

A photograph of a man in a white tank top with the Olympic rings logo, holding a lit torch high against a blue sky. The man is looking upwards and to the right. The torch is lit and has a bright flame. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds at the bottom.

# *Passing the Torch*

*Conveying*

**CHURCH TRUTH**  
*To the Next Generation*

Mark W. Fenison, ThM

Passing the Torch

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CHURCH TRUTH

To the Next Generation

By

Mark W. Fenison, ThM.

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# Passing the Torch

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## INTRODUCTION

This book is written and designed for the next generation in our congregations who are confronted with the fact that the vast majority of Christendom rejects what we teach about “church truth.”

The weighty accusations they are confronted with are:

*“Your view of the church denies that over 98% of professed Christendom has any scriptural churches and do you really think that New Testament churches are found only in your tiny segment of Christians? If there are only that “few” real churches in the world then why is not God doing all the evangelization through you rather than through others? Is salvation only found within your “few” churches?”*

First, in response to this argument, it is true that the church is the only public *institution* authorized to evangelize the world, but evangelization is not restricted to the church *institution*, but is the responsibility of every saved *individual* to give witness to their own salvation experience:

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things **in the churches**. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, **Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.** And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. – Rev. 22:16-17<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> The totality of true “churches” are the institutional “*bride*.” The churches call sinners to come to Christ, but so does the individual believer who has just experienced salvation - “*let him that heareth say, come*”

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Therefore, God is not restricted to merely the church institution for the evangelization of the world, but he sovereignly uses all true believers and their gospel witness wherever and whenever it pleases him. Moreover, the Great Commission requires more than mere salvation to be its proper administrator (Mt. 28:19-20). Christ never authorized the unbaptized to baptize or the untaught to teach anyone. It is the church, as a congregational body of plural “ye” baptized instructed believers that have been given the commission to “make disciples” (literal translation of Greek term translated “teach” in Matthew 28:19).

Furthermore, we do **not** believe you must be a member of our churches (or any other church) in order to be a Christian or in order to enter heaven. Instead, we first require potential members to provide a profession of faith that they have already been saved, and on their way to heaven **before** we will even consider them for membership in one of our churches. Hence, we believe that the church has **nothing to do** with becoming a Christian or going to heaven.

It is this very difference between our view of the church and the view of the church embraced by the vast majority of Christendom that makes our position on the church so vitally important to the truth of the gospel. The vast majority of Christendom embraces the doctrine of church salvation, thereby perverting the Biblical doctrine of salvation.

For example, out of the 2.2 billion professed Christians on planet earth, the vast majority (1.2 billion) are found in the Roman Catholic Church which believes salvation is impossible outside the membership of their *universal visible* church. This is a church salvation doctrine.

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However, Rome is not alone in this belief. Reformed Roman Catholic churches (Protestants), as well as, many other evangelistic type denominations also embrace a church salvation doctrine that demands that there is no salvation, or possession of eternal life outside their concept of the “true” church. They believe that to be in the “true” church is to be saved and to be outside the “true” church is to be lost. Their view of the “true” church is the belief that spiritual union with Christ is impossible outside of their *universal visible* (Roman) or *universal invisible* (Reformed Roman, Protestant, etc.) church salvation doctrine.

Finally, there are those that do not embrace either the *universal visible* or *universal invisible* church salvation view, but still embrace the idea that salvation is found only within the membership of their own kind of visible churches (Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.). – Hence, church salvation.

Our view of the church denies that the church has anything to do with obtaining essential salvation or bringing the believer into spiritual union with Christ. We believe the truth of the gospel is at stake in this difference between our view of the church and the view of the church embraced by the rest of Christendom. We believe that “church truth” is vital to preserve the truth of the gospel from being perverted into “another gospel” of church salvation.

Indeed, we believe that this church salvation doctrine perverts the truth of salvation at its most basic level. When the problem of sin is defined at its most basic level, it is first and foremost, a problem of spiritual separation from God. God told Adam that “in the day” he ate he would surely die. However, Adam did not die physically for another 930 years. Physical and eternal death is the consequences of death at its most basic level – spiritual death.

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Spiritual death is separation of the human spirit from God who is the source of spiritual life. There is no salvation of any kind apart from spiritual union with God through Christ because God is life and to be separated spiritually from God is spiritual death.

This act of spiritual union between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God is what the Bible calls quickening/regeneration/new birth. The necessary by-product of this spiritual union is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Why? The spirit of man resides within man's body, and therefore, for any spiritual union to exist between the human spirit and God's Spirit, it must exist within man, and thus any **union** existing inside of man by its very nature is indwelling within his body.

Significantly, every church salvation doctrine interprets the baptism in the Spirit, rather than regeneration, to be the divine means restoring spiritual union with God through Christ. However, the baptism in the Spirit did not occur in history until the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5). Consequently, their church salvation doctrine denies that anyone living prior to Pentecost could be brought into spiritual union with God. Most church salvation doctrines also deny individual indwelling by the Holy Spirit prior to Pentecost. Therefore, their concept of the "true" church consisting of spiritual union and indwelling of the Spirit by the baptism in the Spirit denies any pre-Pentecostal existence of spiritual union. Furthermore, before the ministry of Christ there was no "*foundation*" laid (Eph. 2:20) nor any members "*set in*" (1 Cor. 12:28) the church (1 Cor. 12:28).

*Their problem is that the church and the baptism in the Spirit are New Testament in origin, but salvation is Old Testament in origin and not New Testament in origin (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2; Isa. 53; Gen. 3:15).*

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Therefore, the doctrinal consequences of this church salvation gospel is that *all human beings* prior to Pentecost are left **outside** of Christ in a state of spiritual separation (death) from God. This doctrine denies them the most fundamental aspect of salvation, which is, reversing their state of spiritual death and granting them spiritual life with God through Christ.

However, our response is that spiritual union with God through Christ has nothing to do with the church or the baptism in the Spirit. We believe the act of restoring spiritual union with God through Christ is called regeneration or quickening (make alive) which has nothing to do with the church or the baptism in the Spirit.

We believe that all lost persons in all ages must be “*created in Christ Jesus*” or they are still lost (Eph. 2:8-10) and if any man has not the Spirit of God indwelling him either *before or after* Calvary, “*he is none of his*” (Rom. 8:9). There is no kind of salvation for anyone at any time **outside** of Christ.

This merging of the way of salvation with the church was the root problem in early church history that evolved into the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformed Roman Catholic doctrine of the universal invisible church is a more sinister perversion of the truth of salvation. At minimum, this church salvation doctrine requires another way of salvation, thus another gospel prior to Pentecost. It is an attack upon the truth of gospel salvation by mixing it with the doctrine of the church.

Therefore, instead of being ashamed of “church truth” we ought to be bold in teaching it, because it is only by teaching “church



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truth” that true Biblical salvation is distinguished and kept from being perverted into a church salvation gospel.

Being among the “few” who preach the truth of the Gospel (Mt. 7:14) free from any church salvation doctrine ought to be a badge of honor instead of an argument against us.

This is one clear evidence why the New Testament church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

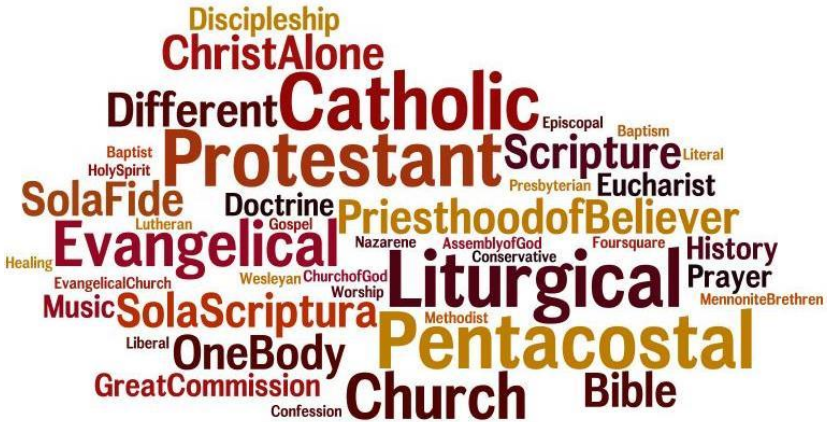
We reject this “church salvation gospel” and it is our prayer that this book will help others “*Pass the Torch*” of church truth to our next generation of Baptists.

Mark W. Fenison  
March 1, 2015

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## The Author of Confusion!



*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.* – 1 Cor. 14:33

God is not the author of confusion but “*of peace.*” The Greek term translated peace, is elsewhere translated to be “*at one*” (Acts 7:26) and conveys the idea of “unity.” Therefore, God is not the author of “confusion” but the author of “unity” = peace. Where God is at work there is unity in speaking and thinking:

*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

However, unity does not characterize the current state of Christendom, but Christendom is characterized by complete confusion and utter disunity. Nor does unity characterize the so-

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called universal invisible church, but it is characterized by absolute confusion.

If God is not the author of confusion, then who is? Of course, it is Satan. Satan and his legion of demons are responsible for all false doctrines and practices (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:1,6) and multi-denominations.

Did you know that in 1980 there were approximately 20,000 different Christian denominations in the world and since 2006 some estimate over 30,000? On the average five new denominations originate every week.<sup>2</sup> And did you know that

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<sup>2</sup>According to the *Dictionary of Christianity in America* [Protestant] (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1990): "As of 1980 David B. Barrett identified 20,800 Christian denominations worldwide . . ." ("Denominationalism," page 351).

Again citing the Oxford *World Christian Encyclopedia* (1982): ". . . a projected 22,190 by 1985 . . . The present net increase is 270 denominations each year (five new ones a week)" (pp. 15-18).

Also, according to the United Nations statistics there were over 23,000 competing and often contradictory denominations worldwide (*World Census of Religious Activities* [U.N. Information Center, NY, 1989]). This was cited in Frank Schaeffer's book *Dancing Alone* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Press, 1994), page 4. Schaeffer is Orthodox.

The 1999 *Encyclopedia of Christianity* has this to say: "In 1985 David Barrett could count 22,150 distinct denominations worldwide." (Edited by E. Fahlbusch, et al., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999, vol. 1, p. 800, s.v. "Denomination"). Barrett is the statistical editor.

Christian denominations number approximately 38,000, according to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (2006).

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every single one claims to be the true New Testament church or the closest to the apostolic model? What other motive could there be for originating another one? With each new denomination comes more and more division and confusion within Christendom.

