but it must remain private until personal confrontation has occurred and has failed to resolve the issue.

However, when admonishment comes by someone other than directly from God (providence, the Word) the person doing the confronting must be very careful that his admonishment is done correctly. Paul instructs the Galatians how that is done:

Brothers, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.—Gal.6:1

A “*spiritual*” person is one who is being led by the Spirit. The chief fruit of the person administering this admonishment is “*meekness*.” Many define “*meekness*” by the statement “*meekness is not weakness but power under control*.” However, a better understanding is found in a negative definition—meekness

is “not self-assertion.” A meek person is not one who asserts himself or his own agenda, but one who has crucified the flesh, denied self and is asserting the Spirit’s character and agenda. The Spirit’s character is spelled out in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The Spirit’s agenda is never destructive, vindictive or spiteful. His agenda is always constructive in the improvement and betterment of the other person and for the glory of Christ. Usually, to attain that kind of disposition requires much prayer. Moreover, it requires a lot of self-examination. The offended person should ask certain questions: (1) Am I partly to blame for the offense? (2) Was it in part due to my own improper words or actions? (3) Is it simply a matter of my own wounded pride?

Furthermore, Paul says “*considering yourself*.” Consider how you would like to be dealt with **when** you need admonishing? Consider the kind of approach and attitude you would prefer **when** it comes your turn for correction? It is not a matter of “if” but only **when** you will need admonishment or correction. James says that only the “perfect” man never offends with his mouth:

*For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a **perfect man**, and able also to bridle the whole body.*—James 3:2

Wherever you confront the offender, attempt to do so without the presence of others. If you are going to the home of the offender, ask to have a private audience with that offender alone without the presence of family or friends (“*go and tell him his fault between you and him **alone***.”—Mt. 18:15). An example of a correct attitude and approach is given to us in the Prophet Nathan when he approached King David and admonished him for his sin with Bathsheba and death of her husband. His approach was well thought through and his attitude was characterized by meekness.

A “spiritual” person is one the Holy Spirit is accompanying in this action and is using to admonish that person. So, if you are the offender, you are not merely being confronted by a human being but by the Spirit of God who is using and working in and through that person. Be careful how you respond to admonishment. Even if the admonishment may not have been administered altogether correctly, ask yourself whether what is being said is right or wrong, rather than just reacting to how it is administered. There is no honor in remaining in error nor will it advance your own spiritual growth to remain in error.

In Matthew 18:16 there is instruction concerning further admonition with regard to a fellow congregational member who is not willing to respond positively to admonishment with regard to personal offense. This second step is still a form of private admonishment but as will be shown a little bit later this is a transition step toward public admonishment. The second step is to take two or three witnesses with you and again approach the offender. The criteria for choosing your witnesses should be the same criteria—*“those who are spiritual.”* Don’t select members who have a bias against the offender or are biased in your behalf. Select members that will command both your respect and the respect of the offender. **Those you choose as witnesses should know nothing about it until they are asked to go with you**, so that they can be objective when hearing both sides.

B. PUBLIC ADMONISHMENT

The selection of *“two or three witnesses”* (Mt. 18:16) is based upon the Old Testament judicial process that required more than one witness in a court of law to administer a penalty.

At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.—Deut. 17:6

These witnesses were to *“establish every word”* in view of a judicial process that would conclude before a final court where a verdict, and if necessary, a penalty would be administered. That final court is described in Matthew 18:17

*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to you as an heathen man and a publican. Truly I say to **you**, Whatever **you** shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever **you** shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.—Matthew 18:17-18*

Ultimately, the only crime penalized is *“if he will not hear.”* The term *“bear”* means receiving and responding accordingly. Regardless of what he is being admonished for, it is forgivable, unless *“if he will not hear.”* In Titus 3:10 Paul refers to the *“heretic.”* The word translated *“heretic”* has the root

idea of being opinionated or self-willed or obstinate when used in a context where they will not hear correction. In Matthew 18:17-18 this person is so self-willed or opinionated in this matter that they “*will not hear*” the admonishment by the offended, or by the two or three witnesses, or by the congregation. If after the proper steps have been taken and the offender refuses to come before the congregation, that is simply another form of refusing to “hear” the congregation.

The church is the final court and the admonition applied by the congregation toward such an offender is “*let him be to you as a heathen man and a publican.*” The passage assumes the church has heard the case from both sides and the evidence demonstrates the offender is wrong and has been publicly rebuked but stubbornly continues not “*to hear*” or respond appropriately.

The judgment by the congregation is “*let him be unto you*” (the offended) as a heathen man and a publican because that is precisely how the congregation is going to respond toward this offender for refusing to heed its verdict until he repents. **It would be absurd and counter-productive, if the rest of the congregation remained in fellowship with the offender, and only the offended responded in the prescribed manner.**¹⁸⁸ Therefore, the whole church (v. 18 plural “*you*”) stands united with the offended and administers this penalty in a united stance toward the offender, thus separating the offender from the fellowship of the entire congregation. It does not mean that person cannot attend services; it only means the membership will not bring that person into their public (membership privileges) and personal fellowship. Peter explains what this means:

And he said to them, You know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come to one of another nation... - Acts 10:28

To treat someone like a heathen man (gentile) means they would not fellowship with that person over a meal or come into their home.

¹⁸⁸ Some have argued both the penalty (“*let him be unto you an heathen man and a publican*”) and the exercise of the keys in verse 18 refer only to the offended person. Therefore, they deny this is church authority with a church administered penalty. However, it is the plural “*you*” that is exercising the keys in verse 18, thus it is the congregational body administering this verdict in addition to the offended party.

Peter was accused of violating this principle by the Jews when he fellowshiped over a common meal with Gentiles in their homes:

For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.—Gal. 2:12

This act of separation does not deny their salvation (2 Thes. 3:14-15) but it is designed to treat them as a lost person with regard to membership privileges and treat them worse than a lost person with regard to personal fellowship in order to “*shame*” them for their behavior and reclaim them in true repentance.

C. PASTORAL ADMONISHMENT

The Pastor is qualified and placed in the congregation to serve the congregation in many different capacities. One of those capacities is “overseer” whereby he is the authorized congregational representative to deal with public disorder in the assembly. He is appointed by God and the congregation as “overseer” with the charge to preach the Word and when necessary to correct and rebuke:

I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.—2 Tim.4:1-2

1. *Personal Pastoral Admonishment:*

The Pastor needs to administer personal admonishment at times. Paul instructs Titus:

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself. - Tit. 3:9-11

Admonishing “heretics” is part of his responsibility. The term translated “heretic” has the idea of “self-willed” or “opinionated” or one who is sectarian in his views which are opposed to sound doctrine. Such persons can be found inside (Acts 20:29) as well as outside the congregation (Acts 20:30; Rom. 16:17-18).

Such a person is to be rejected after admonishing him twice. Do not continue arguing with him but reject him. The most probable meaning is to reject from holding any office or teaching position in the assembly or from speaking in the public assembly. If he attempts to divide the membership by his teachings then charge him with causing schism and usurping the right of the Pastor and then if he does not stop reject him as a member (2 Thes. 3:6).¹⁸⁹

However, the common member at times needs personal admonishment by the Pastor. The wise Pastor will come as a friend who is seeking the best for the member needing admonishment.

2. Pastoral Public Admonishment

There is a time and place for public admonishment by the Pastor before the congregation.

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.—1

Tim. 5:20

In context, Paul is instructing Timothy, the pastor at Ephesus, concerning elders in the assembly. Paul gives us an example in Galatians 2:11-14

¹⁸⁹ *Do not allow him an opportunity to defend his opinions before the congregation. It is the Pastor’s charge to confront and rebuke heretics. Allowing a heretic to defend his doctrine before the congregation is asking to split the congregation and playing into the hands of the heretic. The pastor may take a few men who are solid in doctrine and confront him privately (Gal. 6:1-3). However, in the public assembly the Pastor should not allow it to turn into a debate but rather simply ask the offender if the charge brought against him is true rather than attempting to let him defend his error. If he is a member and refuses to stop teaching his errors among the membership, charge him with causing schism in the congregation and usurping the right of the Pastor as the appointed teacher of the church and the guardian of the pulpit. He simply does not have the authority or right to teach contrary to the ordained leadership. For any individual to insist upon the right to openly dispute with the Pastor or to attempt to do so is an attempt to cause division and is an attempt to usurp the authority of the ordained leadership. As long as the ordained leadership is not teaching things contrary to the articles of faith adopted by the congregation, the ordained leadership should have the liberty to teach their views and no member or non-member should be allowed to openly dispute with the Pastor.*

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; so that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all. . . .—Gal. 2:11–14a

Those who speak before the assembly are subject to his admonishment as it is his office to be the “*overseer*” in order that all things are done “*decently and in order*” (1 Cor. 14:41). He is the buffer zone between heretics and the congregation. The man who fills the office of Pastor must be equipped to deal with such persons.

The public worship service must be observed “*decently and in order*” so that everything said and done glorifies Christ. The Pastor is the authorized public representative of the congregation who oversees the public services. When a member or visitor says or does something that seriously brings dishonor on Christ or is a serious perversion of God’s Word, it is the Pastor’s obligation to openly correct what was openly said or done. This requires tact and humility by the Pastor and the congregation needs to understand that **the Pastor acts as the public buffer zone between heretics and the assembly.** The congregation should support the Pastor in this difficult responsibility, but even if they do not, this is still the responsibility of the Pastor which he must do to protect the assembly from the potential schismatic and heretic. Notice the words “*that others also may fear.*” Members should realize the tremendous responsibility and consequences of their words and actions before the public assembly. The Pastor is the guardian of the pulpit and his authority to guard the pulpit should be respected with reverent fear.

III. PURGATIVE DISCIPLINE

Purgative or exclusion may be the response of the congregation toward private, public, or doctrinal offenses when corrective discipline has failed to

correct the issue. All practical offenses have a doctrinal basis for determining that they are offenses. The distinction between doctrinal and practical offenses would be the difference between teaching versus practicing error. Some may practice error out of sheer ignorance while others practice error due to false teaching. Some may teach false doctrine out of sheer ignorance while others due to being exposed to false teaching. All doctrinal error is first error in mind and then in practice. The pastor and church should attempt to distinguish whether the problem is due to mere ignorance or false instruction when confronting the erring member in the corrective phase of discipline.

I use the term “purgative” discipline because it is based upon Paul’s principle of purging leaven out of the midst of the congregational body.

*Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? **Purge out** therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened.... I wrote to you in an letter **not to company with** fornicators.... But now I have written to you **not to keep company**.... Therefore, **put away from among yourselves** that wicked person. - 1 Cor.5:6-7, 9, 10, 13*

To “*purge out*” means to “*put away from among yourselves*” so that you have no “*company with*” such a member. The same language is found in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15.

With the exception of openly known and commonly reported sins as in 1 Corinthians 5, the reason for exclusion from membership privileges is they “*will not bear.*” In the case of 1 Corinthians 5 immediate discipline is called for in order to address the public dishonor brought upon Christ and His metaphorical body in the community.

A. COMMONLY REPORTED PUBLIC SINS

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I truly, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as

though I were present, concerning him that has so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.—1 Cor. 5:1-5

Let's consider (1) the Nature of this Sin; (2) the Response to this sin, and (3) the Consequences of this sin.

1. *The Nature of this sin:*

With regard to the particular offense, it was a male member in the Corinthian congregation who was committing fornication with his stepmother. However, it could be any of the sins listed in verse 11.

With regard to the public nature of the sin, it was “*commonly reported.*” In other words, it was a matter of public knowledge. The Corinthian assembly was proud and boasted over this matter. Apparently, the same doctrine Paul later repudiated in Romans 6:1 had also arisen within the Corinthians assembly. If they were thinking, where sin abounds grace does much more abound, then sinning would make grace much more abundant. Therefore, sinning would be grounds for boasting in how much the grace of God existed among them. This was part of the “*leaven*” among them as much as the person committing the sin. Both are sins, and both need to be corrected. The congregation needs to repent of its attitude toward that sin and administer discipline to that member.

2. *The Response to this sin:*

There is no three-step process in dealing with this commonly reported sin because the very testimony of Christ in the public community has already been endangered. This kind of sin calls for immediate action “*that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you. . . . For I truly, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that has so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one to Satan.*”

It is so obviously wrong and so openly known and so openly reported that no pre-judicial process of calling in witnesses was necessary. Paul did not need witnesses to condemn this act as it was a matter of public report known to all. Repentance will not correct the public damage already done. This person must be removed from fellowship immediately and all attempts to bring him to repentance are secondary.

In purgative discipline it is not the good of the sinner that stands first in importance but vindicating the glory of Christ and the witness of the congregation in the community, and/or the protection of the congregation from being leavened that are foremost in importance.

Any teaching of church discipline that makes the sinner's feelings, or the sinner's person, or personal improvement of the sinner more important than vindicating the testimony of Christ and/or the congregation is just another form of religious humanism.

This sin is not restricted to fornication, but if any of the sins listed in 1 Corinthians 5:11 had the same public awareness, the very same immediate action should be taken.

*But now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortionist; **with such an one** no not to eat. - 1 Cor. 5:11*

3. The Consequences of this sin:

“To deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Although the book of Job is not about taking disciplinary action against Job, nevertheless, it provides an illustration what it means “to deliver...one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.” Job was delivered by God to Satan. Such action distinguishes the lost from the saved. All of God's children receive chastening and those who do not are not true children of God (Heb. 12:5-8). This person is being disciplined because they are acting like a lost person. Discipline turns them over to Satan to destroy the hold of the fleshly nature over their life and vindicates that they are a true child of God. The fruits of the flesh are listed in Galatians 5:19-21. Paul intends to include all such sins that are public and obvious to all in his list in 1 Cor. 5:11.

B. OTHER PURGATIVE PASSAGES

There are other passages in Scripture that refer to purging, removing, or separating members from the congregational body (Mt.18:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Rom. 16:17-18; Gal. 1:8-9; etc.). Personal and public offenses (moral, doctrinal) are all grounds for public purging from the body.

1. *2 Thessalonians 3:6-14*

Paul applies this same principle in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14. There were very few New Testament Scriptures written at this point in time. The early congregations for the most part, had only the oral teachings of the Apostles handed down to them. It is this apostolic “*tradition*” that Paul is speaking about in 2 Thessalonians 3:6:

*Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after **the tradition** which he received of us.—2 Thes. 3:6*

The Greek term translated “*tradition*” (*paradosis*) literally means “handed down” and can refer to bad traditions (Mt. 15) as well as good ones. Here it refers to apostolic teaching that had been orally handed down as well as apostolic writings:

*Therefore, brothers, stand fast, and hold **the traditions** which you have been taught, whether **by word, or our letter**.—2 Thes. 2:15*

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 the definite singular “*The tradition*” (abstract collective noun) refers to the whole body of apostolic instruction that has been handed down to the congregations whether “*by word, or...letter*.” For example, “*the tradition*” in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 is further defined in verse 14 where Paul says:

And if any man obey not our word by this letter, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.—2 Thes. 3:14

Note the singular “*word*.” Moreover, the literal Greek says “*the word of us*.” Here the whole “*letter*” which is inclusive of all of its various individual instructions is summarized as “*the word*” singular.¹⁹⁰

The particular application in the context of 2 Thessalonians 3 is the apostolic instruction about self-employment to obtain personal needs rather than freeloading off those who work.

There are three factors that need emphasizing concerning 2 Thessalonians 3:6:

- a. The Seriousness of the Command
- b. The Nature of the Offense
- c. The Nature of the Penalty

The Seriousness of the command: “*We command you, brothers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” First, this is not a suggestion but a command. Second, no command can be worded in any stronger or serious language than this. Third, the serious nature of the command cannot be limited to merely the immediate subjective problem or application. This refers to the whole abstract body of apostolic teaching. To violate it at any point is to violate the apostolic doctrine. The apostolic doctrine was designed to protect the congregations from apostates and apostasy. One purpose of congregational discipline is to remove schismatics and apostates from within the body so they cannot destroy the Lord’s congregations from the inside out (Acts 20:29-30). Nothing could be more serious or more important than to protect the spiritual health of the Lord’s congregations.

The Nature of the offense: “*every brother that walks disorderly*”—No specific brother is stated but he purposely uses the abstract all inclusive “*every brother*.” No specific sin is stated, but he purposely uses the abstract all

¹⁹⁰ Some scholars make the argument that either Paul is referring to the violation of one specific tradition, or it must refer to someone who has violated all the traditions but it cannot refer to violation of any particular tradition within “*the tradition*.” 2 Thessalonians 3:6 is describing the response of the congregation to the continual habitual violation of the apostolic doctrine as an abstract consideration (“*the tradition*” collective noun) regardless which specific and subjective tradition is the one being violated. “*The tradition*” is the body of apostolic doctrine or “*the faith*” or “*the truth*” or “*the doctrine of the apostles*.” These definite singulars are figurative uses called a metonymy, where the thing believed is called “*the faith*” or the thing recognized as right is called “*the truth*” or the thing taught is called “*the doctrine*” and where the thing handed down by the apostles is called “*the tradition*.”

inclusive “*that walks disorderly.*” No specific tradition is cited but he purposely uses the abstract all inclusive “*the tradition.*” The consistent abstract language is more evidence that this command is more general than just the specified point being violated.

The Greek term translated “*disorderly*” is a military term that describes a person who marches out of step with the rest of the platoon. It describes a person who marches to the beat of his own drummer. It is found in the present tense, demonstrating this is not an isolated action but a continuing or habitual action. In other words, this person, like the offender in Matthew 18:15-17 will not be corrected. Furthermore, this person is described as a “*brother*” even in his disciplined state (2 Thes. 2:15). Finally, this abstract description forbids restriction of this text to merely just one aspect of apostolic doctrine. Regardless of what particular aspect of apostolic doctrine is being habitually violated, this is how the congregation is to respond to such a person.

The Nature of the Penalty: “*withdraw yourselves*”. He is addressing the congregation and therefore this is a congregational action in keeping with Matthew 18:17-18. Paul was taught by Christ and therefore, Paul is not instituting a different type of church discipline. This action is further explained in verses 14-15:

*And if any man obey not our word by this letter, note that man, and **have no company with him**, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.—vv. 14-15*

In other words, this is the same kind of penalty prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18:17 “*Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*” The end design is not to deny his salvation but to treat him as a lost man so that he might be “*ashamed*” of his actions. The words “**no company**” and “**withdraw from him**” are synonyms that mean break all fellowship with him. These are the same words used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11 (“*not to company with... not to keep company*”).

Notice the prohibition “*Yet count him not as an enemy.*” Even an enemy we treat right and help if he asks for help or needs help:

Therefore if your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.—Rom. 12:20-2

When we happen to meet such a person in the market place or at work we don't mistreat him or act harshly toward them but we treat him as a Christian should treat others, with the exception we do not bring him into our personal fellowship. If that disciplined member attempts to enter into our personal fellowship we use that opportunity to "*admonish*" or place before his mind the reason we will not have personal fellowship with them ("*but admonish him as a brother*").

2. *Matthew 18:15-20*

15 Moreover if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to you as an heathen man and a publican.

18 Truly I say to you, Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say to you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the middle of them.

Matthew 18:15-20 ultimately has church discipline in view as the final step if personal offenses cannot be resolved in a personal private manner. For example, it is assumed that both parties are members of either the same congregation or same kind of congregation. Indeed, it assumes congregational membership is the norm for all disciples of Christ. If the parties were not members of at least the same kind of congregation it would do not good

to “*tell it the church*” as congregations do not resolve issues for those outside their membership or outside their own fellowship of congregations nor have they any authority to do so.

Second, the instruction to take two or three with the offended in verse 17 has in view the transition to a court setting where according to the judicial procedures set forth in the Old Testament it required “*two or three witnesses*” so that “*every word may be established*” before the court of appeals. The implication is that the congregation of Christ is the final court of appeals to settle such problems.

However, some scholars attempt to separate the last phrase of verse 17 (“*let him be unto you...*”) from verse 18 as a congregational action. Hence, they reduce the congregation to merely a counseling assembling without any authority to actually administer any disciplinary penalties. Some would argue that the offended is to remove the offender from his personal fellowship, while the church continues to fellowship with both equally. However, the more logical deduction is that the church is instructing the offended party to take this course of action because it is the course which the church has taken toward the offender for refusing to “hear” the verdict by the congregation, and thus congregation is not only taking sides with the offended but is practicing the same instruction toward the offender.

This corporate action by the congregation with the offended member is in keeping with the authority Christ has given the church in verse 18. Thus, Christ is standing with the church along with the offended member in their administration of discipline toward the offender.

Many scholars agree with this assessment, but then attempt to separate verses 19-20 from verses 15-18. However, verse 19 is grammatically connected with verse 18 by the word “*again*.” The proper use of the keys requires prayerful guidance which Christ promises even when the smallest congregation consisting of only two or three are gathered in prayer seeking his guidance (v. 19). Discerning which member is right and wrong in such an instance requires the Lord’s guidance. The proper assumption is that “*anything*” (v. 19) is not a blank check but has reference to the proper administration of the keys in verse 18 or “*anything*” in keeping with “*my name*” or as authorized by me (v. 20). This promise of Christ’s presence in the administration of the keys is confirmed in verse 20 regardless of how small the congregation may be that meets, prays and rightly administers the keys.

The very meaning of *ekklesia*, is that of an “assembly” or “congregation” denies that just one person constitutes an “assembly” or “congregation.” Therefore, the congregation is at minimum an assembly of at least “two or three” persons. The idea is that no matter how small the congregation may be that administers the keys, if they are administered under the prayerful leadership of Christ, He stands with the congregation, as that congregation stands united with the offended person in the exercise of church discipline. The contextual antecedent for the plural “you” in verse 18 is the “church” in verse 17. The plural pronoun “you” is normally used to modify the church as the term church is a collective noun (e.g. 1 Thes. 1:1-2, 2 Thes. 1:1-2; Philip. 1:1-2, etc.).

Some attempt to claim that the plural pronoun “you” has its antecedent with “the disciples” in Matthew 18:1 but the “disciples” gathered around Christ is the first congregation at Jerusalem (Acts 1:21-22).

Some attempt to claim “the disciples” in 18:1 is limited to the twelve apostles. However, realizing the apostolic office was temporary they attempt to redefine it as referring to the ordained officers. But more than the twelve assembled consistently with Christ during this time or else there would have been none qualified to fill the vacated office of Judas (Acts 1:21-22). Second, it is the congregation at Corinth that was addressed by Paul and who exercised church discipline against the offender in 1 Cor. 5. Indeed, Paul says it was the “many” (majority) that exercised this action (2 Cor. 2:6) rather than merely by elders.

Therefore, Matthew 18:15-20 is instruction to all the members of the church in how to deal with internal offenses. The church that prayerfully exercises the keys of the kingdom (in this case the key of discipline) has the promise of the presence of Christ when administering those keys.

3. *Romans 16:17-18*

Now I beseech you, brothers, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

There were false teachers who followed Paul from church to church which he called the “circumcision” or Judaizers who were trying to merge

the Old and New Covenants together. Moreover, there were such that arose from within the congregations as well (Acts 20:29-30).

The “*divisions*” or schisms had their source with “*good words and fair speeches*” that “*deceive*.” Hence, this is false doctrine “*contrary to the doctrine*” (Metonymy - “the apostolic doctrine, the faith, the tradition or the truth as a body or system of teaching handed down from Christ to the apostles to the congregations). These apostates are professing Christians who claim to “*serve...our Lord Jesus Christ*” but in reality, they are not being led or motivated by the Spirit of God but are being led and motivated by their own desires (“belly”).

They are to be “*marked*.” The term “*marked*” means to keep an eye on them and beware of them. That means the congregation is to be made aware of them and so they are to be “marked” in the sense of exposed and identified. Some congregations forbid their Pastors from identifying and exposing such false teachers before the congregation. That prohibitive policy is unbiblical and foolish. Our assemblies need to know who the enemies of truth are so they can know who it is they should avoid - “*avoid them*.”

They are to be avoided. That would mean if they are leaders of other congregations, then those congregations should not be attended. That means they should not be allowed to speak in your public assembly. That means, if they are members they are to be admonished and if they continue in this divisive behavior they are to be removed from the congregational membership.

IV. CORPORATE OFFENSES

Whole congregations can be guilty of moral or doctrinal offenses. Indeed, that is precisely how most false denominations originate (Acts 20:29-30).

In Revelation 2-3 there are problems within congregations that no individual member can correct but requires a majority to correct, and so overcoming is only possible in some instances by a majority acting together or by a minority separating and continuing the congregation in the truth. The gross errors found in such congregations at Corinth are no excuse for congregations today as Corinth did not have any Scriptures to guide them and when they obtained Scripture they turned from their errors. Today, congregations like Corinth should be admonished by other congregations

and should not be fellowshiped with until they do repent. Congregations that commit moral or doctrine offences must be dealt with as a congregation deals with an individual member. They should be lovingly admonished and if they do not respond to admonishment they must be removed from fellowship. Removing them from fellowship does not deny they are a true congregation of Christ, but only asserts they are in such error that they cannot be recognized as a congregation in good standing. Many true congregations of Christ may temporarily be led into errors. False congregations are those who are permanently characterized by errors that deny the essentials of the faith.

However, congregations should not be disfellowshipped due to minor points of difference (wine versus grape juice, women's place, head covering, holidays, etc.). Articles of faith received by the majority of sound NT congregations should be the objective basis for determining reasons for disfellowshipping another congregation.

V. THE BIBLICAL GOALS FOR DISCIPLINE

The Biblical goals for discipline are (1) The glory of God and the vindication of his honor and witness; (2) The removal of lost members, (3) the protection and witness of the congregation and (4) The ultimate good for the person receiving the discipline.

It is not one or the other, but all four goals must be kept in mind when administering discipline to members in the congregation.

Many reverse this order and thus, bring dishonor on the Lord, exposing the congregation to danger and/or destroying its public witness by placing the feelings, or good of the person being disciplined above God and the church. That reversal is religious humanism.

VI. THE AIM OF RESTORATION

Regardless of what type of discipline is being administered, the ultimate aim is to restore or recover that person from the snare of Satan. If they are a lost member, the aim should be their salvation. Nothing reveals our own spiritual condition more than how we deal with those who oppose us in doctrine or in practice.

When, and if, a person does repent, we ought to be eager to restore them to full membership with exceeding joy (2 Cor. 2:6-8). We should forgive them because that is not an option but a command. It is not based upon our feelings but upon obedience to the explicit teachings of the Bible. Forgiveness means, we are to take our M&M's and not play with T-n-T. We should no longer be dwelling on it in our MINDS or mention it with our MOUTH. What you refuse to THINK about and refuse to TALK about you eventually forget. God has removed their sins as far as the East is from the West and has cast it into deepest sea and "remembers it no more." So, should we? If we take our M&M's (Mind and Mouth commitments) and refuse to play with dynamite (Think and Talk about it) then we too can eventually forget it.

VII. DISCIPLINE AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

Church discipline in its fullest expression (instructive, corrective and purgative) joined with the practice of closed communion is the divine means to restrict the Great Commission reproductive cycle to a closed system of like faith and order.

Closed communion forces the congregation to examine both public and personal sins and correct them prior to observing communion. Church discipline is that process of correction and if necessary, removal of members unwilling to repent of exposed sins

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What are the three primary aspects of the broader meaning of "discipline" as taught in this lesson?
2. Define "instructive" discipline and what it involves and how it is accomplished.
3. Define "corrective" discipline and what it involves and how it is accomplished.
4. What is the meaning of "admonish" with regard to the Greek term it represents?
5. What kind of person is qualified to admonish or correct another person according to Galatians 6:1?

6. What kind of person should you call upon to take with you if a personal issue has not been settled privately?
7. How do you become the kind of person to admonish someone?
8. Define in practical terms what it means to “privately” admonish someone who has personally offended you?
9. Who is set in the congregation and authorized to perform public admonishment?
10. List the three specific goals for purgative discipline.
11. Give reasons why Matthew 18:17-20 refers to church discipline.
12. According to the language used in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 what is the nature of the offense?
13. What are the grounds for immediate purgative discipline without resorting to any kind of judicial process or personal admonishment?
14. Can congregations commit corporate offenses both moral and doctrinal, and if so how are they to be dealt with?
15. How can you eventually forget what you have forgiven?



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 15 LESSON 2

The Institution—Part 8— The Faith Once Delivered—Part 1

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to define “*the faith*” and (2) To identify the synonyms of “*the faith*” and, (3) to determine the Biblical standard of orthodoxy and (4) to define the contents of “*the faith*” and, (5) to understand the Great Commission in the context of “*the faith*.”

INTRODUCTION: No fallen human being or congregation on earth knows all truth. However, in order for a person to be saved and to be recognized as a saved person there are some essential truths they must know. Likewise, in order for a group of saved persons to be a New Testament congregation, and to be recognized as a such, there are some essential truths they must know and practice. These “essentials” are identified as “*the faith once delivered*.”

I. WHAT IS “THE FAITH”?

In any study or discussion, it is of utmost importance to first define the terminology being used. Productive communication depends on all parties in a discussion understanding, and defining the same terms, the same way.

One of the primary problems of religious confusion is that in Christendom, the same Biblical terms are used with radically different meanings.

The Bible uses the term “*faith*” in four basic ways:

A. Trust: The most common use of “*faith*” is the idea of commitment of *trust* or *belief* in something (idea, promise, and truth) and/or in someone.

For example, when faith is placed in a wrong or distorted gospel, it is called a “*vain*” faith (1 Cor. 15:10) or a vain trust.

When a profession of faith exists without any evidence or fruit of regenerative life (“*good works*” - Eph. 2:10) then it is called “*dead*” faith (James 2:14-17).

Therefore, faith in the true gospel, in connection with a true conversion experience to the gospel, would be recognized as *saving* faith.

B. Spiritual gift: Another basic use of “*faith*” in the New Testament refers to the fruit of “*faith*” accompanied by other fruit of the Spirit manifested in the Christian’s life. This “*faith*” may be in regard to a number of things (specific Bible promises, areas of manifest trust; our general walk “*by faith*”; etc.). Also, it may refer to a special measure of faith (Rom. 12:3) in regard to a spiritual gift.

C. Definite Kind: Another Biblical use of “*faith*” is when it is used with the definite article “*the*”, and thus, “*the faith*.” The definite article specifies that this faith is a specific kind or quality of faith. Obviously, when there is more than one kind of faith found in Scripture, it is the immediate context that define what specific faith is being addressed.

For example, in salvation contexts it refers to the true subjective state of salvation which was entered by faith. For instance, the Apostle tells the church at Corinth:

*Examine yourselves whether ye be in **the faith**, prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates. - 2 Cor. 13:5*

Notice that in this passage, to be “*in the faith*” is regarded by the apostle as equal to “*Jesus Christ in you*.” This type of usage is what grammarians call a metonymy, or where the object or consequence of faith (salvation in Christ) is regarded as “*faith*” itself.

A “metonymy” is “*a figure by which one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation*” (E.W. Bullinger, **Figures of Speech Used in the Bible**, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 538).

In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul is challenging them to examine themselves closely to make sure that they have entered into the state of salvation. Since faith is the *subjective* entrance point into this state of salvation, the state of salvation is represented by “*the faith*” required to subjectively enter salvation.

It is under this same use as a metonym with the definite article, “the faith” is also used to refer to the body of apostolic doctrine or “the faith once delivered.” Since the apostolic doctrine expresses what should be believed, it is called “*the faith*.” This use refers to the essentials of New Testament Christianity as a system or body of faith and practice.