Many point to this proliferation of division and confusion as proof that Christianity is no more pure or true than any other world religion; however, instead of being proof against Christianity, it is proof for the reliability of the Scriptures, and for the reality of the Devil. For example, in the parable of the tares Jesus predicted that the professing kingdom of God on earth would be increasingly infested with tares or false professors that have been planted by the Devil:

*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*

As time continued, the vast amount of “*tares*” would give the professing kingdom of God a deceptive unnatural larger appearance just as leaven gives dough a deceptive unnatural larger appearance (Mt. 13:33). Indeed, the “*leaven*” of false doctrine would permeate, corrupt and increase its apparent size due to false professions. In contrast, the true seed were like a treasure “*hid*” among this stuff (Mt. 13:44). This corruption would be so thorough and prevalent that in the parable of the unjust judge, Christ emphasizes how few the faithful would be when He returns:

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*I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith [lit. “the faith”] on the earth? - Lk. 18:8*

Paul near the end of his ministry prophesied that departure from the faith would increase during the last days:

*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*

At the end of his life, Paul predicted the “last days” would be characterized by increasing deception as the coming of the Lord drew near:

*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*

This increasing apostasy within the professing kingdom of God is further emphasized by Christ in Matthew 7:13-14 by contrasting the “*many*” with the “*few*” as he says:

*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.....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? And then will I profess*

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*unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* - Mt. 7:13-14; 22-23

The “*many*” all professed faith in Him (“*Lord, Lord*”) as well as professed to have performed all their works in His name (“*in thy name*”); yet, in spite of all that, Christ claims that it is the “*many*” that he “*never*” knew. In direct contrast, it is the “*few*” that Christ claims will be found on the right “*way*” and enter heaven.

The “*many*” in the last day in Matthew 7 are the “*tares*” in Matthew 13 that are bound together before the coming of the Lord in Matthew 13:39-43. They constitute the majority of professed Christendom.

However, this has been true in all generations even before the coming of Christ. Paul reminds us that among the professing people of God (Israel) during the days of Elijah, that there were so “*few*” true believers among the vast multitude of professors that Elijah believed he was the only one left.

*Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.* – Rom. 11:2-4

God could only point out a mere 7,000 among the hundreds of thousands who professed His name.

This has been the norm between Genesis and Matthew, and it is the same predicted norm in the time between Matthew and

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Revelation. Indeed, as the end draws near, the greater the size of apostate Christianity, the fewer there will be of those who are faithful to the truth (Lk. 18:8).

## The Necessary Conclusion:

Therefore, you, the reader, should expect that the current majority of professed Christendom is primarily made up of “*tares*” or apostates. You should expect to find the true “*way*” of salvation and service among the “*few*” or minority rather than among the “*many*” or the majority. That being the case, you should **not** think that taking a position that places you in the minority or “*few*” is a bad thing, but a good thing. However, this is especially true when considering true from false **public institutional ways of service**.

However, on the other hand, someone might rightly object that there are several small denominations that are “*few*” in number who are obviously apostate, so being “*few*” does not necessarily mean being right.

Someone else may rightly object that there is no church or denomination that is not without some kind of error, just as there is no Christian who is not without some kind of error. So having some error does not mean they are apostate either.

Both of these objections are true and have merit. However, just because there is no Christian who knows *all* truth or is without *some* error does not mean there are not some *essential* truths they must embrace in order to be recognized as a Christian in order to be distinguished from a lost person. Just because no group of people (church/denomination) is not without *some* errors or does not know *all* truth, does not mean there are not some *essential*

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truths they must embrace to be recognized as a true church of Christ which would distinguish them from apostate churches.

The Scriptures not only demand but provide essential truths that can be used to “*try*” or test the spirits and distinguish true from false Christians, and true from false churches. If that were not the case, then we could not distinguish truth from error, but the scriptures provide clear essential truths that we can, and must use to discern the difference between the two.

*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.....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. 4:1,6*

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; - 1 Tim. 4:1*

We are going to “*try*” the spirits behind the vast majority of **public institutional ways of service** within professed Christendom to expose the true from the false **public institutional ways of service**. We will use simple basic, but essential truths to test various denominations within Christendom.

We will select two basic indisputable essential truths:

1. The true gospel way of salvation
2. The true God of the Bible



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These two truths are inseparable from one another as Jesus combines them together in John 17:3:

*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.- Jn. 17:3*

The promise of the gospel is “*eternal life*” (Jn. 3:16; 3:36; 5:24) and that gospel promise is defined as knowing the “*only true God.*”

### The True “Way of Life” Test



The true gospel is the way to obtain eternal life. In the picture above in the yellow sign is the quotation of Matthew 7:13-14. Read it carefully.

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In context, the Matthew 7:13-14 begins the closing section of Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:13-27) wherein he considers all those who will profess Christ is Lord seeking to enter heaven on the Day of Judgement (Mt. 7:21-23).

In the text above, he is beginning to explain why "*many*" in the last day who profess Christ as "*Lord*", but will be turned away in the Day of Judgment. The same "*many*" in Matthew 7:13 is the same "*many*" in Matthew 7:21. In between Matthew 7:13-14 and Matthew 7:21-23 is a description of those who misled and taught them the wrong way of salvation (Mt. 7:15-20). Both the false prophets and their followers are among the "*many*" that will end up in hell.

As you can see in Matthew 7:13-14, there is only one way of salvation. The only alternative way leads to destruction. The word "*way*" is inclusive of a system of religious teaching about salvation. There is "*the way of the Lord*" versus the wrong "*way*" just as there is the true gospel versus "*another gospel*." However, the wrong "*way*" is characterized as very "broad", and thus inclusive of all the wrong, but diverse religious "*ways*" taught in this world concerning how to be saved.

*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.* – Prov. 14:12

All the multiple "*ways*" of death have one basic principle that unites them as one "*way*." That principle is works. They are all a belief system in some kind of higher power(s) that obtains salvation ultimately determined "*according to their own works*."

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In direct contrast, the “*way*” of life is defined as a very restrictive “strait” and “narrow” way. It is characterized in the very opposite terms of salvation “by grace....without works”,

***For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*** – Eph. 2:8-9

It is the narrow way of “*grace*” versus the broad way of “*works*.” Any mixture according to Paul is impossible without causing each principle to be destroyed:

***And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*** – Rom. 11:6

Moreover, grace is defined to be a “*gift*” (Eph. 2:8), whereas works are based on reward due to “*merit*” (Rom. 4:4). Grace is given freely, without a cause in the person receiving it or “*freely*” (Rom. 3:24). Hence, grace and works are always placed in contrast to each other in regard to justification before God whereby forgiveness of sins and righteousness obtains entrance into heaven.

Entrance into heaven is obtained by the works of Christ performed in his body (his works) without consideration of any works performed in our body (our works). It is his righteousness that obtains entrance into heaven, and that is the way of grace.

The conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount summarizes these two ways in the analogy of building a house (your life) on either rock (His Person and works) or sand (your Person and works). The only difference between the two houses is the foundation upon which they are built. Entrance into Heaven requires a righteousness

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greater than that of any man (Matt. 5:20) that must be equal to the righteousness of God (Mt. 5:46). Hence, the revealed will of God (Mt. 7:21) is to hunger and thirst after that righteousness (Mt. 5:5) greater than the best of men (Mt. 5:20) and equal to the best of God (Mt. 5:46) found only by faith in the substitutionary Person and works of Christ.

Notice the contrasting characteristics of these two basic ways to heaven:

## 1. The way that leads to death

- a. the majority way “*many*”
- b. the wide gate – inclusive of many different work applications
- c. the broad way – sufficiently wide for many religions

## 2. The way that ultimately leads to heaven

- a. the minority way – “*few*”
- b. the strait gate – demands self-denial
- c. the narrow way – restricted to “*I am the way*”

The bottom line difference between those institutional public ways of service who teach justification by works versus those who teach justification by grace is about whose works actually obtain entrance into heaven. Those who teach justification by works, believe there is no acceptance into heaven apart from works produced **in their own physical body** in addition to their faith in Christ. Those who teach justification by grace believe the works performed **in the physical body of Christ alone** merits entrance into heaven in behalf of the believer. Hence, all who teach that works must be performed **in their own body** for ultimate justification also deny eternal security of the true believer. All who teach that Christ completely satisfied God’s demand for righteousness by the works performed **in his own body in their**

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**behalf**, believe in eternal security of the true believer. The former constitute the “many” churches/denomination within Christendom, while the latter constitute the “few” in Christendom.

Therefore, it should be your desire to find yourself among the minority or “*few*” public institutions, as it is only among the “*few*” the right way of salvation is to be found. Sovereign Grace Landmark Baptists are among those “*few*.”

## The True God Test

The second test that will be used to distinguish between the true and false public institutional ways of service is the truth about God. Jesus denies that eternal life is possible for anyone who embraces and believes in a different god than the true God revealed in Scripture:

*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.- Jn.*

17:3

Worship of any other god is called idolatry in the Bible. Idolatry begins with a wrong mental concept of God. Those who fashion visible images of God are working from whatever mental image they may have of God. That mental image comes from false teachings by false religions. It is that mental image that is manifested either in a visible expression such as an image or portrait or in a false doctrinal expression, such as the doctrinal expressions of Mormonism, The Watch Tower Society, Muslims, Hindu, or Roman Catholics, etc.

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The Bible is given to provide the right mental image of God. The right mental image of God will prohibit any kind of visible expression (image, painting, etc.) or any false doctrinal expression of the true God. The Bible reveals the one true God, as one Triune Being consisting of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit coequally sharing the same name (Yahweh):

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: - Mt. 28:19-20*

This Triune Godhead is revealed in the very structure of His creation:

*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse: - Rom. 1:20*

The created universe is three dimensional consisting of space, matter and time. Each of these is triune in nature as well. Time is one, but is three dimensional (past, present and future). Space is one, but is three dimensional (length, width and depth). Matter is one, but is three dimensional (energy, motion and phenomena). Significantly, in each case the whole existence of the one is interdependent upon the existence of each aspect. Thus to do away with one aspect is to do away with the whole. Thus, for the whole to exist, so must each individual aspect of the trinity.

This true God is revealed to man through the incarnation of the Son of God in human flesh. If man wants to know what God would be like if he lived in a human body, then all they have to do is examine Jesus Christ. The moral character of the Father and Holy

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Spirit are equally revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, if you know the Son you know both the Father and the Holy Spirit, as they all equally share the very same attributes that make God to be God.

You should want to find yourself within public institutions that teach the true God of the Bible.

There is no possible salvation for idolaters who embrace a god foreign to the God revealed in Scripture (Jn. 17:3). One may not understand all there is to know about God when he/she is saved, but he/she at least must be free from any idolatrous image or doctrine of God when he/she is saved, as salvation is the revelation of the true God in connection with faith in Jesus Christ. For example, neither a Mormon nor a Jehovah's Witness can be saved while still embracing the Mormon or Watchtower view of God. Why? The god you embrace in your mind is the god you are embracing by faith.