However, the careful reader has already noticed that “*the faith*” has been used previously as a metonymy for the *subjective* entrance into the state of salvation. Therefore, the natural question that arises is, how can the reader of Scripture distinguish between the subjective salvation use and the objective body of faith use? The answer is they are distinguished by the immediate context in which they are found. **The former is found in contexts that deal with *personal subjective* salvation, while the latter is always found in the context of apostolic doctrine and practice.** However, in such doctrinal contexts, the doctrine of salvation in its broadest sense (election, regeneration, progressive sanctification, and glorification) may be the focus. In other contexts, there may be emphasis upon some specific doctrine in its relationship to the whole body of faith. However, the distinction between “the faith” as the state of salvation versus “the faith” as the apostolic body of doctrine is that the former is always subjective and personal while the latter is objective and abstract.

Jude 3 is an example where “*the faith*” refers to defending the doctrine of salvation in its broadest objective sense, as apostolic doctrine and practice that was “*once delivered*.” Another clear use after this manner is 1 Timothy 4:1:

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from **the faith** giving heed to seducing spirits and **doctrines** of devils. - 1 Tim. 4:1*

False professors have never entered into “*the faith*” as a subjective state of salvation, and so they can never depart from “*the faith*” subjectively (1 Jn. 2:19). However, they can depart from the objective doctrine of salvation. True Christians cannot depart from the objective state of salvation (Jn.

6:39) but can depart from “*the faith*” objectively as apostolic doctrine (Gal. 3:1) and can be led astray by false doctrine and depart from “*the faith*” as an objective system of doctrine and practice (Eph. 4:14-15). Notice in the passage above, that “*the faith*” is in contrast with “*doctrines*” of devils. Hence, this is a context of contrast between the apostolic system of doctrine with a false system of faith originating with demons. All false doctrine originates with the “*spirit of error*” (1 Jn. 4:6).

Another clear reference to “*the faith*” as a body of doctrine, and practice, once delivered by Christ through the apostles is Titus 1:9, 14, where it is required as a qualification for ordination to the pastoral office:

*Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by **sound doctrine** both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers..... This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply that they be **sound in the faith**. - Tit. 1:9, 14*

Notice the context is “*doctrine*” not the subjective state of salvation. In this passage “*the faith*” is the standard for determining orthodoxy, and doctrinal fitness for qualification to be ordained. These passages represent only a small portion of many others that will be used to demonstrate this particular use of “*the faith*.”

II. THE SYNONYMS OF “THE FAITH”

As stated before, “*the faith*” is a metonym for the doctrine and practice which is the object of faith. However, this metonym has several synonyms. A synonym is a word that basically means the same thing as another word, but is spelled differently, and may add some different nuances or shades of meaning that compliment it.

There are several synonyms found in the New Testament for “*the faith*.” A peculiarity of all these synonyms is that they are always found in the singular with the definite article “*the*” within context of doctrine.

The singular number with the definite article indicates that the writers spoke of a specific and united body or system of doctrine well known to the congregations in the New Testament.

Perhaps the specificity and popularity with this body of doctrine was due to the well-known fact that it was “*once delivered*” by Christ in the Great

Commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Jude 3) to the apostles, who were faithful in defending and delivering it to the congregations, as recorded in the book of Acts.

.... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever, I have commanded you.... - Mt. 28:20

*And they continued steadfastly in **the apostles doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers - Acts 2:42*

*Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in **the faith**, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. - Acts 14:22*

*And so were the congregations established in **the faith**, and increased in number daily. - Acts 16:5*

In all cases above, it was only disciples, those already saved, baptized members of New Testament congregations, that are being built up in “*the faith*.”

There are three synonyms for “*the faith*” that will be considered next:

1. The Tradition
2. The Doctrine
3. The Truth

A. The Tradition: Because “*the faith*” was **passed down** by the apostles to the congregations, first orally, then in writing, it became known as “*the tradition*.” The word “*tradition*” is the translation of the Greek term **paradosis** and simply means that which is “*passed down*.”

The term “*tradition*” is used two ways in the New Testament. It is used in a negative way when speaking of uninspired interpretations, and teachings of men that conflict with the Scriptures:

*But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your **tradition**?..... Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your **tradition**..... But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines **the commandments of men**. - Mt. 15:3, 6, 9*

On the other hand, it is used to describe both the oral and written teachings of the Apostles. Writing to the Thessalonians Paul said:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.
- 1 Thes. 2:13

When Paul distinguished between the oral and the written, or when he spoke of specific teachings, as opposed to others, he uses the plural “*the traditions*.”

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.
- 2 Thes. 2:15

Now I praise you, brothers, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, [Gr. pardoseis] as I delivered them to you. - 1 Cor. 11:2

However, when speaking about them as one united expression of apostolic doctrine and practice, he used the singular “*the tradition*.”

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 2 Thes. 3:6

The Faith was passed down from Christ to the Apostles and from the apostles to the congregations. It provided the standard of orthodoxy to unite the congregations in doctrine and practice. Any “*brother*” who willfully and consistently violated this standard of orthodoxy was to be withdrawn from by the congregations.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Paul uses the present tense (“walketh”) showing a continuing action, not merely a one-time occurrence, but a persistent behavior or characteristic practice. Furthermore, the word “disorderly” presents a picture in the Greek language of a person consistently marching out of step with the rest. In other words, he marches to the beat of his own drummer. He stands in opposition to the rest of the congregation, and the congregations of Christ in this matter. This does not refer to minor differences of interpretation that exist between congregations of like faith and order, or between

The internal purity, stability and reproductive process within the limits of like faith and order of the congregations depended upon reprimanding and, if necessary, withdrawing from “*every brother*” who stubbornly persisted in false doctrine, and/or practices contrary to “*the tradition*” received from the apostles.

B. The Doctrine: The term **doctrine** simply means “*teaching*” and coincides perfectly with the command found in the Great Commission -- “*teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you*” (Mt. 28:20).

As mentioned previously, many believe Jude specifically referred to Matthew 18:18–20 as the delivery point when the faith “*was once delivered.*” The total teachings of the Lord¹⁹² are referred to as “*the doctrine*” or “*the doctrine of Christ*” (Heb. 6:1) but the elementary teachings of Christ are called “*the principles.*”

*Therefore leaving **the principles of the doctrine of Christ,**
let us go on unto perfection....* - Heb. 6:1

It has already been seen that the total teachings of Christ handed down to the apostles in the Great Commission is called “*the apostles’ doctrine*” (Acts 2:42).

As the rule of orthodoxy “*the doctrine*” defines sound faith and practice. “*The faith*” could be used by the congregations to test anyone who came into their midst claiming to be a teacher from God. The congregations were commanded to mark and avoid anyone who came into their midst teaching things contrary to “*the doctrine*” or body of faith they had learned from the apostles:

*Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause
divisions and offences contrary to **the doctrine** which ye have
learned; and avoid them.* - Rom. 16:17

C. The Truth: Because the apostolic doctrine provided the basis for what was to be considered “*truth*” as opposed to error, it was often referred to as “*the truth.*” In the following text the Greek text has the definite article (“*the*”) before the word “*truth.*”

members in a congregation, unless that difference, no matter how small, is made an issue that causes division. At that point it is not the difference of interpretation, but the divisive attitude which is the problem.

¹⁹² *It is one thing to come short in obedience to “all things” Christ commanded, but quite another thing to intentionally depart from, reject, repudiate doctrines that Christ taught.*

*We are of God: he that knoweth God **heareth us**; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we **the spirit of truth**, and the spirit of error. - 1 Jn. 4:6*

John had identified “us” in 1 John 1:1-3 as those who heard, saw and touched the Lord Jesus Christ - the apostles. Twenty-three out of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were written by apostles. The remaining four were written by New Testament prophets, and so, the church’s foundation of truth consisted of the inspired writings of “*the apostles and prophets*” (Eph. 2:20). Notice that the context is a contrast to “*error*.”

Paul writing Titus in regard to the qualifications, and responsibilities of the office of bishop or pastor (see Acts 20:13, 28) said:

*.... Wherefore, rebuke them sharply, that they be sound in **the faith**; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from **the truth**. - Tit. 1:13, 14*

Doctrinal soundness is the subject. Both phrases “*the faith*” and “*the truth*” are synonyms in regard to sound doctrine.

Writing to Timothy, Paul describes those who come door to door attempting to deceive and destroy the faith once delivered:

*Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of **the truth**. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist **the truth**: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning **the faith**. - 2 Tim. 3:7-8*

Paul is warning Timothy against those who teach an opposing system of faith/doctrine and uses “*the truth*” as a synonym for “*the faith*.” In direct contrast to these false teachers, whom Paul describes as ever learning, but never able to accept the apostolic body of truth, he says:

*But thou hast fully known **my doctrine**, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, - 2 Tim. 1:10*

Again, after warning Timothy:

*For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from **the truth**, - 2 Tim. 4:3,4*

He concludes this epistle by claiming “*I have kept **the faith***” (2 Tim. 4:7b). In regard to “*the faith*” as a subjective state of salvation, he claimed that was something which he committed unto Christ to keep (2 Tim. 1:12). However, “*the faith*” as a system of doctrine was committed unto him by Christ to observe, guard, keep, and earnestly contend for - and this he did faithfully.

Paul uses “*sound doctrine*”, and “*the truth*”, and “*the faith*”, as synonyms for the apostolic system of doctrine and practice delivered to the saints.

It was the responsibility of the ordained officers (Bishops and deacons) of the congregations to teach and defend “*the faith*” which was once delivered. Hence, one qualification is that they must be “*sound in the faith.*” Using this same standard to qualify who could be ordained (Tit. 1:9-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-13), and who could retain membership (2 Thes. 3:6) in the congregations, they eliminated heresy, preserved unity, and sustained the church as the pillar and ground of “*the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15).

Shortly after describing the church under such sound leadership, Paul warns:

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from **the faith**, giving heed to seducing spirits, and **doctrines of devils**; - 1 Tim. 4:1*

Again, the subject is “*doctrine*” in a context of warning that some shall depart from the apostolic system of “*the truth*”, or body of faith and practice. They will be led away by “*doctrines of demons.*”

Conclusion: In studying these synonyms for “*the faith*” we have discovered that the faith was *passed down* to all congregations, and thus it was identified as “*the tradition.*” It was considered to be the teaching that Christ delivered once for all, and as such, was identified as “*the doctrine*” of Christ. As the standard of orthodoxy, it was “*the truth*” in order to identify and protect the congregations from those who embraced the “*spirit of error*” and “*doctrines of demons.*” In many of the passages cited, two or more of these synonyms are found together in contexts that deal with defending apostolic doctrine from those who err.

Some other possible synonyms for “*the faith*” may be “*the whole counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27) and “*the way*” (Acts 24:14). Paul did not have sufficient time in merely three years to teach all the Scriptures to the church at Ephesus. So, the “*whole counsel of God*” consists of those essentials called “*the faith.*”

If the exact contents of “*the faith*” could be identified, it would provide the same standard for orthodoxy today to discern truth from error, and define what is, and what is not a true New Testament congregation.

III. THE STANDARD OF ORTHODOXY

There is a general consensus of opinion among theologians, that there is a standard of orthodoxy that can distinguish between non-orthodox and orthodox Christianity.

A. Dr. Walter Martin, a well-known authority on defining the distinction between what is a cult and what is orthodox says,

*A cult, then, is a group of people polarized around someone’s interpretation of the Bible, and is characterized by major deviations from **orthodox** Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.*—Josh McDowell, Don Stewart Handbook of Today’s Religions (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Pub. 1992) p. 17

B. Dr. Josh McDowell, an international authority on cults versus orthodox Christianity says:

*A cult is a perversion, a distortion of Biblical Christianity, and/or a rejection of **historic teachings** of the Christian Church.*—Josh McDowell, Don Stewart Handbook of Today’s Religion (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub. 1992) p. 17

C. Dr. James Sire, an authority on cults said,

Any religious movement that is organizationally distinct, and has doctrines, and/or practices that contradict those of the Scripture, as interpreted by traditional Christianity, as represented by the major Catholic and Protestant denominations, and as expressed in such statements, as the Apostles Creed.

All agree that deviant or cultic Christianity is a departure from Biblical Christianity, or what they refer to as “orthodox” Christianity. However, there is a problem in defining what exactly is the meaning of “orthodoxy.”

James A. Silba presents this problem very well when he says:

*The first problem with the definition of a cult, as an unorthodox religious group is that it leaves unsolved the question of **Christian orthodoxy**. Sire's definition seems to include all traditional Christianity (Catholic and Protestant) under the standard of orthodoxy, thereby, by passing the many debates that have split the Christian Church through the ages. The narrower standard proposed by Martin is that of evangelical Christianity, a criteria that excludes several well established Christian congregations, and sects, which are judged to be unorthodox, and hence, liable to be called cults.... Many... have at times referred to the Catholic Church as a cult.*

Silba points out correctly that none of the experts can agree about the definition of orthodoxy. Nobody wants to define orthodoxy so that it excludes them. However, if you make it so large to include everyone; it is then made moot, and worthless.

Does the Bible provide its own guidelines to determine the essentials of orthodoxy?

IV. THE CONTENTS OF “THE FAITH”

Dr. John MacArthur, a well-known international Bible teacher, when considering this very issue in his book **Reckless Faith** under the chapter entitled “*What Are the Fundamentals of Christianity*” said:

Does the Bible itself identify specific doctrines as fundamental? Indeed it does. - John F. MacArthur, **Reckless Faith**. (Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill: 1994), p. 108

The Biblical canon had not yet been completed when Jude wrote his epistle or said “*the faith that was once delivered*” (Jude 3). The faith had been delivered previous to Jude writing his epistle, as he spoke of its delivery in the past tense, but the Scriptures had not yet been completed, as his own epistle was part of that ongoing process. Neither had the book of Revelation been written when Jude said this. Therefore, “*the faith*” and the Scriptures are not one and the same. The Scriptures contain “*the faith*” but they contain much more than the essentials of orthodoxy¹⁹³.

¹⁹³ *The Bible contains many geographical, biographical and cultural details. It also contains things that are relatively non-essential in comparison to other issues. Even Jesus made a distinction between the weightier issues over other issues in Scripture (Mt. 23:23).*

Instead of giving our opinion, as to what doctrines should be regarded as essential to define orthodoxy, the reader will be provided three Biblical principles that can be used to establish the standard of orthodoxy. In addition to these three Biblical based principles, the principles found inherently in the Great Commission will be provided to further define what is the standard of orthodoxy.

We believe there are three basic Biblical principles that reveal the contents of “*the faith*” once delivered to the saints. These three principles are self-evident, and are as follows:

Principle #1: *Every doctrine and practice that the Bible clearly states, or necessarily infers to be non-negotiable, must be regarded as essential to the definition of orthodoxy.*

Such doctrines are identified in Scriptures by the use of the term “must” that demand it is essential. Also, such doctrines are identified by restrictive terms such as “one” denying any other alternatives. For example:

1. *Limited numerically: “one” God, Spirit, baptism, faith, way to heaven, Savior, gospel, etc. - Eph. 4:4-6; Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5; etc.*
2. *No alternatives - “if any man preach any other gospel...let him be accursed” - Gal. 1:8-9 “except a man be born again he cannot....” (Jn. 3:3) etc. “repent or perish” - Lk. 13:3*
3. *Limiting definitions or absolute contrasts - “if it be of grace then it is no more of works, otherwise, grace is no more grace...” - Rom. 11:6*

These also include doctrines that the Bible infers to be essential without explicitly stating they are necessary (e.g. incarnation, virgin birth, etc.).

Principle #2: *Every doctrine, and practice that is essential to distinguish New Testament Christianity from other world religions and/or predicted false doctrines that characterize predicted apostate Christian religions.*

Some examples of this principle that separate Biblical Christianity from other world religions are:

1. *The God of the Bible*
2. *The Person and work of Jesus Christ*

3. *The Incarnation and resurrection of Jesus*
4. *The Bible as final authority for Christians*
5. *The way of salvation by grace without works*

Some examples of predicted false doctrines that characterize predicted apostate Christian cults are:

1. *1 Tim. 4:1-5*—Prohibiting marriage and eating certain meats, etc.
2. *Jn. 16:1-5*—Persecuting and Killing others in the name of God
3. *2 Thes. 3:9-11*—Last day false apostolic like miracle workers

These distinctions are essential or there could be no way of telling any difference between Christianity and other world religions, or discerning between New Testament Christianity and predicted apostate Christianity.