*We are not saying you must have a complete understanding of the God of the Bible to be saved. Nor are we saying you must understand the Trinity to be saved. However, it is one thing not to understand and need to be taught more about the God of the Bible, but quite another thing to embrace, and believe in a god that contradicts the God of the Bible.*

We are saying that all public religious institutions who teach a wrong god and/or wrong way of salvation cannot be regarded as true churches of Christ.

In the following chapter, we will begin our journey into discerning true from false public ways of service by applying these two basic truths to all churches/denominations. These tests will reveal that many *small* denominations, who are “few” in number

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have no real difference from the false majority or *many*, as many *small* denominations will also fail the same two basic truths as denominations which are *large* in numbers.



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## The Target Method

Now we are ready to take these two simple truths and apply them to the public religious institutions of Christendom, as a whole, and find out who are the false majority or “*many*” versus the true minority or “*few*.”

Take a sheet of paper and draw a bull’s-eye target with five outer circles. Let’s assume the bulls-eye represents what is a true New Testament church. I am going to assume you believe at least two fundamental basic truths. I will assume you believe the truth about the true God, and the truth of salvation, as defined in the previous chapter. We shall take these two basic truths and attempt to show that if you simply believe these two basic truths you are already in a smaller minority of Christians than you think.



Now, let me ask you a series of questions.

**QUESTION #1:** *Do you think other world religions and their sacred temples and shrines are acceptable to God? Does the*

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*Hindu and Moslem serve God in an acceptable way. Do they teach the essential truths about god and salvation*

As you ponder this question, consider what Jesus said,

*I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me. – Jn. 14:6*

Consider what Peter said,

*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved – Acts 4:12*

The vast majority of religious people in this world belong to religions that repudiate what Jesus and Peter just said. The 1998 Almanac lists a total of 3,848,891,000 (almost 4 billion people out of the 7 billion world population) on planet earth that belong to non-Christian religions who reject the Biblical revelation of who God is, and the way of salvation.

Why else would Jesus give a worldwide commission if the majority of the world's religious people were already safe and on their way to heaven?

As a professed Christian you are already in the minority among religious people in the world. Now, on the target you have drawn place the initials "WR" (World Religions) in the outer circle. You can safely eliminate them from consisting of true churches of Christ.

**QUESTION #2:** *What about Christian denominations that merge Christian ideas with other world religions or what are called*

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*“New Age” Christianity? For example, like “Unity” and the “Baha’i faith” or simply Christianized Hinduism or Buddhism (e.g. Christian Science, Scientology, etc.) that includes Christ as one among many other great prophets, but still teach another god than revealed in the Bible, and still Christ is the only way to heaven. Would you accept them as acceptable public institutional ways to serve God?*

Obviously, one who believes in the Biblical revelation of who God is, and that there is no other way to be saved other than through Christ alone cannot accept these denominations as acceptable public ways to serve God.

In the second circle of your bulls-eye write “**NAC**” (New Age Christianity). Like it or not, you are eliminating institutions that claim to be “Christian.” Your view of what is a proper New Testament Church and/or real Christianity is getting narrower.

**QUESTION: #3:** *Would you accept cultic churches (Jehovah’s Witnesses, World Wide Church of God, Mormons, etc.) as acceptable institutions or ways?*

No doubt they possess more Biblical characteristics than the former two groups. However, they still repudiate the Biblical revelation of God and the gospel of grace through faith in Christ alone for salvation.

In the third circle of your bulls-eye write “**CC**” (Cultic Christianity). Your view of what is a proper New Testament Church and/or real Christianity is getting narrower.

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**QUESTION #4:** *Would you accept sacramental churches (Roman Catholic, Churches of Christ, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed, etc.) as acceptable ways to serve God or acceptable churches?*

These type of Christians and churches no doubt possess much more Biblical truth than the former three groups. However, they still deny the truth of the gospel of grace. Instead, they teach that regeneration, and thus salvation is initially obtained through baptism and sustained through other ordinances (communion, etc.) in connection with works performed in your body.

They reject that Christ in his own body provided all the good works/righteousness you need to be justified before God by imputation based on substitution (2 Cor. 5:21).

Instead, they are like those in Matthew 7:21-23 who profess Christ as “Lord” but claim they have done “many wonderful works” as the final basis for entrance into heaven. This is what their gospel teaches, and if that gospel represents *their true state of faith*, then Christ will say unto them “*Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you.*”

**Remember, we are not attempting to judge their actual salvation experience or condition, but rather asking if institutions which preach and teach the gospel of works can be regarded as acceptable ways to serve God?**

As you consider that question, consider what Paul said about those who preach/teach that kind of gospel:

*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.*

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*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 apostle John had polluted Christian institutions in view when he commanded true Christians which were involved in them to “come out of her”:

*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

So the issue is not whether there are genuine saved people within these kinds of churches, but are these kinds of institutions the proper place for true children of God to serve God? John says no.

In the fourth circle, place the letters “**SC**” (sacramental churches). You are now finding yourself increasingly among the minority of Christians by just believing in two fundamental Biblical truths and with much fewer choices of institutions available where you can serve God acceptably in regard to just these two basic truths.

**QUESTION #5:** *Are Pedobaptist (infant baptizers) churches (Presbyterian, Reformed, etc.) acceptable public ways of service, even though they profess the right God and profess salvation is all of grace, but contradict that profession in their ordinances, and by the type of persons they intentionally receive as members into their churches?*

In other words, they say one thing with their mouth, but say the exact opposite with their ordinances and church membership!

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They administer water to lost human beings (infants) and admit such lost members into their institutional membership where they continue to exist, as lost members, perhaps for the rest of their lives. These are institutional churches that **purposefully** include lost people into their membership by **purposely** administering baptism to lost persons.

It is one thing to be fooled by the profession of a person and baptize them upon that false profession, but it is quite another thing to **purposely** administer the ordinances to lost people and **intentionally** bring them into the membership of your church.

Can you find any church within the pages of the New Testament that intentionally admitted lost persons into their membership? Can you find any example of baptism in the Scriptures where any infant was baptized? Can you find anywhere in Scripture where pouring or sprinkling was administered to anyone as baptism?

Where there is no proper baptism there can be no proper church, as a New Testament church is a local body of scripturally baptized believers.

Hence, they preach “another gospel” by their ordinances and represent another kind of church by their membership than found in the Scriptures.

If you think that these kinds of churches ought not to be acceptable public ways of service, then place “CGC” (Contradictory Gospel Christianity) in the fifth circle.

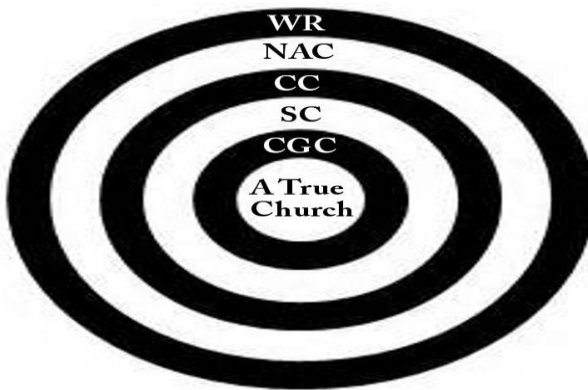
By just using two basic Bible truths; (1) The truth about God; (2) The truth about salvation; you have eliminated about 90% of the religious world as acceptable public religious ways to serve God.

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You have eliminated other World Religions (WR), New Age Christianity (NA), Cultic Christianity (CC), Sacramental Christianity (SC) and Contradictory Gospel Christianity (CGC), as public acceptable religious ways to serve God. You have basically eliminated all types of public Christian ways of service except one tiny category! You have eliminated all, but those public ways of service that preach the same gospel from the pulpit as they do in their gospel ordinances, and worship the Triune God of the Bible.

Therefore, your fear of being found in the tiny minority if you accept “church truth” is really groundless, because if you accept just these two basic Bible truths you end up with only a “Baptistic” minority anyway! Accepting “church truth” simply makes you more consistent with these two salvational truths.



WR – World Religions

NAC – New Age Christianity

CC – Cultic Christianity

SC – Sacramental Christianity

CGC – Contradictory Gospel Christianity

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## The Salvation Method

As previously stated,<sup>3</sup> all other denominations, with the exception of a few Baptist groups, embrace a salvational church doctrine.

For example, Roman Catholicism believes salvation is in their universal visible church. To be in their church is to be saved, but to be outside their church is to be lost.<sup>4</sup>

For example, Reformed Catholics (Protestants) also believe salvation is in their universal invisible church. Indeed, they define the phrase “in Christ” to mean one is brought into spiritual union with Christ through baptism by the Spirit into their “true” church. To be “in Christ” is to be saved and to be outside of Christ is to be lost. Hence, there is no salvation outside of their “true” kind of church.

For example, Restoration Christianity (restored by prophets) in the early 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century either believe in the same “true” church salvation relationship or that salvation is restricted to their visible church denominations (J.W.’s, etc.).

Only some independent and Landmark type Baptists believe that our spiritual union “in Christ” has nothing to do with the church of Christ either before or after salvation, but solely with the gospel and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit from Genesis to Revelation.

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<sup>3</sup> Please review the “Introduction” to this book.

<sup>4</sup> Rome has recently stated that there may be some rare exceptions to this rule. However, these exceptions have to meet certain specific criteria.



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We believe this church/salvation denies the very fundamental truths of salvation, and therefore, perverts the gospel of Jesus Christ. The foundations for this serious charge will be carefully laid in the remainder of this chapter.

## The Foundation of the Church is New Testament

*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone – Eph. 2:20*

The “prophets” described as part of this foundation are not Old Testament Prophets, but properly follow the apostles, as Paul gives them a numerical order:

*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*

Universal invisible church advocates claim both above texts have reference to their “true” church theory. However, these texts present one of the greatest objections against their universal invisible church theory or their so-called mystical body of Christ.

In these two texts, Paul establishes that the “foundation” of this kind of church was laid and composed first with New Testament materials. Therefore, the foundation of the church is laid in the New Testament, not in the Old Testament. The metaphor is

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completely abused if the church existed before its foundation, or before its first members were added.<sup>5</sup>

## **The Baptism in the Spirit is New Testament**

Moreover, just as the “foundation” of the church was not laid in the Old Testament, neither did the baptism in the Spirit occur in the Old Testament. The baptism in the Spirit is predictive prophecy in the gospels (Mt. 3:11) not fulfilled until the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-3).

Therefore, keeping their view in mind what would these two facts mean? According to their church doctrine, it would deny any spiritual union “in Christ” prior to Pentecost for anyone. It would mean all human beings prior to Pentecost were spiritually **outside** of Christ because there was no existing church or baptism in the Spirit, as both are New Testament in origin.

However, what are the Biblical implications of being spiritually outside of Christ? For example, is there any kind of salvation possible for anyone outside of Christ at anytime?

## **The Gospel of Christ is Old Testament**

New Testament writers claim that the gospel of Christ has been preached by all the prophets from the first prophet Abel to the last

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<sup>5</sup> This is the problem with the non-dispensational universal invisible church view. Moreover, the mechanism of this view is still the baptism in the Spirit which does not occur until the day of Pentecost – far too late to be used as the mechanism for Old Testament saints.

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prophet preceding Christ – John the Baptist, as Peter explicitly states:

*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* – Acts 10:43

The writer of Hebrews claims the very same gospel preached to us was preached by Moses to Israel:

*For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them [those who fell in the wilderness in unbelief – Heb. 3], not being mixed with faith in them that heard* – Heb. 4:2

Jesus claimed before Pentecost there was no other way to the Father but by him (Jn. 14:6) and Peter claimed after Pentecost that no other name was given under heaven among men other than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Paul explicitly states that his gospel preached “none other things” than that which all the prophets had preached (Acts 26:22-23).

Paul repeatedly claims that Abraham is the pattern for “all who are of faith” in regard to justification by grace through faith (Rom. 4:4-11,16) in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:23-25; Gal. 3:6-8) and that God’s covenant of salvation with Abraham was “*in Christ*” 430 years prior to Moses, and thus 2000 plus 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

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He also tells the Galatians that they were born after the Spirit just as we are born after the Spirit:

*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*

Paul tells the Romans that only those Israelites born after the Spirit are the children of God rather than those merely born after the flesh:

*That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. – Rom. 9:7*

God told Ezekiel that “*circumcision in flesh*” was insufficient for entrance into the temple, but they additionally had to have “*circumcision in heart*”

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

Paul says that this circumcision in heart is “*the circumcision of Christ*”

*In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: - Col. 2:11*

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Long before Pentecost Jesus rebuked Nicodemus as a “master” teacher in Israel for being ignorant of the new birth by the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-11). However, Israel was at its peak of apostasy under the “traditions” of the elders at the time of Christ’s first coming and knew less about the gospel and salvation than their fathers.

The New Testament writers insist that the very same gospel (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2; 1 Cor. 15:4-5), and very same way of salvation (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12) that was preached before the first coming of Christ is also preached after his coming.<sup>6</sup>

## Repudiation of the Essentials of Salvation:

However, such a doctrine necessarily perverts the very fundamental truths of salvation in all ages.

For example, the very essence of the lost condition experienced by Adam, and passed to all his natural born descendents is spiritual separation from God or spiritual death.

*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. – Gen. 2:17*

God said that Adam would die *in the day*” he ate, but he did not die physically in that day, but physically died 930 years later. What

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<sup>6</sup> The only difference was the pre-cross gospel was progressive in revelation and unfulfilled, while the post-cross gospel was fulfilled. Job believed in the coming Christ as “my redeemer” (Job 19:25) but Post-cross Christians realize the specific means (the cross) that redemption was obtained. Israel at the time of Christ’s coming was apostate and knew less of the gospel due to the perversions of the traditions of the elders than those between Genesis and Malichi.

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kind of death did he suffer “*in that day*” if it was not physical death? He suffered *spiritual death* or the separation between his human spirit and the Spirit of God. Since God is life and He is light (Jn. 1:4), to be separated from him spiritually is *spiritual death*. Remember, it was God that “*breathed*” (inspired) into the man, making him a “*living soul*.” Man’s spiritual life originated with union between the Spirit of God and the soul of man, which enabled him to have spiritual communion with God.

Take the analogy of a heater that is unplugged from the wall socket. To be unplugged is to be dead electrically. However, to be plugged into the wall socket is to be alive electrically. Electric life is by union between the heater and the wall socket. When brought into union with electrical life from the socket, that electrical life indwells the heater. Unplug it from the socket and it is separated from electric life and thus is electrically dead.

The universal invisible church doctrine demands that the baptism in the Spirit is the wall socket to be in spiritual union with God through Christ. However, if that is the case, then all mankind from Adam to Pentecost were spiritually separated from God, and thus, spiritually dead or **outside** of Christ without any hope of salvation.

However, spiritual union with God through Christ has always been by the supernatural grace of God in the act of quickening (making alive) whereby the spirit of man is brought into spiritual union with God through Christ. Long before Pentecost, Jesus told Nicodemus:

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* – Jn. 3:3

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If the new birth was impossible until the day of Pentecost, then Nicodemus should have replied, “*What is this new doctrine you are teaching?*” However, when Nicodemus expressed ignorance of the supernatural unseen power of the Spirit of God through new birth (v. 8), Christ rebuked him for being a “*master*” teacher of the Scriptures and ignorant of this truth:

*Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? – Jn. 3:9-10*

The new birth is clearly taught in the Old Testament as circumcision of the heart, or giving of a new heart by God. In fact, on the very same day God provided the Ten Commandments the second time through Moses, God said:

*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*

In the very same book at its close, the writer declares that such a heart must be given to them by God in order for them to be spiritually alive, or have ability to spiritually see and hear and obey God:

*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*

This is the new birth or being quickened or being made alive to spiritually perceive, see and obey God.

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The Old Covenant was never designed or given to Israel as a means to obtain eternal life or entrance into heaven. It was designed and given to reveal what sin and what God's moral standard of righteousness is (Rom. 3:20-21; Gal. 3:20).

What then was designed by God to bring them back into spiritual union with God? It was the quickening power of God in connection with the gospel of Christ:

*My soul cleaveth unto the dust: **quicken thou me according to thy word.** – Psa. 119:25*

*Being **born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever..... And **this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.** – 1 Pet. 1:23*

*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. – Acts 10:43*

*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 Crux of the Issue:

So here is the issue. The gospel preexisted the building of the church, and therefore, the church cannot possibly be any part of the gospel way of salvation without changing the gospel into “*another gospel*” after Pentecost (Gal. 1:8-9). Furthermore, the very fundamentals of salvation necessarily include spiritual union with



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God through Christ and thereby indwelling or there is no salvation possible for any fallen human at any time.

Why is that an issue? It is an issue because the doctrine of the universal invisible church makes what is essential to the very nature of salvation inseparable from membership in this church. According to universal invisible church advocates, the baptism in the Spirit is the method by which believers are brought into *spiritual union* with Christ, or placed *spiritually* “in Christ” as there is no salvation outside of Christ. They insist that “*in Christ*” is inseparable from being members of the mystical universal invisible church body of Christ. Hence, to be saved is to be placed in the *universal invisible* church, as that is what they say being spiritually “in Christ” means, and to be lost, is to be outside the membership of this universal invisible church, and therefore outside or separated spiritually from Christ.

Therefore, the baptism in the Spirit cannot possibly be interpreted to be the means by which a person is brought into spiritual union with God through Christ as that would condemn all people prior to Pentecost to be **outside** of Christ and having no spiritual union with God, thus eternally spiritually dead in sin.

What then is the baptism in the Spirit and the day of Pentecost all about if it is not being brought into spiritual union with Christ? It is the standard operating procedure of God when endorsing and indwelling a new public institutional “*house of God.*” It is not an *individual* baptism, but an *institutional* baptism to a plural “you” of already water baptized believers in Christ (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:4-5).

It has Old Testament precedence with each newly built “house of God.” It always occurred immediately after “*the house of God*” was finished by its builder (Ex. 40:35-37; 2 Chron. 7:1-3; Acts 2:1-

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3). In the case of the first church in Jerusalem it occurred once on Pentecost to an all Jewish church membership, and then in Acts 10 in order to divinely accredit Gentile believers as proper candidates for church membership through water baptism.

Indeed, every single instance where the baptism in the Spirit is predicted prior to Pentecost, it is predicted to be fulfilled only upon a plural body of water baptized believers (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:4-5 a plural “*you*”). After Pentecost, the benefits or gifts of this baptism in the Spirit are promised only to water baptized believing members of the church institution<sup>7</sup> (Acts 2:38). As a consequence, many in the audience (3000) repented and believed in the gospel and were baptized in water and thereby added to this new public “*house of God*” (Acts 2:41-42,46).

Our “*church truth*” position must be preached and taught in order to protect the gospel from being perverted into “*another gospel*” of church salvation. Only our view of the church maintains the proper distinction between the Biblical way of salvation and the way of service. So “*church truth*” should be the last doctrine we ought to be ashamed of, simply because it can only be found among the “*few*.” Only by preaching “*church truth*” is the gospel preserved from being perverted by some kind of church salvation doctrine. Church truth maintains the distinction between the gospel of salvation and the church.

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<sup>7</sup> The “miracles, wonders and signs” that characterized the office of apostle (2 Cor. 12:12) were communicated to other church members through the laying on of their hands. These were temporary until the apostolic office produced the finished Biblical Canon with the writing of the New Testament. For a fuller defense of this position see my book “The Completed Biblical Canon” - [http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/Finished\\_Revleaitonbook.pdf](http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/Finished_Revleaitonbook.pdf)

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## What About 1 Corinthians 12:13?

*For by one Spirit<sup>8</sup> 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*

Many suppose 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to the baptism in the Spirit and a universal invisible church body. However, 1 Corinthians 12:13 is only a summary of the fuller teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:13-3:16. In the first three chapters, Paul is dealing with divisions within the congregational body at Corinth over the issue of different human administrators of water baptism.

*Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crisps and Gaius; - I Cor. 1:12-14*

Paul resolves this division by teaching that the human administrators really worked together toward the same goal in building the congregational body of baptized believers at Corinth under the leadership of one Spirit – the Spirit of God.

*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 anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

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<sup>8</sup> Some believe “Spirit” should be lower case “spirit” having no reference to the Person of the Holy Spirit, but to the unity of mind existing when becoming a member of the local congregation.

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*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..... Know you not that **ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?** – 1 Cor. 3:5-9, 16*

Therefore, those administering water baptisms “*are one*” and all work “*together with God*” the Holy Spirit under His leadership to build a singular “*temple*” comprised of a plural “*ye*” at Corinth. Note carefully that Paul said “*ye*” (not “*we*”) are the temple of the Holy Spirit at Corinth.<sup>9</sup> He is not a member of the “temple of the Holy Spirit” at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:16; 12:27).

Therefore, it was under the leadership of one Spirit (the Holy Spirit) that all the members were **water** baptized into the one institutional public “*house of God*” at Corinth, wherein the Spirit of God dwelt corporately, and gifted each member to fulfil a specific role in that body. Even the lost members are used by God to play a specific role in the churches (1 Cor. 11:19).<sup>10</sup> Also, this metaphorical body was a complete body with a metaphorical head other than Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:21 “head”).