Principle #3: *All doctrines and practices that are essential to preserve New Testament Christianity.*

The Scriptures clearly teach that New Testament Christianity, as established by Christ and the apostles, will be preserved until Jesus returns (Mt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:26; Jude 3; etc.).

For example, the basis for truth must be preserved or truth cannot be discerned. The doctrines of inspiration and preservation of the Scriptures (Isa. 8:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) are essential to have an objective basis for discerning truth from error. If the Scriptures are not preserved for future generations, and/or not trustworthy, then there is no basis to determine truth from error.

For example, the essentials for making disciples must also be preserved for conveying the truth from one generation to the next. The Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) provides this process “*till the end of the world.*” Another example of what is essential to preserve New Testament Christianity is the congregation as “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” Nothing is more characteristic of New Testament Christianity than those congregations of Christ found throughout the scriptures. There can be no such thing as a “New Testament congregation” if the Scriptures do not clearly spell out what are the New Testament essentials that define it (officers, ordinances, government, doctrine, etc.)? If not, then we have no idea what is and what is not, a true scriptural congregation.

The next lesson we will look at the mechanism or process Jesus has provided to preserve “*the faith*” until He returns.

V. THE PATENT OF “THE FAITH”

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power [Gr. exousia = authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go teach [Gr. mathetos = make disciples] of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even until the end of the world. Amen - Mt. 28:18-20

I am sure you are familiar with a patent. A patent is the legal protection that prevents unauthorized reproduction of someone’s materials, design, or invention. A copyright may allow for authorized reproduction under certain limited and stated terms or conditions.

The process in Matthew 28:19-20 that is being protected by a patent is how New Testament Churches of like faith and order are reproduced after their own kind as it is the church that is “the pillar and ground of the truth. The patent or legal protective restriction found in the text is the words “whatsoever I have commanded.” In the process for making disciples the final aspect is gathering them into a teaching/observing assembly of like faith and order with Christ. Christ does not authorize anyone to produce someone called a “disciple” that goes with “another gospel” than what he commissioned or administer another kind of baptism or be gathered into another kind of teaching/observing assembly than the kind He instituted. His authority limits making disciples to this process of like faith and order. This is the divine means for preserving the faith “once delivered” until the end of the age.

A. Limited by Definition: What is this patent protecting? It is protecting the disciple making process. The word “*teach*” in verse 19 represents a completely different Greek term than the word “*teaching*” in verse 20. In verse 19 the word “*teach*” represents a Greek term that means “make disciples.”

A “*disciple*” by definition is one who “follows” a master. He is one who copies the faith and practice of his master. In contrast, one who innovates or departs from his master’s faith and practice is not a “disciple” but an apostate. But a “disciple” is a reproduction or replication of his master in doctrine and practice.

B. Limited by Like faith and order: This commission limits this process within the boundaries of “*whatsoever I have commanded.*” The Lord never authorized or commanded anyone to go preach “*another gospel,*” or administer another baptism or teach another faith and practice than what He observed and practiced Himself. Such a person would not be His disciple or a follower of Him.

This is authority to go preach the **same** gospel that Jesus preached (Jn. 3:16, 36). This is authority to administer the **same** baptism Jesus administered (Jn. 4:1-2; Lk. 7:29-30). This is authority to teach the **same** faith and practice Jesus taught and observed. Why would Jesus authorize anyone to depart from His own doctrine and practices and yet call them “my disciples”? However, there are many today that do just that and call themselves “disciples” of Christ.

Those who preach “*another gospel*” are “*accursed*” (Gal. 1:8-9) and have violated this patent. Those who administer another baptism have rejected the counsel of God against themselves (Lk. 7:29-30) and have violated this patent. Those who teach another faith and practice have departed from “*the faith once delivered*” (Jd. 3; 1 Tim. 4:1) and have violated this patent. Those who innovate, change, and/or depart from this order, have disobeyed what Christ “*commanded*” and thus violated this patent that prohibits teaching things contrary to what he has commanded.

C. Limited Authority: The Greek term translated “*power*” in verse 18 is elsewhere translated “*authority*” in the King James Version (e.g. Matt. 7:29). It refers to the “*power*” of authority.

Only Christ claims to have all “*power*” or authority in heaven and earth. That authority resides with Him alone. However, he is delegating authority for administrating a certain process that produces a definitive result. Delegated authority is limited and answerable to the one giving it. For instance, governments are authorized by God to carry out a specified function within the limits of the boundaries of righteousness (Rom. 13:1-5). That is why they are called “*ministers of righteousness*” as they are authorized within the boundaries of righteousness.

For instance, the wife is to be subject to the husband in all things qualified by the phrase “*in the Lord*” or what is in keeping with God’s Word (Col. 2:16). Children are to be subject in all things to the authority of their parents within the boundaries of righteousness or “*in the Lord*” (Eph. 6:1-3).

Likewise, the Lord is delegating authority to make disciples within specified boundaries of “*whatsoever I have commanded.*” That is a patent restriction.

D. Limited Process: The Lord does not give authority to make disciples any way you please. Although the English translation is quite clear about this, the Greek grammar is even more explicit.

There is one main verb translated “teach” in verse 19 which literally means “make disciples.” That main verb is then followed by three adverbial participles (“*go... baptizing... teaching*”) that limit and define how disciples are to be made.

These three participles provide the copyrighted process in making disciples. Disciples produced by any other process are at minimum defective disciples. If they are discipled by another gospel, then they are counterfeit disciples.

Let’s examine these participles a little bit closer. The first participle translated “*go*” is found in the Aorist tense, while the next two are found in the present tense. What does this mean in regard to the stated process?

First, the Aorist tense demonstrates that “going” is regarded as a completed action prior to the action of the main verb. In the parallel Gospel of Mark, the command to “*go*” is further explained as “*go preach the gospel*” (Mk. 16:15).

Second, this Aorist tense action means that evangelization or conversion to the gospel is regarded as a completed action prior to the act of baptism, and indoctrination by teaching. A person must be completely evangelized before they can be a fit candidate for baptism or indoctrination. Hence, a person can be evangelized without being baptized or taught. Examples of this are the thief on the cross and Paul’s words to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:17) that prove salvation and baptism are not interchangeable terms.

Third, the order of participles is a logical process. People must first be saved or evangelized, then baptized, and then added to the teaching assembly.

This is precisely the process carried out by the church in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost:

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 2:41-42

Note the precise order of this patented process:

1. *"received the word" - evangelization*
2. *"were baptized" - baptism*
3. *"were added unto them" - added to a teaching assembly*

Notice that the third process (added to a teaching assembly) is for indoctrination and observing of all things as members of a New Testament congregation. Baptized believers were added to the church at Jerusalem for the purpose to be taught how to observe all things commanded:

.... 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 2:41b-42

New Testament disciples are saved persons who have submitted to baptism and have been added to a teaching congregation in order to observe all things commanded. It is impossible to observe the commands of Christ in Matthew 18:15-18; 26:22-30; outside the membership of the New Testament congregation.

Fourth, this means one can be evangelized or "saved", and yet not be a "disciple" of Christ according to this patented process. There are many "saved" but unbaptized and unchurched professors in the kingdom of God. The thief on the cross was a saved, but unbaptized and unchurched believer. Those who attempt to make disciples or be disciples outside this three-fold copyrighted process are defective disciples - simply because they are not really following Jesus Christ, and the term "disciple" means "one who follows."

E. Limited by Qualifications: Not only is there a qualified process to become a disciple of Christ, but not just anyone is authorized to make disciples for Christ.

This commission contains three classifications of people:

1. *"Ye...you"*
2. *"all nations"*
3. *"them"*

However, only one classification is given authority to “make disciples.” It is the classification identified by Christ as “*ye...you.*”

The second classification “*all nations*” refers to the lost multitudes populating the known world. No such authority is given them to administer any of these things.

The third classification “*them*” are those who have been evangelized by going to them with the gospel, but they are in need of baptism and assembling to be taught. They are the recipients of the commission rather than the authorized administrators of the commission.

The first classification “*ye...you*” are those who are authorized to administer this commission to “*them*” because they “*have*” already been through the process and are “disciples” (Mt. 28:16 “disciples”).

What does this mean? It means that Christ never authorized the unevangelized, unbaptized or non-church member to “make disciples.” It means that Christ never sent the blind to lead the blind. It means one must first be made a disciple by this threefold process before they can make disciples. It means the unconverted cannot convert, nor the unbaptized baptize, or the untaught teach.

Furthermore, it means that Christ has established a horizontal authorized administrator identified as “*ye...you*” which is qualified because they “**have**” been first disciplined through this same process. That means there is no direct authorization given by Christ to “*all nations*” or to “*them*” to administer this commission.

This means the unbaptized and unchurched believer must seek out the authorized administrator for baptism and church membership or they violate this patented designated authority.

Finally, notice this is a plural rather than a singular “*ye... you.*” This authority had previously been given to the Lord’s congregation in Matthew 18:17-18 - “*tell it to the church.*” The church administers the commission through its ordained officers. The apostles were “set in the church” first (1 Cor. 12:28).

Conclusion: This is precisely why the congregation of Christ is called “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” It is this patented process that preserves “*the faith.*” Those brethren who depart from “*the faith,*” (Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1) and start a different disciple making process are to be withdrawn from by New Testament congregations, and disciples (2 Thes. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:11-

13; Rom. 16:17; etc.). They simply have no authority from Christ to violate His commission.

Therefore, the content of *“the faith”* is defined by the three previously stated principles along with these Great Commission principles.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What are four basic uses of “faith” in Scripture?
2. What is a “metonymy”?
3. How can one distinguish between “the faith” when used of the state of salvation versus “the faith” used of the Christian body of doctrine?
4. Name three synonyms for “the faith”?
5. How do most Protestants define the standard of orthodoxy?
6. What does the Bible provide as the standard of orthodoxy?
7. What are the three principles for defining the essentials of “the faith”?
8. What are the five limitations of the Great Commission?



PAGETURNER
PRESS & MEDIA

WEEK 15 LESSON 3

The Institution—Part 9— The Faith Once Delivered—Part 2

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to identify the “logo” of the faith and (2) to understand the significance that Scriptures attach to “*the faith*” and, (3) to understand our responsibility to “*the faith*” and, (4) to understand the New Testament congregations’ responsibility to “*the faith*” and, (5) to understand “*the faith*” with regard to the prophetic last days;

INTRODUCTION: If one removed the New Testament congregation with its officers and ordinances from the pages of the New Testament there would be very little New Testament Scriptures left. New Testament Christianity as presented in the New Testament would cease to exist if the New Testament congregation with its officers and ordinances were removed. That does not mean saved people would cease to exist, but the external form and administration of New Testament Christianity would cease to exist. Therefore, it should be easy to see why the New Testament congregation with its officers and ordinances is an essential part of “*the faith*.”

I. THE LOGO OF “THE FAITH”

In the previous lesson the Great Commission was likened to a patent or copyright as it prescribed a certain process to make disciples. Just as you are familiar with a patent or copyright, most are also familiar with a logo. A logo is a public symbol that represents the owner of a product.

Baptism is the logo of “*the faith*.” Baptism publicly identifies the candidate with those who are entrusted or authorized to make disciples and teach “*the faith*” in the Great Commission. Therefore, it identifies you publicly with the doctrine and practice of your administrator.

For example, if you choose to publicly submit to a Roman Catholic priest for baptism, what would that tell those who observe that baptism? They would interpret that baptism as public identification with the Roman Catholic system of faith and practice or why else choose a Catholic priest to administer your baptism? Your baptism advertises and identifies you with a system of faith just like a logo identifies with a producer.

Can you see how important whom it is that you choose to publicly identify with in baptism? Your identification with an administrator of baptism is your public identification with, and approval of their doctrine and practice. Indeed, most will not baptize you unless they believe you are committing yourself to their faith and practice.

The Great Commission is authority to make disciples by a certain defined threefold process. Only those authorized to make disciples are authorized to administer baptism. Jesus restricts baptism in the Great Commission to administrators who are like faith and order with Himself. Only those who preach the same gospel and teach the same faith and order are authorized to administer baptism. He does not want His disciples to publicly endorse or identify with any system of faith other than that which was "*once delivered to the saints.*" Think about it? Is this not the best way to preserve the true purpose and proper practice of baptism by restricting its administration to those who are like faith and order with Christ?

Therefore, in the Great Commission, baptism is the public visible logo that is designed by Christ to identify a person with his system of faith and order. This is why Landmark Baptists will not accept baptism by other denominations because they are not like faith and order.

However, there is more! Baptism is the logo of "*the faith*" because in the Scriptures baptism is identified with all the essential doctrines of Christ. It is directly identified with the following doctrines:

1. The Triune God - Mt. 28:19
2. The Gospel - Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:3-4
3. Faith and repentance prior to baptism - Mt. 3:6-8; Acts 19:5
4. Regeneration - Col. 2:11-13 with Rom.5:11
5. Progressive Sanctification - Rom. 6:5
6. The congregation of Christ - Acts 2:41-42
7. Resurrection of the body - 1 Cor. 15:12-17, 28

But that is not all! Baptism is also a protector of “*the faith*” in the very way it is administered. The Scriptures require four prerequisites for an act to be regarded as scriptural baptism or else one just gets wet and still is without scriptural baptism.

1. **The right candidate** - repentant believer - Mt. 3:8; Acts 19:5
2. **The right design** - symbolic and public identification - 1 Pt. 3:21
3. **The right mode** - immersion only - “buried” - Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:12
4. **The right authority** - church of like faith and order - Acts 2:41

These four scriptural essentials of baptism further define “*the faith*” once delivered. The baptismal prerequisite of a **right candidate** (a repentant believer) denies infant baptism. It demands a regenerated person as the proper material not only for baptism, but for church membership. Hence, it defines the essential characteristic of the nature of proper members for New Testament congregations - baptized believers.

The **right design** for baptism denies that regeneration is obtained *literally* in baptism or in church membership, but like a logo it is an outward symbol or sign of the previous internal conversion to the gospel by faith (1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 4:11). It demands that regeneration is in connection with internal gospel conversion rather than post conversion external forms and thus denies sacramentalism.

The **right mode** of baptism defines the true nature of the gospel (Rom. 4:4-5). The gospel is about what Christ did for sinners through his death, burial and resurrection rather than what sinners do for Christ (1 Cor. 15:3- 4; 2 Cor. 5:21). The mode conveys a burial with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12) in hope of your own resurrection to come.

Its restriction in the Great Commission to administrators of like faith and order (**right authority**) make it a fitting logo of “*the faith*.” In proper baptism, the candidate identifies with these Biblical doctrines that characterize “the faith” while improper baptism does not. It is that identification with these doctrines that makes baptism the perfect logo of “*the faith*.”

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE ATTACHED TO “THE FAITH” BY SCRIPTURES

The importance of “*the faith*” must be determined by the Scriptures alone. We can see the importance that Scriptures attach to it by the following:

1. There can be no qualified persons to be ordained to the ministry apart from those “*sound in the faith*” - Titus 1:9-13
2. There can be no true New Testament congregation apart from “*the faith*” 1 Tim. 3:15-4:1
3. There can be no qualified church membership apart from “*the faith*” - 2 Thes. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:11-13¹⁹⁴
4. There can be no true unity apart from the unity in “*the faith*” - Rom. 16:17; Eph. 4:3-6, 13-14
5. There can be no true obedience to the Great Commission apart from “*the faith*” - Mt. 28:19-20.

This does not mean that Christians are only found within “*the faith*.” Christians can and do exist outside “*the faith*” within distorted and apostate systems of faith and practice:

*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people,** that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. - Rev. 18:4*

Indeed, the practice of purgative congregational discipline removes a “*brother*” from the administrative agency of “*the faith*” (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thes. 3:6) placing them outside the congregation of Christ.