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<sup>9</sup> Many fail to understand the Biblical context for the Pauline Epistles. He is writing to a people who were like faith and order with himself. He is writing to churches of like faith and order. Therefore the contextual “*we*” of his epistles is a “*we*” of like faith and order, instead of a “*we*” of post-first century denominational confusion and denominational division. Therefore, the use of “*we*” only demands they share things in common as members of the same kind of churches. However, the use of “*ye*” refers to the membership of that particular church. Paul was a member and authorized missionary of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-4; Acts 15:1-3).

<sup>10</sup> There is now only “one baptism” and it is the baptism administered by men to other men found in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) as no other baptism is promised until the end of the age.

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The same division that existed over the administrators of water baptism existed over the difference of spiritual gifts within the congregational body at Corinth (1 Cor. 12). Therefore, Paul applies the very same principle to the diversity of gifted members that he did to the diversity of administrators of water baptism.

These gifts were imparted to them by the laying on of apostolic hands, just as, their water baptism was administered by the hands of men (Acts 6:5; 8:15-17; 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6; 2 Cor. 12:12). What is true of the church as the institutional body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-26, 28) is true of each geographically located church (1 Cor. 12:27). Remember the context of the apostolic letters is “we” who are all members of churches that are like faith and order with each other, rather than the Post-apostolic context of “we” who are not found in churches of like faith and order.

**Conclusion:** The doctrine of the universal invisible church fundamentally attacks and denies the Biblical doctrine of salvation at its very heart. It denies spiritual union with God prior to Pentecost, thereby leaving all pre-Pentecost saints in spiritual death (spiritual separation) outside of Jesus Christ. By the very nature of this doctrine it demands at minimum “*another gospel*” way of salvation prior to Pentecost, as any pre-Pentecost gospel consistent with this theory would not resolve the problem of sin in the life of the Old Testament believers in any practical sense, because it would leave them in spiritual separation from God, thus spiritually dead. Therefore, the advocates of this view are *doctrinally* teaching “*another gospel*” inconsistent with the gospel that Paul preached, and said was “according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:4-5; Acts 26:22-23; Heb. 4:2) – meaning the Old Testament scriptures.

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## The Builder's Method

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. – Mt. 16:18*

Matthew 16:18 is the very first time in the New Testament that the Greek term *ekklesia* (translated “church”) occurs. Its first occurrence is used by the builder of the New Testament church in reference to being built. The builder of the church goes on to use the very same term 21 more times, making a total of 22 times Jesus used the term *ekklesia*. No scholar disputes that all 21 following uses of *ekklesia* by Christ refer to a local visible congregational body of baptized believers. However, debate rages over its very first usage by Christ in Matthew 16:18.

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 directly addresses the 23 uses of *ekklesia* by Christ in response 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.*

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*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 a local assembly when He said: 'On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Christ used the word ecclesia, so far as the record tells us, just 22 times. We will set aside, for the sake of argument, this passage, Matt. xvi, 18, as doubtful, and look at the 21 passages, to determine our Lord's usage of the word. Whatever that usage is, must be applied to this passage. In Matt. xviii, 17, Jesus says: 'Tell it to the church, but if he neglect to*

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*hear the church.' This is the local assembly. In Rev. I, II and III Christ uses the word ecclesia 18 times, e.g., 'the seven churches,' 'to the angel of the church at Ephesus,' etc., and in every one of these cases there can be no sort of question that He means the local assembly. It is Christ that says this, because the one who told John to write what is here recorded, says of Himself; 'I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.' Again, in Rev. xxii, 16, we read: 'I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches.' Certainly here ecclesia means the local assembly.*

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



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*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*

No one has ever successfully repudiated this response by Dr. T.T. Eaton. Indeed, a careful examination of Matthew 16:18 will support Dr. Eaton's view.

### **The Building Context of Matthew 16:18**

It should be easy to see that Matthew 16:18 outlines a building context with a building line of thought:

There is a builder “**I will build**”.

There is something to build “**my church**” and

There is something to build on “**upon this rock**”.

These points clearly demonstrate a *building* context line of thought. The builder is named. The building is named. The foundation to build upon is named. However, apart from the name given to Simon (Peter, Gr. “petros” a rock), there is an obvious missing ingredient in this building context. The missing ingredient

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is the material out of which Jesus builds His church. How does the noun *petros* supply this missing ingredient?

## 2. The Characterization

There is an intentional word play used by Christ in this verse between the name of Peter (Gr. *petros*) and the foundation rock (Gr. *petra*) upon which Christ will build His church.

Significantly, the noun *petros* (translated “Peter”) is found without the definite article (“the”) in the Greek text.<sup>11</sup> This often indicates that the speaker or writer is intentionally trying to characterize the quality of the term. What would be the implication of such a characterization in this kind of building context? Such a characterization could define the suitability of “petros” for the right kind of material for building the edifice (“church”) upon this larger foundation rock.

For example, the characterization would amplify the contrasting word play between “petros” (“Peter”) and “petra” (“rock”) by distinguishing the kind of rock out of which Jesus uses to build the church *with* from the kind of rock He builds the church *upon*. Thus, the foundation rock would be distinguished from the rock edifice upon that foundation. What contextual evidence is there for such an interpretation?

(1) The preposition “*upon*” clearly demands that “petra” is the larger kind of rock used for foundations.

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<sup>11</sup> It cannot be denied that Jesus gave Simon the name *petros* for intentional characterization in John 1:42 and this is the only context that provides any reason for that characterization. So characterization is intentional.

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(2) The 3<sup>rd</sup> person demonstrative pronoun “this” (“*upon this rock*”) demonstrates that the foundation rock (petra) is not the same rock as “petros” because “petros” (“Peter”) is identified by a 2<sup>nd</sup> person (“you”) pronoun rather than a 3<sup>rd</sup> person (“this”). Therefore, “petros” (Peter) must refer to another type of building rock such as the kind used for the construction of the edifice built upon that foundation.

(3) The historical distinction in meaning between “petra” (large massive rock) and “petros” (“Peter” - smaller part of a massive rock) would indicate that the kind of building rock used for the edifice is smaller in nature to that used for the foundation.

Both “Petros” and “Petra” refer to “rock” but the building context and grammar make them distinct one from the other. However, in such a building context, both are essential. The church must be built **upon** a more massive rock, but the church edifice itself must also be built **with** rock. Only when the two terms are understood in contrast can the building line of thought be completed.

### **3. The building “rock” characterized?**

When the grammar is carefully considered with the historical context, there is a clear picture of what kind of building rock “petros” (Peter) is intended to characterize.

a. A Derived Kind: Grammatically the masculine “petros” is a derivative from the feminine “petra.” The feminine is the source of origin, whereas the masculine is the derived product. Another way to illustrate the difference is by comparing a gold nugget being derived from a larger source such as a *mother lode*. As even

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Catholic theologians admit, the noun “petros” has a history for meaning a smaller rock derived from a larger rock - “petra.” Therefore, in a building context, it would suggest the historical concept where a master builder had a rock cut out of the massive quarry to be used in construction of a building. Contextually, this idea of a derived product from a larger source is clearly spelled out in the verse that immediately precedes Matthew 16:18:

*“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” – Mt. 16:17<sup>12</sup>*

In the Old Testament, the God of Heaven is repeatedly called “the Rock.” Here the source of Peter’s confession is the God of heaven. Spiritually, Simon was a derived product from a greater heavenly source. In essence he was a chip off the old rock.

**b. A Prepared Kind:** The builder would not only have the rock cut at the quarry, but he would have it cut to the precise measurement to fit the exact place intended for it in the structure. This was the job of the Master cutter or rock mason. The rock mason was responsible to make ready such a stone prepared for the use of the Master builder. John the Baptist had been sent ahead of Christ to “*make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Lk. 1:17). John the Baptist prepared the material from which Christ used to build His church. Peter is an example of such prepared material, and his name characterized the very building materials prepared for the Lord to build His church. He had received the gospel of Christ and then submitted to John’s baptism (Acts 1:21-22; Lk. 7:29-30). His name aptly characterizes the only kind of material

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<sup>12</sup> The nearest grammatical antecedent for “this” rock (third person singular) is “it” in verse 17 which refers to his profession in verse 16.

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that the Master Builder would use to build His churches – baptized believers.

c. A Representative Kind: In the immediate context it is clear that Jesus was not directing his questions to just Peter. He is addressing all his disciples. Impetuous Peter simply responded in behalf of all the rest.<sup>13</sup> Peter’s response represented the belief of all the Disciples of Christ. His response is required by all whom the Lord adds to His congregations by profession of faith and baptism as clearly seen in Acts 2:41-42.<sup>14</sup>

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

It is in this *representative characterization* that Peter is addressed as “*thee*” (Mt. 16:19) in conjunction with the keys (as the plural “you” in Matthew 18:18 proves it is given to the whole church).

The keys are not given uniquely to Peter, as an individual, but rather are given to him, as a representative of the kind of membership or building material used to build his churches. Hence, the singular pronoun “*thee*” in verse 19 does not support

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<sup>13</sup> All the apostles had already made this profession earlier – Mt. 15:33

<sup>14</sup> Luke uses the periphrastic construction in verse 42 translated “*continued steadfastly*” in setting forth Acts 2:41-42 as the pattern followed by the churches.

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the Catholic position that Peter is given the keys as the first Vicar or Pope.<sup>15</sup>

## 4. Christ's Testimony:

Positive proof that Christ never intended to give the keys to Peter as an individual or as an apostle is that only two chapters later the authority of the keys is said to be given to a plural “ye” and “you” which have for their antecedent “*the church.*” (Mt. 18:17-18).<sup>16</sup>

Neither Peter nor the apostles are said to be the final court of appeal on earth, but “*tell it to the church and if they hear not the church*” (Mt. 18:17), as there is no other final court of appeal on earth or any other final authority for discipleship matters on earth.

## 5. Peter's Testimony:

Who could better determine whether this interpretation is correct other than Peter himself? How did Peter understand Christ's words in Matthew 16:18-19?

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<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the Lord uses a future tense “shall” with a perfect tense “bound” indicating this is only administrative authority to bind what God has already bound. No Papal legislative authority here.

<sup>16</sup> The term “church” or Greek ekklesia is inclusive of a plurality. It is common to address a church in the New Testament and then use the plural pronoun to continuing addressing it (e.g. Acts 11:22; 1 Cor. 14:23; 1 Thes. 1:1; etc.). Also, the subject is church discipline in Matthew 18:15-17 and it is the church not its officers that administer discipline (e.g. 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2; 6 “the many”).

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It is clear from Peter's own epistle that He repudiated Rome's interpretation and adopted this interpretation to be the correct one. How so? Within five verses in 1 Peter 2:4-8, Peter provides this whole building analogy to his readers concerning the material used to build the church, and the proper identity of the *Petra* to be Christ rather than Peter (petros).