It is true that no redeemed person or congregation knows all truth. However, just as a person must know at least the essential truths of the gospel to be recognized as a true Christian, so also, a group of Christians must know at least the essential truths of salvation and service (“*the faith*”) which includes the true nature of the congregation, its ordinances, officers and government in order to be recognized as a true congregation of Christ. So being a true New Testament Church does not require knowledge of all truth nor does it mean a church is without error. It means the essentials of beliefs and practice are found within that congregation.

¹⁹⁴ This does not mean anyone must first confess they believe all essentials prior to being received into membership but once a member they cannot openly and continually oppose “*the faith*” and retain membership.

III. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO “THE FAITH”

Your responsibility to the faith depends upon your present relationship to it. You need to critically analyze what system of faith you are identified now and determine if it is, or is not the Biblical system of faith. The Bible commands us:

*Prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good - 1
Thes. 5:21*

Take the principles provided in the previous chapters and apply them to the system of faith with which you identify now. If your present system of faith does not identify with all of these essential principles, then you are within one of the predicted apostate denominations or congregations. If you find yourself outside “*the faith*” but inside polluted forms of Christianity, then the Lord’s admonition to you is:

*... come out of her my people, and be not a partaker with
her sins... - Rev. 18:4*

On the other hand, if you are a member of a New Testament congregation, then your responsibility is clearly stated in Scriptures:

*Watch ye, stand fast **in the faith**, quit you like men, be
strong - 1 Cor. 16:13*

This admonition is more necessary as the Lord’s return approaches because apostasy from the faith will increase more and more. If you are not prepared for this time of great apostasy, it will be very discouraging as you see your congregation decrease in number while apostate Christendom expands in numbers.

What is your responsibility toward those who have been taught, and corrected, but will not listen to the truth, but are departing from the faith?

1. “... wherefore **rebuke them sharply** that they may be sound in ***the faith***” - Tit. 1:13
2. “Now I beseech you brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to ***the doctrine*** which ye have learned and **avoid them.**” - Rom. 16:17

3. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **withdraw from every brother** that walketh disorderly, and not after **the tradition** which he received of us.” - 2 Thes. 3:6
4. “...it as needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.” - Jude 3

These responses are not merely necessary for the spiritual health of yourself, but also for that of your family, and your church. It is faithfulness to these responsibilities that enabled Paul to persevere in “*the faith*” so he could say at the end of his life:

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have **kept the faith**:* - 2 Tim. 4:7

It is the clear command of Scriptures that those who stand for “*the faith*” are not to support false systems of faith in any way, shape or form, whether it is by their presence in their meetings, or participation in their financial support. The Scriptural command has always been to “*avoid*” them and “*come out from among them*” when it comes to ecclesiastical matters and fellowship.¹⁹⁵ That does not mean we cannot support secular legislation with those who support other Biblical principles. That does not mean we are to treat them harshly. It simply means we are to be **ecclesiastically** separated from them so that we do not even appear to support their doctrine or practice. Those who involve themselves in ecclesiastical fellowship with apostate congregations are viewed in Scriptures as partakers of their errors:

....*be not a partaker of their sins...* - Rev. 18:4

For he that biddeth him God's speed is a partaker of his evil deeds. - 2 Jn. 11

¹⁹⁵ *Neo-evangelicalism was introduced in the 1940's which opposes this Biblical rule of separation from apostates. Billy Graham the most influential leader of neo-orthodoxy practices the very reverse of the Biblical command to “be ye separate” but rather his method is to infiltrate them in order to convert them. Thus, he invites Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Roman Catholic priests, etc., upon his stage and includes them in his crusades and then sends his converts back to their own apostate denominations to infiltrate and do the same thing. However, neo-evangelicalism has succumbed to the Biblical consequences for failure to separate and come out from such and that is “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”*

Your responsibility is to find, join, and support the kind of church (1) that embraces every doctrine the Scriptures plainly states is essential; (2) that is a product of the Great Commission process, and characterized by the Great Commission principles; (3) that is characterized by the principles of scriptural baptism; (4) that practices ecclesiastical separation from false systems of faith and practice.

Once having done that, then the Biblical admonition for you is:

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, **be ye steadfast, unmovable,** always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. - 1 Cor. 15:58*

IV. THE CONGREGATION AND THE FAITH

The origin of denominationalism and apostate Christianity is predicted by Paul to the elders of the congregation at Ephesus in Acts 20:28-30:

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Congregations are perverted and led astray by those who enter the membership and corrupt them from the inside (v. 29). The congregation at Rome is an example of this type of corruption and Roman Catholicism is the result.

New denominations are formed by apostate leadership within a congregation that gains a following and then leads them out of that congregation to form a new kind of congregation (v. 30) which reproduces after its own kind—thus a new denomination.

In order to prevent and protect themselves from these two types of apostasy, many congregations have adopted a confession of faith comprised of what they regard as essentials of “the faith.” Then, they adopt

by-laws that require several weeks advance notice to the full membership before any changes to that confession can be made, and then only by a two-third majority in a duly called business meeting.

After adopting such a confession, they use that confession to qualify anyone they ordain to the ministry and deaconship or invite into their pulpits or select as teachers. They use it as a catechism for instruction of new members and publish it and provide every member a copy. This unites the congregation around essential doctrines and acts as a preventive for any leader or teacher to have the opportunity to publicly oppose anything listed in that confession. This provides any member or group of members the means to address any other member, including any elder who may attempt to openly oppose any of these essentials. Thus, defining the essentials of “*the faith*” in this manner provides a safe guard to make it much more difficult to corrupt a congregation or use it as a base for discipling members into another faith and order.

What are not listed in such a confession are those things that congregations of like faith and order may disagree over (e.g. wine versus grape juice, holidays, etc.) but are not regarded as essential for fellowship. Once an elder is qualified by such essentials and ordained or accepted as the Pastor, then by his very selection to that office he is authorized by the congregation to present his own interpretation of things that do not contradict those listed essentials.

However, a rule to remember when dealing with potential heretics within and without the congregational membership is that false doctrine usually begins with baby steps. Satan’s attack on truth is generally never outright denial, but subtler as in simply questioning a truth and then offering another interpretation based strictly upon *eisegesis* (half-truths that disregard the immediate and overall historical and grammatical context). Remember, the pastor is generally the focus of attack by potential heretics.

For example, it usually begins with questioning and then redefining definitive Biblical terms that are necessary to sustain a certain essential truth (e.g. “*grace....justified....imputeth....works*” etc.). Such redefinitions usually include the very things that term was designed to exclude.

It may begin by redefining definitional texts which are designed to draw absolute lines of distinction between things that differ (e.g. Rom. 11:6; Gal. 1:8-9). Again, the redefinition usually includes the very things that text was designed to exclude.

It may begin by attempting to transform Biblical absolutes into relative non-essentials. It may begin by attempting to transform Biblical finalities into circumstantial alternatives.

A confession of faith that carefully defines essential doctrines and practices aids in preventing such apostasy occurring from within the membership. Moreover, such a confession is Biblical as that is the essence of “*the faith*” in Scriptures. Indeed, 1Timothy 3:16 seems to be an ancient first century confession that provides a summary of essentials with regard to the person and redemptive work of Christ.

V. THE LAST DAYS AND “THE FAITH”

Many see the last days as a time of great revival of “*the faith*.” However, that is not the view of Scriptures. The New Testament is very clear that in the last days there will be a great departure from “*the faith*.” Those embracing “*the faith*” will become fewer and fewer, while false Christian systems of faith will greatly increase. Remember, Jesus characterizes the last days as the days of Lot and Noah. Those were days when the faithful were hard to find. The last days is also the time when the “Great Whore” and her “harlot” daughters are in the pre-eminence (Rev. 17:14-16; 18:4).

Indeed, the apostasy from “*the faith*” will be so great that Jesus asks rhetorically if he will even find “*the faith*” when he returns:

Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith [lit. “The faith”] on earth? - Lk. 18:8

Paul says one of the chief characteristics of the “*last days*” will be the increase of false teachers and false systems of faith:

*But evil men and seducers **shall wax worse and worse**, deceiving, and being deceived. - 2 Tim. 3:12*

Paul tells Timothy that the Holy Spirit emphasizes that the latter times will be characterized by departure from the faith:

*The **Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall **depart from the faith** giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils - 1 Tim. 4:1***

Indeed, both Jesus and Paul describe one aspect of this last day great departure from the faith to be an appearance of apostolic revival of signs and wonders:

*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and **shall shew great signs and wonders**; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. - Mt. 24:24-25*

*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come **a falling away** first,Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan **with all power and signs and lying wonders**, - 2 Thes. 2:3, 9*

The parable of the tares in Matthew 13 is perverted by these same revisionists to teach a great revival, when in fact, the context of this parable makes it clear Jesus is talking about the increased size of the visible professing kingdom of God due to the increase of tares rather than true disciples. Indeed, the true seed of the kingdom become so obscure and lost within this increasing corruption that they only come to light when Christ removes tares at His coming:

***Then shall the righteous shine forth** as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. **Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.**
-Mt. 13:43*

However, prior to that time, they are hidden in this world of the professed kingdom of God, like a treasure that must be sought out and found.

The key to discerning the false revival and nature of this miracle movement is not whether the miracles are genuine, as they are genuine, with genuine power behind them. The key is the word “**lying**” (2 Thes. 2:9). The purpose behind God’s signs and wonders is to confirm the words of his messengers to be true (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:3-4; etc.). The workers of miracles in this false end time revival have authentic miracles, but it is their message that is false. Satan is attempting to counterfeit the confirmation method so that people will believe that the message of his servants is true. Moses predicted that false prophets would perform authentic miracles, and

authentic prophecies, and by such authentic wonders would lead God's people away from the truth of God's Word:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, - Deut. 13:1-2a

Moses confirms the miracle or wonder is authentic. There is nothing “lying” about the authenticity or power of the wonder. However, Moses goes on to describe the nature of the real lie:

saying**, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou **shalt not hearken unto the words** of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. **Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice**, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; **because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God,

Miracle workers are to be tested by God's Word, not by the authenticity of their miracles, signs, or wonders.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. - Isa. 8:20

The Spirit of God is the Spirit “of truth” (Jn. 16:13), and only by the Word of God, which is the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) can we ultimately discern between “the spirit of error and the Spirit of truth” (1 Jn. 4:6). All other attempts to discern truth from error are subject to error as they are all subjective tests.

One acid test that distinguishes the bulk of apostate Christendom from “the faith once delivered” is the question over the preservation of true children of God. Any denomination or system of faith that teaches that a true born-again child of God can lose their salvation is rebuking Christ (Jn. 6:37) and calling God a liar (1 Jn. 5:9-13).

Do you realize that over 93% of professed Christendom identify with systems of faith that reject the grace of God in eternal salvation? Out of the 2.2 billion professing Christians on planet earth 1.2 billion belong to the Roman Catholic Church, while another .5 billion belong to denominations/congregations that teach that ultimately your good works determine entrance into heaven. These are those Jesus predicts will make a profession of faith plus good works as the basis for entrance into heaven:

***Many** will say to me in that day, **Lord, Lord,** have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? - Mt. 7:21*

This is the same “*many*” just previously described in Matthew 7:13 who are on the broad way through the wide gate of faith plus works. In direct contrast, “*few*” there be that enter the strait gate and narrow way, and (Mt. 7:14) build their life on the Person and work of Jesus Christ, as the only hope to pass through the judgment.

Another acid test that distinguishes the bulk of apostate Christendom from “*the faith once delivered*” is the question of final objective authority. Any denomination or system of faith that denies that inspired revelation has ceased with the completion of the Biblical canon and/or denies Scripture is the final authority over all subjective experiences has no light in them (Isa. 8:16-20).

However, this time is not the time to be faint hearted or to be discouraged or to quit. It is the time to stand fast as it announces the soon return of Christ.

Conclusion: Here is another additional Biblical clue to identifying “*the faith*” once delivered. It is not only identified by the three principles for defining the essentials given in the chapter entitled **Identifying the Contents of The Faith**. It is not only identified by the copyright principles inherent in the Great Commission. It is not only identified by the principles that characterize scriptural baptism as the logo of “*the faith*.” It is identified by its decrease rather than its increase as time of the coming of the Lord gets nearer. It is identified among the “*few*” rather than the “*many*” that make up professing Christendom. When all these principles are considered together,

the majority of denominations/congregations¹⁹⁶ today are easily weeded out by this identification process.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How is baptism like the “logo” of “*the faith*”?
2. What doctrines are directly associated with baptism in the Scriptures?
3. What are the four essentials that define scriptural baptism?
4. What are five essentials the Scriptures attach to “the faith”?
5. What are the four essentials of baptism?
6. What are your four responsibilities to the faith?
7. What is the prophetic future of the faith in the last days?
8. What is your responsible reaction to last days apostasy?
9. What practical measure can a congregation take to protect itself from apostates?
10. Why is it important to carefully choose the administrator of your baptism?
11. Why do Landmark Baptist congregations refuse to accept baptism from other denominations?

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¹⁹⁶ By “denomination” I am referring to any group of congregations united by the same faith and practice. The plural “denominations” would refer to many such groups with conflicting belief systems. Christ designed the Great Commission to produce His congregations which were united by the same faith and practice. In that sense, He established a denomination or congregations that are like faith and order.

APPENDIX 1

Practical Problems of the Big Church Theory—Part I

LESSON GOALS: The goals for this lesson are (1) to present some practical and theological problems for those who embrace the universal invisible church doctrine and, (2) to make a Biblical based common-sense appeal to evangelical students who embrace the universal invisible church theory.

INTRODUCTION: It is true that all believers are united in the same “*in Christ*” salvation and therefore, are all in one spiritual family and are all citizens of God’s kingdom.

Therefore, one may ask, what is the big deal, since the universal invisible church theory contains truth when properly applied to the Biblical doctrine of the kingdom and family of God? First, it perverts the Biblical teaching of the church and that is not without serious practical and doctrinal consequences. Second, Biblical texts that are designed to provide practical instruction concerning the true church are robbed and applied to something that has no actual existence.

In the Pauline epistles doctrine always precedes life applications. Doctrine is simply teaching. Doctrine defines what is proper versus improper life application. Every doctrine has practical consequences. The universal invisible church doctrine has practical consequences that adversely affect a believer’s understanding of other essential doctrines and practices. Indeed, this doctrine has a very practical adverse effect upon the practice of concrete congregations.

I. EIGHT COMMON SENSE REASONS

For Rejecting the Universal Invisible Church Theory

1. Its theory contradicts its practice

This doctrine is commonly preached and taught to be the Biblical basis for **unifying** God's people as "*one body*." However, in reality, even though it is common that several congregations embracing this doctrine are to be found in almost every city throughout this country, this theory never brings such congregations 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 congregations embracing that theory, which only exist within walking distance from each other in the same cities????? Instead, since its Reformation origin it is the basis for further multiplication of denominations and further division within Christendom. In practice it actually achieves the very opposite of what it theoretically claims to achieve.

Without this doctrine there would have been no basis for the excommunicated Reformers (Luther, Calvin, etc.) to respectfully call themselves congregations 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 being formed each week. This doctrine is the **ONLY** basis used for justifying the 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.

2. Its 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 salvation for pre-cross saints **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.

3. It includes what God commands local congregations to exclude

New Testament congregations 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 congregations are commanded to mark and avoid heretics (Rom. 16:17).

However, the universal invisible church theory is used as the basis to include in practical working union with what the Lord demands his congregations to exclude. The idea of the one world church is completely based upon the universal invisible church theory.

Moreover, the advocates of the universal invisible church theory claim that the local church is to be the visible expression of the universal invisible church!!

New Testament congregations don't receive into their membership unbaptized persons. However, if big church advocates are to conform to the universal church theory, then they are forced to include within their membership unbaptized, sprinkled, poured or immersed persons. Moreover, the big church does not exclude members who embrace false doctrine and practice. Therefore, such a theory leads to complete corruption of congregations who attempt to visibly conform to that theory.

Thus, this theory makes God the author of confusion. According to this theory, what God denies for membership in *the visible expression* (local church) is accepted in the membership requirements of the Universal

invisible church. Only a false doctrine would demand such contradicting interpretations.

4. 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 but 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 was the 286 congregations 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 congregations, 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 congregations if there were already two kinds of congregations (one visible another invisible)????? Why? The answer is simple. It is because the universal visible concept is a false doctrine invented by the Augustine 300 years after the writing of the New Testament and the universal invisible concept 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.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ *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.*

5. It Perverts the Historical Biblical Context

It must be remembered that during the New Testament period, all congregations were like faith and order with one another and jointly referred to as “*the congregations of Christ.*” The contextual “*we...us...ye... you*” found in New Testament epistles were united in the same faith and practice within the same kind of congregations. 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 congregations or what today we would call the same “denomination” of congregations. 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 ignores this contextual definition, misapplies it and is simply Satan’s tool to justify those who have departed from the faith.

6. It robs the New Testament Congregations 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 say what particular church or what particular ordinances, but it is a common abstract statement that is ordinarily 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 congregations

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.

However, the universal invisible church advocate robs the Bible of every passage where such abstract instruction occurs for the concrete church and applies it to something that cannot possibly make any kind of application of *practical* unity between its membership or *practical* assembling of its membership.

7. 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 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 on earth 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.

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

The spiritual kingdom is all about the King 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 with regard to the fall demands the existence of the spiritual kingdom and family of God from the time of Genesis.

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 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 4000 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 either 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) or denies the church’s foundation is New Testament in origin.

In reality the theory of a Universal Invisible Church is the doctrinal justification of the Great Harlot of Revelation 17-18.¹⁹⁸ 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*”

Pastor Ramsey’s 8 Problems for the Universal Church Theory

Dr. S.E. Anderson in his book *Real Congregations or a Fog*, cites 8 problems provided by Pastor W. A. Ramsey in his book “*The Nature of the New Testament Church on Earth*:

¹⁹⁸ *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.*

1. It is incompatible with the meaning of ecclesia in the New Testament.
2. It makes unity impossible and tends toward ecumenicalism.
3. It violates the words of Christ in Revelation 1:3; 22:16.
4. It robs us of the concept of a coherent, functional body with members in close, coordinated, conscious proximity to all other members. It renders many New Testament passages powerless in their proper and practical meaning.
5. It destroys the meaning of “body” as an analogy of the church. The invisible church is not analogous to a functional, coordinated, compacted close-knit body as in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:12-16.
6. The “universal” church is unable to have any discipline, and therefore has to tolerate heresies of many kinds.
7. It undermines and weakens the position, image, calling and commission of real congregations, and it breaks the force of the vast majority of the Scriptures dealing with the practical work and purposes of real congregations.
8. It splits the one kind of church Christ built into two separate and distinct kinds of congregations—OPPOSITE kinds—universal and local.—Stanley E. Anderson, **Real Congregations or a FOG**. (Texarkana, TX: Bogard Press), p. 13

II. PROBLEMS FOR CONGREGATIONS COMING OUT OF ROME

“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.”—
 Job 14:4

1. The Evangelical Dilemma—evangelical Christianity has a historical dilemma. If Evangelical Christianity accepts the secular record of Christianity as dictated by Rome and Reformed Rome, then Apostolic evangelical Christianity as seen in the pages of the book of Acts and in the epistles has ceased to exist over sixteen hundred years. What are the consequences for embracing such a position? They face the following dilemma. They must either deny the many Biblical promises that New Testament Christianity would continue until the end of the age, or they must accept sacramental

Christianity as the true and sole historical representative of apostolic Christianity between the first century and the Reformation. If they choose the latter then that would be an admission that they are apostates from the true and sole historical representative of apostolic Christianity.

On the other hand, if they reject Rome altogether and hold to the Biblical promise of the continuation of an evangelical New Testament Christianity, then they face another dilemma. They are forced to find apostolic Christianity among those condemned by Rome as heretics (the evangelical Anabaptists). However, if they accept the evangelical Anabaptists as the fulfillment of the continuation of apostolic Christianity, then they have no right or authority to originate any kind of institutionalized church apart from the authority given this Apostolic church of Christ. Hence, they are between a rock and hard place. To accept secular history is to accept sacramentalism and to reject all Biblical claims of Christ's true congregations. To reject secular history is to accept the hated and distorted Anabaptists as the true remnant of Christ's congregations; which is to reject all others as true apostolic congregations of Christ, and thus to condemn their own denominations as unauthorized by God. The Bible says, "*who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing, not one.*" However, this is exactly how they originated—out of an unclean thing.

2. The Presbyterian Trilemma - "*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.*" Jb. 14:4 - emphasis mine

In 1855 J.R. Graves wrote an essay addressing an issue which faced the Presbyterian General Assembly that met in 1854. The following is taken from that essay:

The Protestant Trilemma

by Elder J. R. Graves

A little history connected with the last N. S. Presbyterian General Assembly, which held its session in Buffalo, May, 1854, . . . ought not to be allowed to pass without improvement. A query was introduced into that body to this effect:—

Are Romish baptisms and ordinations valid? A Committee of junior and senior patriarchs was sent out to report an answer. They failed to agree. The majority reported negatively. But there were sundry gray-haired doctors who saw the logical

conclusions behind such a decision, and indeed any decision they as Pedobaptists could make; and those consequences would certainly be precipitated upon them by their Baptist friends and Catholic foes. The reports were read in the assembly, and a warm discussion ensued. Unfortunately, very little of that discussion has been given to the public; but the positions taken by the two parties were substantially these:

The majority reported that all ordinances at the hands of Romish priests were invalid, because the Romish Catholic Church was no Church of Christ, and no part or branch of Christ's Church; but manifest Anti-Christ—the scarlet harlot riding on the beast with seven heads and ten horns, drunk with the blood of saints; the baptism and ordinations of such an apostate body are null and void; and to pronounce them valid, is to pronounce the Romish Church the Church of Christ; and more, to involve Presbyterians and all Protestant sects in the guilt of schism, since they rent the body of Christ when they came out of Rome!

But the party who sustained the minority report, or were unfavorable to a decision, urged on the other hand:—If you deny the Church of Rome to be a true Church, and decide that her baptisms and ordinations are invalid, then do we to all intents and purposes unchurch ourselves, unless we can baptize the ashes of Luther and Calvin, from whom we have received our baptisms and ordinations! If the baptisms and ordinations of Antichrist, of the Man of Sin, and Son of Perdition are invalid, then Luther and Calvin were unbaptized as were all the members that composed the first congregations of the Reformation! then were they unordained, and consequently had no authority to baptize their followers, or ordain other ministers to follow them; in a word, all Protestant societies are unbaptized bodies, and consequently no Congregations of Christ, since a body of unbaptized persons, however pious, cannot be considered a Church; all Protestant ministers are both unbaptized and unordained, and consequently unauthorized to preach officially and administer the ordinances.

Thus, we see the trilemma into which the query precipitated them.

To decide that “Antichrist,” “the Man of Sin,” “the Mother of Harlots” is a true Church of Christ, would be a monstrous solecism. But this would convict all Protestant sects of sin and destroy at once every claim they could set up to be congregations of Christ; for they confess themselves Schismatics.

To decide that the Romish apostasy is not the true Church of Christ is to decide that all her ordinances are invalid, and consequently that all Protestant societies are bodies of unbaptized persons, and therefore not congregations of Christ, and all Protestant ministers are both unbaptized and unordained, and consequently unauthorized either to preach or administer the ordinances.

To say that we cannot decide a question so manifest, will arouse the attention of the people, and awaken their suspicion, at once, that there is a great wrong and a great failure about Protestant congregations somewhere. Finding that they could not extricate themselves from this labyrinth of fatal consequences, they moved an indefinite postponement of the question! Their membership which they have led into their societies, and the world which they are now using every possible effort to entice into their societies, should loudly and constantly demand of them to decide whether the Romish apostasy is a true Church of Christ or not, for let Protestant societies decide it affirmatively or negatively, according to their own admissions, they equally cut off all their own claims to be considered Christian Congregations!

This is the continuing trilemma of ALL protestants, including the so-called Reformed “Baptists” of our day.

The similarity of this Protestant Trilemma, with that faced by the opponents of the Lord in regards to John’s baptism will not be lost to the Bible student:

(Mat 21:23–27) And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? {24} And Jesus

*answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. {25} The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? {26} But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. {27} And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. - J.R. Graves, **The Protestant Trilemma.***

This is the same trilemma faced by all Protestants today. The only solution to this trilemma is to “*come out of her my people*” (Rev. 18:4).

Conclusion: Professor Emeritus Dr. James B. Carlin of Murray State University well says concerning all other kinds of denominations but historical Baptists:

*All of these erroneous congregations were never fully developed by any recorded history until more than 300 years after Christ had risen from the dead and ascended back to heaven. Therefore, none of these congregations can be the kind of church Jesus Christ established since His kind of church was set up, organized and assembled with Him before He went back to heaven (Acts 1:1-12)–James B. Carlin, **Identifying the Lord’s Kind of Congregations**, (Emmaus, PA, Challenge Press, 2nd ed., 2006) p. 89*

Even the hard core ecumenicalist must admit that New Testament congregations were fully functioning long before the apostle Luke closed out the book of Acts and certainly long before the apostle John closed out the Biblical Canon with the book of Revelation. Since that time the only thing new to originate are false denominations. Job asked, “*who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing*”? His answer was “*not one*” (Job 14:4), and yet this is exactly what modern evangelical Christianity must do in order to justify its existence apart from historical Baptists.

APPENDIX 2

Primary Source Materials Prove Immersion in England Prior to 1640

Opponents to Baptist Church succession at first claimed that no Baptists existed prior to 1641 (Whitsitt). Then, as more historical evidences were obtained they moved the date back to at least 1631 as the possible date of Spilsbury's Church. Now, they have moved the date back to 1612 because of more evidence. However, there is more than sufficient evidence to move this date back prior to Queen Elizabeth with good probability that it is impossible to date their origin anytime other than in the apostolic era. There are abundant historical primary sources that prove immersion was common as early as 1536 all the way up to 1640 in England. There are also abundant primary sources that prove godly orthodox Anabaptists were living all over England from as early as the 1400's right up to 1640.

A. THE CHANGE OF LAW IN 1641

Court of Star Chamber, in English law, the court made up of judges and privy councillors that grew out of the medieval king's council as a supplement to the regular justice of the common-law courts. It achieved great popularity under Henry VIII for its ability to enforce the law when other courts were unable to do so because of corruption and influence, and to provide remedies when others were inadequate. When, however, it was used by Charles I to enforce unpopular political and ecclesiastical policies, it became a symbol of oppression to the parliamentary and Puritan opponents of Charles and

Archbishop William Laud. It was, therefore, abolished by the Long Parliament in 1641. - Britannica

It is this court that prosecuted dissenters from the state established church and prevented Baptists from printing or publicly promoting their views. It was immediately after this court had been abolished in 1641 that state church advocates labeled as Anabaptists, who later would publicly call themselves “Baptists” began to publish their views through the public press and in public debate. Parliament and Charles 1 where so involved with the inward dissension of the church of England between Puritans, Separatist and orthodox Anglican’s that little heed was given to the Anabaptists, so for the first time in English history they could freely preach and publish their views without fear of imprisonment by the Star Chamber courts.

B. THE ACT OF UNIFORMITY PRESCRIBED IMMERSION OF INFANTS AS EARLY AS 1540

The Act of uniformity was enforced in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth. The act of uniformity demanded precise obedience to the Common Book of Prayer. The Common book of Prayer prescribed **only** dipping as the mode for baptism. Therefore, the only authorized mode for baptism found in the Common Book of Prayer from 1509-1603 was immersion.

The issue then, is how demanding was the Act of Uniformity concerning conforming to all aspects of the Common Book of Prayer. Henry VI expressed it this way:

CAP. XXVI. 1540 A.D.

*All decrees and Ordinances which, according to God’s Word and Christ’s gospel, by the King’s Advice and Confirmation by his letters patents, shall be made and ordained by the Archbishops and Doctors appointed, or to be appointed, in and upon the matter of Christian Religion and Christian faith, and the lawful rites ceremonies and observations of the same, **shall be in every point thereof believed and performed to all intents and purposes, upon the pains therein comprised.** Provided, that*

nothing shall be ordained or desired, which shall be repugnant to the laws and statutes of this realm. – Statutes at Large of England and Great Britain from magna carta to the union of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in twenty volumes, Vol. from Henry VIII to Mary – Public Acts—Anno Secundo & tertio Edwards VI—A.D. 1540—emphasis mine

1548

he should use or minister the same, in such order and form as they be mentioned and set forth in the said book; or shall use, willfully and obstinately standing in the same, any other rite, ceremony, order, for or manner of mass openly or privily, or mattens, even song, administration of sacraments or other open prayer than is mentioned and set forth in the said book: (Open prayer, in an throughout this act, is mean that prayer which is for other to come unto or hear, either in common congregations or private chapels): or shall preach, declare or speak anything in the derogation or depraving of the said book, or any thing therein contained, or of any part thereof; and shall be thereof lawfully convicted according to the laws of this realm, by verdict of twelve men, or by his own confession, or by the notorious evidence of the fact, shall lose and forfeit to the King's Highness, his heirs and successors, for his first offence, the profit of such one of his spiritual benefices or promotions as it shall please the king's Highness to assign or appoint, coming and arising in one whole year next after his conviction: And also that the same person so convicted shall for the same offence suffer imprisonment by the space of six months without bail or mainprise: and if any such person once convict of any such offence concerning the premises, shall after his first conviction eftfoons offend and be thereof in form aforesaid lawfully convict, that then the same person shall for his second offence suffer imprisonment by the space of one whole year, and also shall therefore be deprived if so facto of all his spiritual promotions; and that it shall be lawful to all patrons, donors, and grantees of all and singular the same spiritual promotions, to present to the same any other able clerk, in like manner and form through the party so offending were dead: and that if any such person or persons, after he shall be twice convicted in form asaid, shall offend against any of the

premises the third time, and shall be thereof in form aforesaid lawfully convicted the third time, shall suffer imprisonment for life. – Statutes at Large of England and Great Britain from magna carta to the union of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in twenty volumes, Vol. from Henry VIII to Mary – Public Acts—Anno Secundo & tertio Edwards VI—A.D. 1548—emphasis mine 1549 Common Prayer book of the Church of England says concerning the mode of baptism of infants:

*Then the prieste shall take the childe in his handes, and aske the name. And naming the childe, shall **dyppe** it in the water thryse. First dyping the ryght syde: Seconde the left syde: The thryd tyme **dippyng** the face towards the fonte: So it be diserethly and warely done, saying. – [http://justus.anglican.org/resources/.../1549/Baptism 1549. htm](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/.../1549/Baptism%201549.htm) accessed 06/14/18*

1558 Dipping of Children

*Wherby we vnderstande, that lyke as Christe dyed, and rose againe the thirde day, and lyueth euermore: so euery man when he renounceth the deuyll he dyeth to synne, and kylleth the woorkes of the fleshe in him self, and **when he is dipped and put vnder the water**, than is he buried to sinne as Christe was putte within the earth in the sepulchre, and when he is thrise putte vnder the water, he representeth the three dayes of Christes buryall, and when he is taken forth of the water againe, than doth he rise a newe manne, as Christe rose oute of the Sepulchre, and oughte to dye no more by seruinge of sinne, but to lyue continuallye in righteousnesse and holynesse all the daies of his life.*

*And although the old and auncient tradition of the Church hathe bene from the beginninge, **to dippe** the childe three tymes in the water, as Christe laye three dayes in his graue: yet that is not of suche necessitie but that if he bee butte once **dipped in the water**, it is sufficyente, yea, and in tyme of greate perylle and necessarytie, – by Thomas Watson, **Holsome and catholyke doctryne concerninge the seuen Sacramentes of Chrystes***

Church expedient to be knowen of all men, set forth in maner of shorte sermons to bee made to the people, Excusum Londini: In ædibus Roberti Caly, typographi, 1558 (10 Feb.).