First, he characterizes the congregation to be made up of metaphorical stones in keeping with how Christ used the name of Peter to characterize the building material of His congregation:

*Ye also, as LIVELY STONES, are BUILT up a spiritual house... – 2 Pet. 2:5*

The words “*built up*” are 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 analogy for the church of Christ, if it wasn't from Christ's use of Peter's own name in Matthew 16:18?

Furthermore, Peter identifies Christ not only as the “rock” that unbelieving Jews stumbled over, but the foundation stone 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” is the object of faith which the Jews stumbled over in unbelief and rejection. This corresponds perfectly with Christ's previous statement “*upon this*

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*rock I will build my church*” as the **foundational profession** of faith made by Peter in Matthew 16:16 – “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*” That is the profession of faith by these “lively stones” which Christ uses to “build up” the public house of worship. It is the public house of worship or the “house of God” where “acceptable sacrifices” are offered up to God. 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. However, if this is not enough, Peter denies the Catholic view of the primacy of Peter.

*...whom am also an elder...Neither be lord's over God's heritage... – 1 Pet. 5:1, 3*

Here would have been 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.

Peter categorically denies every claim that Rome makes in Matthew 16:18-19. Peter categorically affirms this Landmark Baptist interpretation of Matthew 16:18-19.

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 the churches<sup>17</sup> (Rom. 16:10-11, 14-15) at Rome. Peter was instrumental in its foundation on the

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<sup>17</sup> Romans 16 demonstrate there were several congregations at Rome unto which Paul wrote.



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day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11) and Paul was instrumental in its growth by his writings and presence during his imprisonment.

It is interesting to note that Peter uses one term (*lithos*) in 2 Peter 2:4-8 for two distinct subjects.<sup>18</sup>

In Matthew 16:16-19 Christ is speaking of His church in the institutional<sup>19</sup> sense in regard to its organizational constituent character. Christ is its builder. The foundation upon which it is built is the profession “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God*” and the material out of which it is built is baptized believers. This is precisely his continuing application of the term *ekklesia* proving that the institution he claims he will build in Matthew 16:18 is the very same one he continues to teach and speak about every single time thereafter. In every single use of the term *ekklesia* thereafter by Christ there is no debate He is referring to what can only be a local visible congregation of baptized believers.

**Why should you think that He promised to build something He would never again speak about, but rather speak about something 21 more times that he never promised to**

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<sup>18</sup> 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) Jesus Christ – v. 4; (2) church members – v. 5. However, Peter uses the disputed Greek “*petra*” in this same context exclusively for the Person of Christ as the proper object of faith (v. 8).

<sup>19</sup> The Institutional sense conveys the organizational character and purpose of an entity. For example, “the public school” is an American institution. We do not mean a universal invisible school. We are referring to the public school that exists in each community across America that has a common organizational structure and purpose. Likewise, the words “the church” in the 18 cases it is found in scripture without a specific geographical location refers to the church as an institution, its common organization and purpose. Its organization is composed of baptized believers, with qualified officers and ordinances, and its purpose is defined in the Great Commission.

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**build?????? The evidence from the Builder's use of the term supports only the Landmark Baptist position.**

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## The “House of God” Method

*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

This is the eighty-fifth mention of the phrase “*the house of God*” in the Bible. All eighty-four previous occurrences indisputably refer by context to the **local visible institution for public worship** – the temple. The writer of this statement is Paul, a Jew. The one being addressed is Timothy, raised by a Jewish mother and grandmother under the Old Testament scriptures. Jews were raised with certain understandings when it came to the words “*the house of God.*” Understanding this phrase will also help us understand the true nature of the churches of Christ. When this phrase was used or was heard or read by Jews there were certain specific things that immediately came to their minds.

### A. It was the appointed public place of worship:

*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: 6 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:7 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*

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*blessed thee.....13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:14 But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.” – Deut. 12:5 (emphasis mine)*

*Unto him be glory **in the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. – Eph. 3:21 (emphasis mine)*

### **B. It had a qualified public ministry:**

*Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that **hath any blemish**, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, Or crookback, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. – Lev. 21:17-21(emphasis mine)*

*This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be **blameless....**” – 1 Tim. 3:1-2 (emphasis mine)*

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### C. It's construction and ordinances were built after a Divine 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. And look that thou make them after their **pattern**, which was shewed thee in the mount. – Ex. 25:9-10 (emphasis mine)*

*All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of **this pattern**. – 1 Chon. 28:19 (emphasis mine)*

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and **upon this rock** I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. – Mt. 16:18 (emphasis mine)*

*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*

The churches of Christ are reproduced by a divine pattern (Mt. 28:19-20) and each essential is defined by a divine pattern (essentials of baptism, essentials of the gospel, essentials of the Lord's Supper, essentials of qualifications for officers, etc.).

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### D. It administrated everything according to a due order:

*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 Chon. 15:13 (emphasis mine)*

*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)*

### E. All other places, ministries and administrations were forbidden and regarded as “*high places*.”

*Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the **high places**, yet unto the LORD their God only. – 2 Chron. 33:17 (emphasis mine)*

*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)*

Although, the eighty-fifth mention of “**the house of God**” is found in 1 Timothy 3:15, it is the first mention in the New Testament that does not apply it to the Old Testament houses of God (tabernacle, temple and rebuilt temple). Theologians according to the laws of hermeneutics would refer to such a first mention as **the law of first mention**. The significance of such a law is that it is usually regarded by theologians as the definitive occurrence. True to this law is the fact that Paul says “**The house of**

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God which is....” demonstrating clearly that Paul is providing a definitive statement. The immediate context clearly defines it as the institution of public worship where a qualified ministry is found (1 Tim. 3:1-13) and where the public offering (Person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ) is found (1 Tim. 3:16) and where “*the faith*” once delivered is taught (1 Tim. 4:1). In addition to all these contextual factors, it is further defined as “*the church of the living God and the pillar and ground of the truth.*”

The very use of the terms “*the House of God,*” to describe “*the church,*” immediately brought to mind these entire distinctions characteristic of the institution of **public** worship to the Jewish mindset. When the Jew heard the words “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” the immediate thought was the authorized visible institution for public worship where the truth was not only administered but taught (Deut. 12). Surely, no one could seriously describe the universal invisible church as the “*pillar and ground of the truth*” when every doctrine under the sun can be found in it???

This concept clearly conveyed to the Jewish mind the institution for public worship that was built after a divine **pattern**. The churches in the New Testament were all built after the divine pattern in Matthew 28:19-20. People were first converted to the gospel, then baptized and then assembled together and instructed how to observe all things Christ commanded. They all shared “*the faith*” which was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). They were all warned about the rise of false teachers that would lead many to depart from “*the faith*” (1 Tim. 4:1) and they were told exactly how this would happen and how new denominations and churches that were not of like faith and order would arise (Acts 20:29-30). The people were forewarned that demonic activity would be the cause for all departures from “*the house of God*” (1 Tim. 3:15 with 1 Tim. 4:1). These things support the Landmark position.

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### The Prophetic New Testament Method

The epistles are primarily written to local visible churches or members in such churches. The contextual “*we*” of the New Testament books are members of churches of *like faith and order*.

There can be no debate that New Testament churches were fully functioning long before Luke penned the final pages of the book of Acts. There are no accounts of any other denominational kind of churches. All churches found in the pages of the New Testament were of *like faith and order*.

However, when one picks up a modern secular book on “church history” there is nothing found in such books for at least fifteen hundred years after the close of the apostolic era that even comes close to resembling those churches found in the pages of the New Testament. During that period, the only kind of church that stands out on the pages of secular church history is the Roman Catholic Church and those whom Rome persecuted and depicted as heretics.

Even though there is a radical and profound difference in theology between modern Rome and the epistle written to the New Testament church at Rome, the vast majority of secular and religious historians assume they are one and the same.

Even prominent protestant leaders such as Dr. John MacArthur and Dr. R.C. Sproul when they speak of the Roman Catholic Church during the period of the Dark Ages, 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



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is the true apostolic church until the Reformation period, and even now continues to be “a” true church of Christ in error.

However, what evidence supports this assumption? From what sources can this assumption be supported? It is common knowledge that the writing and preservation of ecclesiastical records up to the Reformation period have been solely in the hands of Rome.<sup>20</sup> She has determined what should be preserved and what should be destroyed. She has defined what orthodoxy is and what heresy is and who are to be regarded as “heretics.”<sup>21</sup>

The question must be asked, how credible is her testimony and how accurate are her definitions? 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

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<sup>20</sup> “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.

<sup>21</sup> “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

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many denominations, including some candid Roman Catholic historians that view the data preserved by Rome in a completely different light.<sup>22</sup> Many of them realize that unlike the Scriptures, secular history is; (1) uninspired, thus subject to personal bias;<sup>23</sup> (2) incomplete; and (3) often inaccurate.<sup>24</sup> These historians believe that Rome has unintentionally preserved sufficient historical data to demonstrate that apostolic Christianity continued among those whom she labeled and treated as **heretics**. Indeed, some identify those “*heretics*” as apostolic Christianity who are prophetically

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<sup>22</sup> “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 Vigilus 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

<sup>23</sup> “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

<sup>24</sup> “...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

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predicted to be characterized as “*heretics*” between His first and Second Advent.

Is it a fair question to ask if the Bible predicts that apostate Christianity would characterize the apostolic true churches of Christ as “*heretics*”? Does the Bible predict that apostate Christianity would distort and persecute apostolic churches until He comes again? If it does, all one has to do is compare these predictive scriptures with the character of all churches found in secular church history to see which, if any, are the Lord’s true apostolic churches.

The Bible clearly predicts an apostate Christianity will arise in direct contrast to the characteristics of true apostolic New Testament Churches. In essence, the Bible warns us where we ought not to look for the Lord’s true churches between the close of the Apostolic Age and the Second Coming of Christ.

## **A. Don’t look among Churches 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)

*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*

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These are predictive prophecies concerning the future of the Lord's churches and their persecutors. Significantly, Jesus predicts that those who persecute the Lord's churches during that period, after the close of the Biblical era, will believe they are serving the one true God, in killing them.

*...that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.* – Jn.16:2 (emphasis mine)

At the very minimum, this is clearly a Biblical prophecy that should warn us not to look for the true churches of Christ among those who persecute professed people of God in the name of God.

It does not take much study of secular church history to realize that the Roman Catholic Church perfectly characterizes this kind of persecuting Christianity. 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 them, or took part in such acts of persecution.

Where then do you look for His true churches? You don't look among those known for their persecution of other professed Christians. You look among those whom Rome and Reformed Rome martyred and persecuted, as "heretics." This is the inspired predicted plight of the true churches of Christ during this time of apostasy. Their history is traced by the trail of blood of their martyrs.

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## B. Don't look among State Churches

*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 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)*

Many 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 stated, whereas in Revelation 17:6-18, the symbolic descriptions are explained. In both the symbolic description and explanation she is clearly distinguished from secular government and 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*

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*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 description “*beast*” is a common symbol for gentile governments. In Daniel such beasts are characteristic of secular governments and their rulers (Dan. 7). Her relationship to this beast is two-fold.