1559 Common Prayer book of the Church of England under Queen Elizabeth says:

*Then the Prie al take the childe in his hands, and aske the name; and naming the childe, all **dip** it in the water, so it bee discreetly and warily done, saying, N. I baptize the in the Name of the Father, and of the Sonne, and of the holy Ghost. Amen.*
http://justus.anglican.org/resources/.../1559/Baptism_1559.pdf
pdf accessed 06/014/18

1578 - Dipping Defended and published in England

Secondly: Baptisme is A Symbole, (or token) of things, which by his proportion, or comparison teacheth vs. Whereof Augustine saith: If Sacraments had not a certaine cõparison with those things whereof they be Sacramentes, they were no Sacramentes at all. So our Baptisme, in the which, **man is dipped vnder the water**, and is drawne foorth againe, hath his spirituall signification, for whiche, it is called, A Symbole, or token of things. ... (p. 140) As we are **dipped in the water of Baptisme, and tary vnder the water, and are drawn from thence againe:** so we should mortifye sinne, and choke the vitious affections, desyres of sinne and corrupt concupiscences in vs, & rise againe in newnesse of life. Of this thing Paule Rom. 6. doth admonish vs, where he inueigheth against those, which supposed, that libertie to sinne was graunted, because that Paule had sayd, VVhere sinne did abounde, there Grace did more abounde: Whom hee confuteth with these words: VVhat shall we say then, shall wee abide in sinne, that Grace may abounde? God forbidde.*Howe shall we which are deade to sinne, (that is to say) (whose sinne is deade) liue any longer therein? Knowe yee not, that wee whiche are Baptized into IESVS CHRISTE, are Baptized to dye with him? (that is to say, we which are*

*baptized doe, in Baptisme put on Christe, whose death doth effectually, kill, and keepe vnder sinne in vs, that it shoulde not reigne in vs.) VVe are therefore buried together with him by Baptisme, for to dye, (that is, that sinne might bee deade in vs,) that euen as Christ was raysed vp frō death, by the glory of the father, so we also shoulde walke in newnesse of life. (p. 147) – Niels Hemmingsen, **The way of lyfe A Christian, and catholique institution comprehending principal poinctes of Christian religion, which are necessary to bee knowne of all men, to the atteyning of saluation. First delyuered, in the Danish language for the instruction of those people, by Doctor Nicolas Hemmingius, preacher of the Gospell, and professor of diuinitie, for the Kynge of Denmarcke, in his Uniuersitie of Hafnia: and about three yeares past, (for the commoditie of others) translated into Latine, by Andrew Seurinus Velleius: and now first, and newly Englished, for the commodity of English readers: by N. Denham, this yeare of our redemption. 1578. Imprinted at London: By [W. How for] Richard Iones, and are to bee sould ouer agaynst S. Sepulchers Church, [1578]–emphasis mine***

1586 - Common Universal Practice among Reformed Congregations

And forasmuch as we learne out of the word of God, that these signes were appointed vnto an other end and vse, then commonlie they are vsed vnto, therefore we teach that they now in this their holie vse doe take vpon them the names of the things signified, and are not still called bare water, bread or wine, but water is called regeneration, and washing of the new birth, and the bread and wine the bodie and blood of the Lord, or the pledges and sacraments of his bodie and blood, not that the signes are turned into the things signified, or cease to be that which in their owne nature they are, (for then they could not be sacraments, which should consist onelie of the thing signified, and haue no signes) but therefore do the signes beare the names of the things, because they be mysticall tokens of holie

things: and because that the signes and the things signified are sacramentallie ioyned together: ioyned together, I say, or vnitied by a mysticall signification, and by the purpose and will of him, who first instituted them. For the water, bread and wine, are not common, but holie signes. And he that instituted water in baptisme, did not institute it with that minde and purpose, that the faithful should **onely be dipped in the water of baptisme:** and he which in the supper commaunded the bread to be eaten, and the wine to be drunke, did not mean that the faithfull should onelie receiue bread and wine, without anie further mystery, as they eat bread at home in their own houses, but that they should spiritually be partakers of the things signified, and by faith be truelie purged from their sinne and be partakers of Christ also..... Baptisme was instituted, and consecrated by God, and the first that baptized was Iohn, **who dipped Christ in the water in Iorden.** From him it came to the Apostles, whoe also did baptize with water. The *Lord in plaine words commaunded them To preach the Gospel, and to baptize in the name* of the Father, the Sonne, and the holy Ghost. And Peter also, when diuers demaunded of him what they ought to doe, said to them, in the Acts, Let euerie one of you be baptized in the name of Iesus Christ, for the remission of sinnes, and you shall receiue the gift of the holy Ghost. Whereupon Baptisme is called of some a signe of in•tiation of Gods people, as that whereby the elected of God are consecrated vnto God.

There is but one Baptisme in the Church of ▫ for it is sufficient to be once baptized or consecrated vnto God. – Simon Guliart, *An harmony of the confessions of the faith of the Christian and Reformed Congregations which purelie professe the holy doctrine of the Gospell in all the chiefe kingdomes, nations, and prouinces of Europe: the catologue and order whereof the pages following will declare. There are added in the ende verie shorte notes: in which both the obscure thinges are made plaine, & those thinges which maie in shew seeme to be contrarie each to other, are plainelie and verie modestlie reconciled, and if anie points doe as yet hang in doubt, they are sincerelie pointed at.*

All which things, in the name of the Congregations of Fraunce and Belgia, are submitted to the free and discrete iudgement of all other Congregations. Newlie translated out of Latine into English. Also in the end is added the confession of the Church of Scotland. Alowed by publique authoritie. [Cambridge]: Imprinted by Thomas, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1586. pp. 381, 395—emphasis mine

1587 - Dipping of Adults regarded as a Normal Mode in England

And that which is more straunge, to be suffered in this clear light of the Gospell, to permit the ministration of baptizme not onely to ignoraunt **men**, but also to **Women** which haue no voyce to speake in the Congregation, 1. Cor 14.34. and 1. Tim. 2.11. and that in priuate places,* but in case (they say) of necessity, as though there were such necessitie of the outwarde signe, when it can-not bee ministred according to the institution of Christe, which is nothing else but to affirme with the papistes, that sacramentes conferre grace of the work wrought: and that the sacrament of Baptisme, is a sacrament of such necessity, that whosoeuer is not **dipped in Water**, must bee eternally condemned..... Fourthly, let the Infant be baptised, in the name of the father, and of the Sonne, & of the holy ghost. It makes no matter, be he **dipped** either once or twice or thrise, or sprinkled with water. Although in the old time, he was **wholly dipped**. Which also the word baptisme (that is, a washing) signifieth. But herein the custom may varie, according to the diuersity of regiös, & the tendernes or firmnes of the infants body. – by John Bridges, *A defence of the gouernment established in the Church of Englande for ecclesiasticall matters Contayning an aunswere vnto a treatise called, The learned discourse of eccl. gouernment, otherwise intituled, Abriefe and plaine declaration concerning the desires of all the faithfull ministers that haue, and do seeke for the discipline and reformation of the Church of Englande. Comprehending likewise an aunswere to the arguments in a treatise named The iudgement**

of a most reuerend and learned man from beyond the seas, &c. Aunsv̄ering also to the argumentes of Caluine, Beza, and Danæus, with other our reuerend learned brethren, besi des Cænais and Bodinus, both for the regiment of women, and in defence of her Maiestie, and of all other Christian princes supreme gouernment in ecclesiasticall causes ... Aunsv̄ered by Iohn Bridges Deane of Sarum At London : Printed by Iohn VVindet [and T. Orwin], for Thomas Chard, 1587. – pp. 576, 581–582, 590—emphasis mine

John Bridges is a minister in the Church of England. What was considered “new” was the exclusivity of dipping believers only.

This record demonstrates that prior to Queen Elizabeth dipping was the normal mode for baptizing children in the Church of England.

1606 - Dipping for baptism normal Mode by Church of England

*Now, d there is a notable agreement, a singular vnion, and fit proportion betweene these partes, where the minister hath relation and reference to the father, the word to the spirit, the water to Christ, and **the body dipped** to the faithfull censed (p. 181).....First, that the outward washing with water, is not the washing away * of sins: for then whosoeuer **were dipped** in it should receiue forgiuenesse of sinnes, repentance from dead workes, and sanctification of the spirit, whether he beleued or not: e which is otherwise, as we see Act. 8, 22. – by William Attersoll, **The badges of Christianity. Or, A treatise of the sacraments fully declared out of the word of God Wherein the truth it selfe is proued, the doctrine of the reformed congregations maintained, and the errors of the congregations of Rome are euidently conuincid: by perusing wherof the discreet reader may easily perceiue, the weak and vnstable grounds of the Roman religion, and the iust causes of our lawfull separation. Diuided into three bookes: 1. Of the sacraments in generall. 2. Of Baptisme. 3. Of the Lords Supper. Hereunto is annexed a corollarie or necessary aduertisement, shewing the intention of this present worke,***

opening the differences among vs about the question of the supper, discovering the idolatry and diuisions of the popish clergy, [London]: Printed by W. Iaggard, dwelling in Barbican, 1606. - pp. 181, 186 - emphasis mine

1606 - Defense of Immersion by Puritans in 1606

CHAP. 1. Of the Word Baptisme, and what it is.

*Hitherto we haue spoken of the Sacraments in General; together with the partes, uses, and number of them: now we come to the first sacrament, which is Baptisme, being an Honourable badge whereby we are dedicated vnto Iesus Christ a This word in Scripture hath many significations. **First, in the natiue and proper signification, it signifieth to dippe, to diue, and plunge vnder water,** as Mat. 3, 16. Iohn 3, 22, 23 Act, 8. 38, 39.*

Secondly, to cleanse and wash any thing with wa/ter, euen when this sacrament is not administred, as Mark. 7 wher it is said, the Pharisies did not eat, except first they washed. So Heb. 9, x, the old tabernacle did consist in washings. Thirdly, it signifi th the Crosse, afflictions, myseries, persecutions, and inward vexations of the spirite, as Luk, 12, 50. where Christ saith, I must be baptized, and how am I griued - William Atersoll, Ibid., - pp.107-109—emphasis mine

1609 immersion by Church of England Bishop

*In Baptisme we are **dipped** in Christs passion: - by Thomas Morton, **A catholike appeale for Protestants, out of the confessions of the Romane doctors particularly answering the mis-named Catholike apologie for the Romane faith, out of the Protestants: manifesting the antiquitie of our religion, and satisfying all scrupulous obiections which haue bene vrged against it. Written by Th. Morton Doctor of Diuinitie. Londini: [Printed by***

*Richard Field] impensis Georg. Bishop & Ioh. Norton,
1609.—emphasis mine*

Later Thomas Morton went to America in 1622 and was deported back to England in 1625. He was an Anglican (Church of England) bishop.

1612 - Dipping Children normal mode in England

Now seeing old and young, men & women, masters and seruants, fathers and children, cannot so generally & conueniently meet on the weeke daies, by reason of their callings, as they can on the Lords day, their busines set apart: it seemeth by good reason that the Sabbath is the fittest day for this Sacrament. Againe, if the Lord in his infinite wisdom and goodnes commanded Circumcision to be vsed on the eight day, both for the auoyding of superstition, if any tied the grace of God to the outward signe, as also for a sufficient time, wherin the children might gather some strength to the cutting off of their flesh; why were it not a thing requisite, that Baptisme should be deferred to the Lords day, both* for the remouing of their superstitious opinion, who think the childrē dying vnbaptized to be but damned; and also for the better enabling of **the child to be dipped in the water, according to the ancient maner and pure nature of Baptisme?** (p. 157) Again, in the Sacraments there are actions of the body as well as of the soule, for the body is dipped into the water and taken out againe in the sacrament of Baptisme: and therefore if Baptisme be a token of our resurrection to grace, and that in bodie and soule, we are not to doubt, but that the bodie shall rise againe as well as the soule..... - by Richard Greenham, **The workes of the reuerend and faithfull seruant of Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham, minister and preacher of the Word of God collected into one volume: reuised, corrected, and published, for the further building of all such as loue the truth, and desire to know the power of godlinesse.** By H.H. London: Printed [by Thomas Snodham and Thomas Creede] for VVilliam VVelby, and are to be solde at his shop in Paules Church-yard, at the signe of the Swanne, 1612. - pp. 157, 186—emphasis mine*

Richard Greenham was a minister in the Church of England of Puritan leaning.

1621 - Dipping is the normal mode in Scotland

*Easter is the most solemne Day for Baptisme, seeing the Passion of our Lord, wherein **wee are dipped**, is thereon fulfilled; - by David Lindsay, **A true narration of all the passages of the proceedings in the generall Assembly of the Church of Scotland, holdenat Perththe 25. of August, anno Dom. 1618 VVherein is set downe the copy of his Maiesties letters to the said Assembly: together with a iust defence of the Articles therein concluded, against a seditious pamphlet. By Dr. Lyndesay, Bishop of Brechen, London: Printed by William Stansby for Ralph Rounthwait, dwelling at the signe of the golden Lyon in Pauls Church- yard, 1621. - p. 55—emphasis mine***

1638 - Church of England Admits to dipping as a normal preferred mode

And first for Baptism

*IN BAPTISM, the outward visible sign (saith our Church) is water wherein **the person baptised is dipped**, or sprinkled with it in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: where note. - by Thomas Bedford, **A treatise of the sacraments according to the doctrin of the Church of England touching that argument Collected out of the articles of religion, the publique catechism, the liturgie, and the book of homilies. With a sermon preached in the publique lecture, appointed for Saint Pauls Crosse, on the feast of Saint Iohn Baptist, June 24. 1638. London: Printed by Richard Bishop [and E. G[riffin]], for Abel Roper, and are to bee sold at his shop, at the black spred eagle in Fleetstreet, over against S. Dunstans Church, 1638. - p. 21—emphasis mine***

So, the primary argument demanding a late origin of Baptists in England is proven to be completely false. Immersion was not new in England. There

is much more abundant testimony that can be provided that immersion was no new thing in England but had been the established practice in the Church of England since its departure from Rome under Henry VIII and even long before Henry.

C. NON-RADICAL “MODERATE” ANABAPTISTS ALL OVER ENGLAND PRIOR TO 1600

Modern English Baptist historians claim that the only kind of Anabaptists prior to 1612 were radical Anabaptists that occasionally arrived from the continent to England all of which believed in heretical doctrines about the person of Christ and other heresies. However, this claim is directly contradicted by the earliest Church of England historians.

1549

Dr. John Lewis admits there were Anabaptists in England that were doctrinally divergent from the radical Anabaptists who simply rejected infant baptism and these were called “the gentle” Anabaptists by Lewis.

*In 1549, we are told, there were many Anabaptists in several parts of England... of these there were two sorts most remarkable: The one was of those who only thought that baptism ought not to be given but to those who were baptized in their fancy, ought to be baptized again when they were adults; from whence they had the general name of Anabaptists; these were called the gentle or moderate Anabaptists... The next year, 1551... That for the Sort of Anabaptists, who only denied infant baptism... no severities are to be found used to them: But several books were written to convince them, to which they returned some answers.... - John Lewis, *A Brief History of the Rise and progress of Anabaptism in England* (London; 1738)—pp.47-48, 50, 51—emphasis mine*

It is these same peaceful moderate Anabaptists living in England that Lewis cites Bishop Latimer that were so numerous that one city contained over 500 of them:

1547–155 BISHOP HUGH LATIMER - 500 Anabaptists in one town

*If Bp latmer was not misinformed there were above 500 of them in one town, who spoke against the order of magistrates, and doctrine of subjection to them, and would have no miagistrates nor judges in the earth. Bp Latimer's 4th sermon, &c. - John Lewis, **A Brief History of the Rise and Progress of Anabaptism in England**, (London: 1738) p. 48*

The magistrates, prelates and judges were the chief persecutors of Anabaptists in England. There is a consistent reaction by the state church against books defending immersion of believers only from 1542 right up to 1573.