1. She sits upon it – Symbolism of being supported by the beast.
2. She commits fornication with the kings of the earth – Symbolism of illicit union – marriage of state and religion – state religion

Furthermore, she is a symbolic woman identified as “*Mystery Babylon.*” The term “mystery” when attached to “*Babylon*” commonly referred to the paganized religions that originated from Babel. Babel was the first organized 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. She is state institutionalized false religion.

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

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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)

The Babylonian mystery religion had its seat of power in the city of Rome at the time John wrote this vision (Rev. 17:18). She was epitomized in Caesar, who was worshipped as a god man. John was on the island of Patmos, because he refused to offer up incense, dedicated to this deity of Rome.

However, John’s message is concerning the future of this harlot. She will be destroyed by ten kings, who had not come to power when John wrote this, nor will they come to power, until just previous to 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... and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. –* Rev. 17:12, 17

She is not destroyed, until the time of these ten kings after they receive a kingdom. They destroy her, when they come to power “*with the beast*” for “*one hour*,” when He attempts to fight Christ at the Second Advent.

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*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.* – Rev. 17:13-14

Rome, as a secular government was overthrown in AD 476, and since that time has been the Vatican State. Therefore, the only government existing in Rome both before, and at the time of the Second Advent, when these ten future kings unite with the beast to fight Christ, is the Vatican Roman Catholic Church State.

John is predicting the future of this Harlot in connection with the churches of God. Notice the direct contrast between this woman in Revelation 17-18, and another woman in Revelation 18 and 21! 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.

This Babylonian mystery cult had captivated, and permeated the whole Roman Empire, long before Constantine the Great came to power in the fourth century. Long before Constantine came to power, there were many churches that took in massive amounts of members, still clinging to the traditions, and beliefs of this Great Harlot. Slowly, multitudes of churches were permeated, and leavened into an apostate condition by this harlot.



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During the time of Constantine the Great, the Roman Empire was beginning to crumble. Constantine rejected the apostolic churches that would have nothing to do with those paganized churches, or with any institutionalized state religion. Constantine embraced the apostate Augustine, and the paganized churches, that sided with him, to form the new state church religion. Constantine hoped this merger would prevent the collapse of the Roman Empire.

Dear reader, take note that the origin of a state church is not to be found in the New Testament, but with paganized Christianity, three hundred years after the writing of the New Testament. Here is the beginning of an institutionalized Christian State religion. The apostate Augustine formulated the theological foundations (The City of God) to support this Christianized Babylonian state religion. In declaring it the new state religion, all citizens in the Roman Empire were to become part of this Christianized Babylonian state religion, just as they had done with the previous pagan Babylonian state religion. The very character of the religious order adopted by Roman Catholicism comes directly from Mystery Babylon:

*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 Babylons or The Papal Worship**. Loizeaux Brothers, New Jersey, 1959, p. 206*

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In the Mystery Babylon religion, can be found **Pontiff's, monks, priests, and Cardinals**, but no such offices are to be found anywhere in the New Testament. Roman Catholicism would continue to adopt and develop the doctrines, and practices of Mystery Babylon, under Christianized names for the next one thousand years.

This Great Whore would produce a brood of offspring, Christianized "*harlots*," all of which would also be state churches. All of them would continue to practice Christianized Babylonian doctrines (infant baptism, sacraments, etc.).

*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*

Some of these "harlots" which are state churches are:

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

We are not to look for apostolic Christianity among any kind of state church, or religion. Such, is an unholy union (harlotry – "*fornication with the kings of the earth*"). This Biblical prophecy

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rules out Rome and her Reformation daughters, as possible candidates to be New Testament churches. 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 churches, as “heretics.”

### **A. Don’t look among those churches 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. Seventh Day Adventism, and other apostate Christian cults, is also well known concerning their dietary laws. There are multitudes of new denominations that distort, and thus deny the gospel of grace, and teach justification by works.

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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 United Pentecostal Churches, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Latter Day Saints, and scores more.

What the apostate church called truth and orthodoxy, the Bible and apostolic Christianity calls heresy. What Roman and Reformed Catholicism condemned as heretics, the New Testament defined as the churches 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 churches of Christ among those who hold to such explicitly condemned heresies. We are to look for the true churches among those who opposed these heresies and as a consequence were labeled “heretics” by the ruling state churches.

## **B. 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*

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*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 invented a slanderous term to label the true apostolic churches. They called the churches of God, **Anabaptists**. The term means to **rebaptize**. New Testament churches refused to recognize the ordinances of apostate churches, as scriptural, and therefore, would properly baptize those coming over from the apostate churches. New Testament churches 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 called the *Codex Justinianus* after their founder.

The fabrications, and slanders brought against the apostolic Anabaptists by Rome, and her Reformed daughters, are legion.<sup>25</sup> When apostolic Christianity used the Bible as their defense, the inquisitors used Catholic tradition, to repudiate their orthodox beliefs, labeling them “*heretics*” instead.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “...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

<sup>26</sup> “...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,’

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Rome accused the ancient apostolic Anabaptist Paulicians for embracing the heresy of Manicheism even though the Paulicians openly denied it and openly condemned Manicheism as heresy themselves.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> The radical Pedobaptist (baby baptizers) led by Thomas Munzer in Germany were labeled as Anabaptists by the Lutheran State Church in order to

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was invented in order to subject to imperial law those who preferred to call 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

<sup>27</sup> "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

<sup>28</sup> 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 Lynons.' 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 & Plamer, Louisville: 1831) p. 300

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exterminate all evangelical Anabaptists by the thousands even though Munsterites were Pedobaptist and not Anabaptists. Anabaptists condemned the Munsterites as heretics and denied such were ever part of the true Anabaptist movement, but that mattered little to the Lutheran or Roman Catholic state churches.

It is this kind of distortion, false accusations by the ruling State Churches that defined the Anabaptists as “heretics” and led modern historians to view them through the eyes of their enemies instead of the truth.<sup>29</sup>

We are not to look for the Lord’s churches among those who slandered, distorted and falsely accused others. Where are we to look then? We are to look for the Lord’s true churches among those who are slandered as the “*heretics*” by such state churches.

### **G. Don’t Look Among the so-called Church Fathers**

Few if any evangelical scholars recognize The Nicene Church Fathers and The Post-Nicene Church Fathers as true representatives of New Testament Christianity. Why? Because they are so radically different from New Testament churches and so obviously like modern Roman Catholicism. Rather, they rightly see these preserved documents to accurately reflect the doctrinal

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<sup>29</sup> “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

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evolution of Roman Catholicism.<sup>30</sup> However, most cannot see that **The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers** are but the logical historical foundations for **The Nicene** and **The Post-Nicene** record. The Ante-Nicene Fathers record the beginning of apostasy that gradually developed into the Nicene and Post-Nicene Pagan form of Christianity. In **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.

**The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers** are the history of apostasy at its very root, which laid the foundation for the Nicene and Post-Nicene development. Rome destroyed the historical and doctrinal records of all other professing Christians during this period (Montanists, Novationists, and Donatists) by the power of the secular sword except for those Nicene records! Why? Those

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<sup>30</sup> <sup>30</sup> 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 Father is recognized as singly a trustworthy guide, every one of them is admitted to have held some views which cannot be safely followed.*” – **Infallibility of the Church**, George Salmon; 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



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Nicene (ante, post) records are the historical roots of what gradually developed into the Nicene and Post-Nicene Roman Catholic denomination. These writings record the historical succession of apostasy.

What is the value of **The Ante-Nicene Fathers**? When compared to **The Post-Nicene Fathers** it reveals clearly how far **The Post-Nicene Fathers** had departed from what was formerly believed and practiced. Some of the earliest Ante-Nicene fathers (**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. However, don't look for the true churches of Christ among the Ant-Nicene Church Fathers. Rome preserved these records while choosing not to preserve other records because these records serve Rome's claim to historical succession while helping Rome to disclaim all others as heretics or newcomers.

## **G. The True History of New Testament Christianity after the Apostolic Era:**

If the Roman Catholic Church is not the true representative of New Testament Christianity, then, who is? We do find them distorted but preserved in the pages of Rome's persecuting history. They are routinely identified by Roman historians as the evangelical Anabaptists. They are recorded by their trail of blood shed by Rome. Paul said, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."

Several factors are routinely overlooked by pro-Romanists when studying what Rome recorded about those she called

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“*heretics.*” False religious groups lived in the same geographical areas where true churches of Christ were also located simply because there was religious freedom and safety among New Testament Churches as they were all objects of state church persecution. Consequently due to geographical and social association, the true churches of Christ were labeled by the names of those heretical groups. Another factor often overlooked is that Roman historians isolate a particular heretic and then label apostolic churches by the name of that heretic simply because there are resemblances between the two. For example, New Testament Churches believed that a true child of God possessed a new and old nature simultaneously (Gal. 5:16-19) and therefore since Manicheans also believed in two opposing forces Rome labeled the Anabaptists as Manicheans. For in another example, New Testament Churches believed that the membership of a church ought to be solely composed of spiritual persons who live a holy life and since individuals like Donatus and Montanus believed similarly, these churches were labeled Montanists and Donatists and ascribed every excess that these individual’s embraced. Rome played this game consistently throughout its recorded histories.

However, at times, Roman persecutors preserved what these Anabaptists actually believed because their faith was so obviously in contrast to that of Rome’s that it provided clear evidence to subject them to the ecclesiastical laws established by Rome. Such glimmers of light revealed that true apostolic Christianity was still alive and thriving in spite of the horrid and bloody persecution by Rome.<sup>31</sup>

These evangelical Christians, many of whom, even the Roman persecutors admitted, lived pure and godly lives are painted, for the most part, in the worst of terms, in regard to their doctrines, simply

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<sup>31</sup> See **Three Witnesses for the Baptists**, by Curtis Pugh

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due to the word of their enemies, or invalid associations. They were generally called “Anabaptists” by Rome but their reputations were perverted and distorted under such epithets as Montanists, Novations, Dontanists, Paulicians, Henricans, Catharists, and Waldenses. However, they preferred to call themselves simply “Baptists.” Here are the groups where you look for the churches of Christ during the predicted age of apostasy under state controlled churches.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of Church historians still accept history as recorded and viewed by Rome. However, there are many non-Baptist historians that acknowledged the antiquity of the Baptists:

1. **Sir Isaac Newton** - the greatest scientist 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,

*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**

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**Church Perpetuity** (Dallas, 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. Ypiej 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...* Ypiej 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 Laurenze von Mosheim, **An Ecclesiastical History**, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1860), [Reprinted by Old*

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Paths Book Club, Box V, Rosemead, CA., Second ed.], Vol. II pp. 119,120

5. **Cardinal Hosius**, Roman Catholic, Ambassador of 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.* (by Carolinne White, Ph.D, Oxford University, Head of Oxford Latin) - **Tracing the Cardinal Hosius “Baptist” Quote** By Ben Townsend<sup>32</sup>

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

Reformers Date Baptists back to 225 AD

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<sup>32</sup> *Nam & alterius Principis edictum non ita pridem legi, qui vicem Anabaptistarum dolens, quos ante mille ducentos annes haeretis, 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.)