D. CHURCH OF ENGLAND HISTORIANS ATTEST TO THESE “GENTLE” ORTHODOX ANABAPTISTS IN ENGLAND ALMOST CONSISTENTLY YEAR BY YEAR UP TO 1612

1516 -

Then seau'n times was he washed in the place, And seau'n times dipped ouer eares and hed, - Ariosto, Lodovico, 1474-1533. Orlando furioso in English heroical verse, by Sr Iohn Haringto[n] of Bathe Knight, [Imprinted at London: By Richard Field, for Iohn Norton and Simon VVaterson, 1607] - emphasis mine

This was printed in London in 1607 nearly 40 years prior to the use of this phrase “dipped over ears and head” by Daniel Featley against the Baptists in 1645. However, it was written in 1516 and shows this phrase had been used for immersion for over 100 years.

1536 -

And yet farther yf monasteryes shoulde be mynished, and of theym the foundations altered, ye thoughte it were to the hygh settinge forwarde of vertue and lernynge, yet wolde many of you thinke, Christis religion vtterly therby to peryshe. Suche is

*our blyndnes, suche is our folly. And what trow you cōcernyng the sacramentes, that many of vs haue not also of them very folyshe & superstitious opiniō, lokyng onely to the outwarde sygne and ceremony, nothyng consydyryng the inwarde and heuenly mysterie? Be there not som amonge vs thynke you, that wold iuge their childrē not to be wel baptised and christened, **if they were not dipped in the fount quite ouer the heed**, wherby the childe oft tymes cōceyueth his deth? & yet this is but a rite & a custome, diuersely used amonge diuers natiōs, & nothing {per}teinyng to y^e substance of the sacrament. – Thomas Starkey, *A pface to the Kynges hyghnes*, [Londini: In aedibus Thomae Bertheleti Regii impressoris excusa. Cum privilegio, [1536] – p.22—emphasis mine*

NOTE: Thomas Starkey (c. 1495–1538) was an English political theorist and humanist. Starkey attended the University of Oxford and obtained an MA at Magdalen College in 1521. After this, Starkey stayed in Padua until around 1526. Here he studied the works of Aristotle and admired the government of Venice. He is complaining about the pollution of the Christian faith in various areas. One of the areas he complains about would be to discourage children from being completely immersed and thus “not to be wel baptised”. It would appear it was about this time that justification for pouring or sprinkling started to be popular for sickly infants.

1555–

*For Ciprian beeyng asked counsell, whether they that were baptized, when they wer drawing to their death, oughte to be taken for true baptized Chrystians. For they lying in theyr beddes, & beeing oppressed with sicknesse, cold nether be **dipped ouer the eares**, nor washed, but onely ouer sprikled: wherefore they mighte seme not to haue been baptized: this mā of god did aunswere, that thei had receaued their ful baptisme. I knowlege and confesse, that ye auncyente fathers, when they could by the age or health of the persons, **dipped them ouer eares and head in the water**: For when we are dipped in, therby it is signified yt we dye with Christ: and by the **cōmyng out of***

*the water we are admonyshed, that we rise with him. vnto euerlasting life. - by Gracyous Menewe, **A confutacion of that popishe and antichristian doctryne, whiche mainteineth ye ministracyon and receiuing of the sacrament under one kind made dialoge-wise betwene the prieste and the prentyse by Gracyous Menewe.** [Wesel?: Printed by H. Singleton? 1555?]-emphasis mine*

Gracyous Menewe is thought to be the pen name for Thomas Beckon. In 1645 Daniel Featley repeatedly described the early English Baptist mode of baptism with the same similar expression used by Beckon “*The dippers dipt, or, The anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over head and eares*”.

1558 A long letter of Dr. Parker’s, excusing himself from the offer of the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury we read:

*They say that the realm is full of Anabaptists - Gilbert Burnet, **The history of the Reformation of the Church of England** (Printed for Scott, Webster, & Geary, Charterhouse Square: London, 1839) Vol. 4,-p. 388*

1562 - Clear Inference of the Baptist view of baptism in England

Now although we say we haue no confidēce in our workes and doynges, & doe grounde the whole course of our saluatiō in Christ onely, neuerthelesse we say not therupon yt we may liue loosly and wātonly, as thoe it were inough for a Christian man to be **dipped onely** in ye water & to beleue, & yt nothing els is to be looked for at his hande. Trew faith is liuely and can not be idell. - John Jewell, **An apologie, or aunswer in defence of the Church of England concerninge the state of religion used in the same. Newly set forth in Latin, and nowe translated into Englishhe.** Londini: [Printed by Reginald Wolf], anno Domini M.D.LXII. [1562] p. 18-emphasis mine*

Jewell described baptism by dipping, thus the normal mode (while sprinkling was regarded as occasional for sickly infants) and he was repudiating those who denied works necessary for salvation.

**1556 - Record of those refusing to have their children dipped in font
Names of such as obserue not Ceremonies.**

- **S. Clementes.**
 - Robert Cambridge refused the Paxe.
 - Robert Brage his wife **refused to suffer anye childe to be dipped in the Font.**
 - Ioane Barber widowe. refused to beholde the eleuation of the sacrament.
 - Thomasine her Daughte. refused to beholde the eleuation of the sacrament.
 - Mistresse Ponder, mother to Ioane Barber. in the same fault.
 - Tie a Mariner his wife.
- **S. Mary at Elmes.**
 - Richarde Hawarde refused the Paxe at Masse in S. Laurence.
 - M. Lyons at Masse at Saint Mary Stoke refused the Paxe.
- **S. Peters.**
 - Mother Fenkel. refuse to haue Childrenne dipped in Fontes.
 - Ioan Warde, alias Bentleys wife. **refuse to haue Childrenne dipped in Fontes.** - John Foxe, **Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church.** [vol. 2, part 2] **with an vniuersall history of the same, wherein is set forth at large the whole race and course of the Church, from the primitiue age to these latter tymes of ours, with the bloody times, horrible troubles, and great persecutions agaynst the true martyrs of Christ, sought and wrought as well**

by heathen emperours, as nowe lately practised by Romish prelates, especially in this realme of England and Scotland. Newly reuised and recognised, partly also augmented, and now the fourth time agayne published and recommended to the studious reader, by the author (through the helpe of Christ our Lord) Iohn Foxe, which desireth thee good reader to helpe him with thy prayer. [At London: Imprinted by Iohn Daye, dwelling ouer Aldersgate beneath S. Martins], An. 1583. Mens. Octobr. - p. 2089—emphasis mine

1566 - Description of English Anabaptist holy lives

In lyke maner this is also a shepes clothyng, when false Prophetes shewe outwardly a great holinesse of lyfe. As we haue the Anabaptists for an exāple. They vse no vayne, wycked, or worldly talke: They swear not: They vse all simplicitie both in theyr diete and apparell: they speake muche of Gods worde: they pray continually: they suffer persecution patiently: they renenge not what soeuer is doone to them: they suffer no man to lacke that is of theyr profession, but haue al thynges common among them, as it was in the time of the Apostles. &c. These thynges of their owne nature are not euyll, and it were to bee wysshed, that all men were suche in these thyngs,* according to the christen profession. - Thomas Beacon, **A new postil conteinyng most godly and learned sermons vpon all the Sunday Gospelles, that be redde in the church thorowout the yeare**, Imprinted at London: In Flete- strete nere to S. Dunstons church, by Thomas Marshe [and John Kingston], M.D.LXVI. [1566] - p. 68*

1558 - Admission before English Parliament that Anabaptists were among them

*Of the times in like maner **wherein we now live**, the Apostle S. Paule did prophesie, * that there should be many false prophets:*

*and we do see his sayengs therein to be fulfilled by the number of such prophets as **now remaine amongst us**: Arrians, Donatists, Papists, Libertines, Anabaptists →, the Familie of love, and sundrie other (I knowe not of what opinion) so many sectaries and schismatikes, as that in very deed divers do revolt daily to Papistrie, many are become meerly Atheists, and the best do stand in som sort at a gaze. - RICHARD BANCROFT, **A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the 9. of Februarie being the first Sunday in the Parleament, Anno. 1588. by Richard Bancroft D. of Divinitie, and chaplaine to the right honorable Sir Christopher Hatson Knight L. chancelor of England.** (Imprinted at London: by E.B[ollifant] for Gregorie Seton, and are to be sold at his shope under Aldergate, 1588) p. 3 - emphasis mine*

1613 - Public Assemblies of Anabaptists in England

*In the former by the fauor Gabriel Bartorius now Prince of that Region, who not many yeares, since hath expulsed thence all such as are of the Papall faction, in a manner the whole body of the Inhabitants (except some few rotten and putred limmes of Arrians, Antitrinitarians, Ebionites, Socinians, **Anabaptists, who heere** as also in Polonia, Lituania Borussia **haue some publicke Assemblies**) are professed Protestants: - by Edward Brerewood, **Enquiries touching the diuersity of languages, and religions through the cheife parts of the world.** Written by Edw. Brerewood lately professor of astronomy in Gresham Colledge in London, London: Printed [at Eliot's Court Press] for Iohn Bill, 1614.-emphasis mine*

Professor Brerewood died in 1613 and so he stated this either in 1613 or before.

1626 - Warning about Anabaptists in England

*Let them admonish the people to take heed of the leauen of Iesuites, **Anabaptists** →, Brownists, and all deuiders and*

*offenders whatsoever, and let them marke them to restraine their madnesse (p. 20)..... Againe, this being their aime, wee need not wonder if in this flourishing Church of England, and as it were in the noone-tyde of the Gospell, as well the doctrine, as the discipline of the Church, being agreed vpon in publique conuocation, by the learned and religious of the Land, and authorised by law, **you haue yet many among you**, who willingly would (and doe as farre as they dare) alter the forme of our publike Church-Seruice, and Ceremonies: and feigne would innouate something, either in respect of substance or of circumstance, and **if you haue Sects of Anabaptists**, Brownists, Papists, Familists, Catharists, and those who mislike all things but their owne inuentions (p. 25)..... And this may teach vs two things. First, that we ioyne not our selues to any of those Sects, that are deuided from our Church, which is a member of the true Catholike Church of God, whether Papists, Anabaptists, Brownists, Familists, or what else you may call them, - Matherw Brookes, *A sermon preached at Pauls- Crosse, May 30. 1626* wherein may be seene whom we are to repute hereticks, and schismaticks, what sleights they vse to deceiue, Gods iust iudgements on them, and how we may escape those nets which they lay for vs: also good counsell to the magistrate, minister, and subiects, necessary for these times, London: Printed by William Iones dwelling in Red-crosse streete, 1626. - pp.20, 25—emphasis mine*

E. ANTI-ANABAPTIST LITERATURE FROM 1542-1573

1542-1543 in England

No Person shall retain any English Books or Writings concerning Matter against the holy and blessed Sacrament of the Altar, or for the maintenance of Anabaptists, or other books abolished by the King's Proclamation. —XCIX. Stat. 34

§35 hencrici 8, c.192) A.D. 1542–3—Archibald John Stephens, *The Statutes relating to the Ecclesiastical and Eleemosynary Institutions of England, Wales, Ireland, India and the Colonies; with the decisions thereon* (London: John W. Parker, West Strand; 1845) Vol. 1 p. 282

1542—Tyndale’s English Bible Prohibited in England.

1. *An Act for the Advancement of true Religion, and for the abolishment of the contrary.*

*Recourse must be had to the Catholic and Apostolic Church for the decision of controversies; and therefore all books of the old and new Testament in English, being of Tyndal’s false translation, or comprising any matter of Christian religion, articles of the faith, or holy Scripture, contrary to the doctrine set forth fithence Anno Dom. 1540, or to be set forth by the King, shall be abolished. No printer or bookseller shall utter any of the aforesaid books. No persons shall play in enterlude, sing or rhyme, contrary to said doctrine. No person shall retain any English books or writings concerning matter against the holy and blessed sacrament of the Altar, or the maintenance of Anabaptists, or other books abolished by the King’s proclamation. There shall be no annotations or preambles in Bibles or New Testatments in English. The bible shall not be read in English in any Church. No woman or artificers prentices journeymen serving men of the degree of yeoman or under, husbandman nor labourers, shall read the New Testament in English. Nothing shall be taught or maintained contrary to the King’s instructions. And if any spiritual person preach, teach, or maintain any thing contrary to the King’s instructions or determinations, made or to be made, and shall be thereof convict, he shall for his first offence recant, for his second abjure and bear a fagot, and for his third shall be adjudged an Heretic, and be burned and lose all his goods and chattels. – **The Statutes at Large of England and Great Britain from magnacartatotheunionofthe Kingdomof Great Britain and Ireland, in twenty volumes, Vol. II from***

*Henry VIII to Mary Public Acts—Annis tricefno quarto &
Tricefno quinto henrici VIII - 1542*

You will notice that the dates given by Lewis coincide with the Common Prayer book of the Church of England where dipping is the ONLY prescribed mode for baptism of anyone.

It is the Reformation of England by Presbyterians in 1625-1645 that practiced sprinkling and thus accused the Baptists of a “new” baptism which to them (Presbyterians) was “new” as the Baptists baptized adults only and only by immersion in private up to 1641.

1573 - William Tyndale - dipping for baptism

*In so much that a * Christen mannes lyfe is nothing els saue a continuall baptisme, whych is begon when are **dipped in the water**, and is put in continuall vre and exercise, as long as the infection of sinne remaineth in oure bodyes, whych is neuer vtterly vanquished vntill the houre of death, and there is the great Goliath slayn wyth hys owne sward, that is death, whych is the power of sinne, and the gate of euerlasting lyfe opened vnto vs, and thus is Paule to be vnderstand - William Tyndale, **The vvhole workes of W. Tyndall, Iohn Frith, and Doct. Barnes, three worthy martyrs, and principall teachers of this Churche of England collected and compiled in one tome together, beyng before scattered, [and] now in print here exhibited to the Church. To the prayse of God, and profite of all good Christian readers.** At London: Printed by Iohn Daye, and are to be sold at his shop vnder Aldersgate, An. 1573. - p. 95—emphasis mine*

Tyndale wrote this in 1536 and it was edited by John Foxe, but John Daye published it in London in 1573. Tyndale describes baptism as being “dipped in the water.”

1573 - William Tyndale on baptism - 1536

***The plunging into the water** signifieth that we die, and are buried with Christ, as concerning the olde life of sinne which is Adam. And the pulling out againe, signifieth that we rise*

*againē with Christ in a newe life full of the holy ghost, which shall teach vs & guide vs, & worke the will of God in vs, as thou seest. – William Tyndale, **The vvhole workes of W. Tyndall, Iohn Frith, and Doct. Barnes, three worthy martyrs, and principall teachers of this Churche of England collected and compiled in one tome together, beyng before scattered, [and] now in print here exhibited to the Church. To the prayse of God, and profite of all good Christian readers. At London: Printed by Iohn Daye, and are to be sold at his shop vnder Aldersgate, An. 1573. (Baptisme).**—emphasis mine*

This was published in England in 1573 and the above quote was taken from under the heading of “Baptisme.”



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of the Roman religion, and the iust causes of our lawfull separation. Diuided into three bookes: Of the sacraments in generall. 2. Of Baptisme. 3. Of the Lords Supper. Hereunto is annexed a corollarie or necessary aduertisement, shewing the intention of this present worke, opening the differences among vs about the question of the supper, discovering the idolatry and diuisions of the popish clergy, (London: Printed by W. Iaggard, dwelling in Barbican, 1606)

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The issue of the church is one of the most divisive issues in Christendom. In this volume, Professor Fenison restricts his studies to pre-New Testament and New Testament uses of the Greek *ekklesia*. He then evaluates the more modern universal invisible church theory in its relationship to the historical usage of the term and in its relationship to the very fundamental basics of biblical soteriology. He demonstrates that this post-biblical theory is consistent with regard to the primary consequence of the fall (spiritual death/separation) and its only possible fundamental solution (restoration to spiritual union with God).



Mark W. Fenison is a retired Baptist minister and an adjunct professor of ecclesiology for John Leland Baptist College, Georgetown, Kentucky for their online extension classes. He pastored congregations in Mississippi, Montana, Ohio, and Washington. He earned his bachelor's degree at Lexington, Kentucky and started his Master of Theology at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and finished at Landmark Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas in 2010. In 2014, he earned his Doctor of Theology from Landmark Baptists Theological Seminary.

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