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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 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

9. **Roland Bainton**, a Mennonite, author of “The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century” says of the Anabaptists:

*To call these people Anabaptists, that is re-baptizers, was to malign them, because they denied that baptism was repeated, inasmuch as infant baptism is no baptism at all. They called themselves simply Baptists.-* Rolland Bainton, The

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**Reformation of the Sixteenth Century**, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1956), p. 99

Nearly all early Baptist historians unanimously testify to the historicity and perpetuity of the New Testament churches. However, many (but not all) modern Baptist historians approach historical sources through the eyes of Reformed Catholic Rome (Protestantism).<sup>33</sup>

When the Reformation occurred, the Protestants joined with the Catholics in persecuting these Anabaptists. Even in America up to the introduction of the bill of rights, Protestants publicly persecuted these Anabaptists. The “**Ana**” was dropped and they became known merely as “**Baptists**.” Historical Baptists<sup>34</sup> have always rebaptized all who came over from the ranks of Protestants and Catholics simply because baptism was the designated act to publicly identify a believer with the Baptist ministry (not a Catholic or Protestant ministry).

The Protestant Reformer Henry Bullinger confirms the fact that these apostolic churches rejected both Protestant and Catholic churches and their ordinances when he says of them:

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<sup>33</sup> 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 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 supported the view of Reformed Romanism. - Robert Ashcraft, **Contending For the Faith**. (Baptist Sunday School Committee, Texarkana, TX. 2006) pp. 601-606

<sup>34</sup> Today the term “Baptist” is generic and includes more churches than the true historic and Biblical Baptists. Historic Baptists are known by their doctrinal content rather than their label. Historic Baptists are specifically known by their identity with all five aspects of the great commission.

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*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 churches, ought not to have communion [fellowship] with [those called] evangelical, or any other whatsoever: for that our-[i.e., evangelical Protestant, or reformed] churches are not true churches, any more than the churches of the Papists.” - J.R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism What Is It?** (Reprint by Calvary Baptist Church Book Shop, Ashland, KY) p. 115*

Significantly, since the time that a denominational difference occurred among apostolic churches, the name **Baptist** has always been attached to those churches which continued the ministry of John (Ana-baptists, Cata-baptists, etc.). Today, the name **Baptist** has become a generic tag worn by many conflicting denominations which do not share either the doctrinal or historical heritage of these churches. However, it is not the name tag that defines New Testament Churches but their apostolic faith and practice as well as historical heritage that reaches back to the first church in Jerusalem.



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## The Bride Method

When the Apostle Paul predicted the increasing last day apostasy within professing Christendom he warned about its impact upon the churches 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 true churches of Christ metaphorically as “*chaste*” virgins.<sup>35</sup> Although it was his anticipated hope for all such churches to maintain purity of 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)*

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<sup>35</sup> 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 churches.

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A “*corrupted*” virgin is an impure and unfaithful woman or a “*whore*” or “*harlot*.” Paul goes on to describe how such “*chaste*” churches could be “*corrupted*”:

*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 mine)*<sup>36</sup>

As you can see, Paul is not referring to minor errors, but corruption of essential doctrine so that what results is “*another*” in kind.<sup>37</sup> Paul claimed by prophetic foresight that he knew for certain that many true churches 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)*

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<sup>36</sup> It is true that no church is perfect. However, Paul is not referring to minor or temporary errors but fundamental and serious departures from essential faith and practice. “Corrupted” or “harlot” churches are those who have forsaken fundamental characteristics of New Testament faith and practice.

<sup>37</sup> The difference between a “virgin” and “harlot” is a change in **kind**. Some churches 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 churches.

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All churches 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. 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 churches found in the New Testament.

However, the Apostles (Paul and John) revealed there was a deeper source of such corruption, and the Holy Spirit pressed them to reveal unto the churches what it 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)*

*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:

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*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” churches could be “*corrupted*” (which implied they became “*harlots*”), the Apostle John carried this metaphorical inference unto its consistent conclusion. John chose to describe the aggregate of both true and false churches 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 churches metaphorically as “*the bride*” (Rev. 19:6-7; 22:16-17), while he described false churches metaphorically as “*the Great Whore*” (Rev. 17:5). The true churches he metaphorically described as a heavenly city (Rev. 21:1), but perverted institutionalized religion (the false churches) as a worldly city (Rev. 17:18). Hence, here is the Biblical contrast between institutionalized apostolic (“*virgin*”) and apostate (“*harlot*”) Christianity. True New Testament churches are included under the figure of “*the bride*” while predicted apostate churches are included under the figure of a “*harlot*.”

### **The Collective Bride and Harlot Presently in this World**

John describes both kinds of churches under these metaphors as existing now, and both containing God’s people. 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:

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*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. 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 “*churches*” in verse 16 are clearly the antecedent of this metaphor. John had already established a present working relationship between the “*churches*” and the Holy Spirit:

*John to the seven churches...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 churches - Rev. 2:7*

The metaphorical “*bride*” in Revelation 22:17 are the collective<sup>38</sup> unglorified “*churches*” (Rev. 22:16) that work jointly with the Holy Spirit here and now in making disciples for Christ.

Paul confirms this identity of the present unglorified bride in 2 Corinthians 11:2 when he describes the local church at Corinth in the following language:

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<sup>38</sup> The numerical significance of “*seven*” churches in the book of Revelation is the collective fullness or completeness of all true churches then existing. In other words, what is said to these “*seven*” is applicable to all other true churches existing in that generation as well as all generations to come. It is these “*churches*” that John describes metaphorically and collectively as “*the bride*” in Revelation 22:16-17.

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*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 anticipation to present this individual church to Christ is the same anticipation Paul had for all true churches of Christ collectively, and so to the Church 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)*

In direct contrast to the present unglorified bride are the corrupted “*harlot*” churches which contain true children of God. God is presently calling His people to come out of these corrupt churches:

*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)*

The collective “*bride*” (Rev. 22:16-17) existed at the time John wrote Revelation. He predicted that Christians would be involved within the collective “*harlot*” (Rev. 17:5; 18:4). However, saints cannot exist in both at one and the same time. They are either in one or the other. Furthermore, those who are saved, but continue in the collective “*harlot*” will be outside the future glorified “*bride*” in the new heaven and earth.

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*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 churches; 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)*

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 unglorified bride now is to be outside the future collective 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 determines where you will dwell then.

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Right now, God's appointed public way of acceptable service is in New Testament kind of churches.

*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.

Therefore, 30,000 different denominations and five new ones being formed every week are in perfect harmony with what the Bible predicts will characterize the last days. However, this creates massive confusion in the minds of most people and makes it more difficult to discern between decreasing true churches of Christ (“*the bride*”) and the increasing false churches (“*harlots*”) in these last days. Of course, that kind of confusion is exactly what Satan has in mind. This book was written—to enable the reader to distinguish Christ's church from those that are corrupted. This book offers some Biblical principles that can help easily distinguish between the two. The important question for the reader to ask himself or herself is: Am I in one of the Lord's churches, or am I in one that is corrupt or what the Bible describes as a metaphorical harlot?

## **Distinguishing between Harlot and Virgin churches?**

How can one know they are in a true New Testament “*virgin*” church or in an apostate “*harlot*” church? If a person does not want



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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 churches 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 churches? 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)*

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Therefore, false churches can and do contain true Christians; but just because they contain true Christians does not mean they are true churches, nor does it mean that God wants His people to remain in such.

QUESTION #2: Are true churches perfect churches?

ANSWER: The answer is “no”. Not even the first church was perfect as it had a Judas, and the best of members are men at best. Hence, the difference between a true and false church is not that true churches are perfect or that false churches are without true Christians in them.

QUESTION #3: What then is the difference?

ANSWER: The difference between a false and a true church are essential characteristics that belong exclusively to true churches which are not found in false churches. Just as there are essential characteristics that distinguish between true and false Christians, there are essential characteristics that distinguish between true and false churches. There are Biblical characteristics that make a church a true church. A true church will always conform to the Great Commission essentials and pattern.

QUESTION #4: Is not the marriage metaphor used for individual believers in Romans 7:4

ANSWER: In Romans 7:4 it is used for a spiritual union **already consummated with metaphorical children** (fruit). In regard to the church it is always a yet future anticipated expectation.

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## Some Objections Considered

**Question:** *The Church in Acts 20:28 is one that has been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who is God in the flesh. Does not this prove that this church must be inclusive of all the elect, as all the elect have been redeemed by His blood? Local churches have lost members in them, such as Judas.*

*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. – Acts 20:28*

**Answer:** First, the immediate context demands it has particular reference to the church at Ephesus. For example, the pronouns "*yourselves*" and "*you*" found in verse 28 are contextually identified, as the particular "*elders*" located in the church at Ephesus;

*And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, ye know... - vv. 16-17*

Second, it is these elders that the Holy Ghost made overseers over the church in verse 28. The Universal Church advocates must embrace the idea that this church is of such a nature that it required human overseers other than the Holy Spirit and Christ. In addition to requiring human overseers, it requires the specific overseers contextually located at Ephesus!

Third, verse 28 says "*all the flock*," and continues to refer to this very same "*flock*" in verse 29, out of which some shall depart. How can the so-called universal invisible church, composed only of

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elect, lose members without denying both eternal security, and perseverance of the saints?

Fourth, New Testament writers commonly use what is called the language of accommodation. That is, they address, and describe the members of local churches, according to their profession, and according to what characterizes the requirements for membership. Why wouldn't Paul address the church at Ephesus according to their profession of salvation, and why wouldn't he address the Ephesus church as made up of redeemed, since the basis for baptism, and church membership, is profession of redemption?? Every single member of every New Testament church must make such a profession to be baptized and become a member. Theologians call such language, the language of accommodation.

We use this language all the time. For example, on a Christian symposium when you first read a letter from a new person who claims to be a Christian and signs off as "Brother," how do you address him in return? Don't you address him as "Dear brother" so and so? Until you have a valid basis to reject his profession you have no reason not to address him as such. The apostle Paul established this church and knew these brethren first hand. He had no reason to address in any other way than in redemptive terms. He is the one who preached the gospel to them, heard their professions, baptized them, and therefore, there was no reason for Paul not to address them in redemptive language, according to their profession, according to the requirements for baptism, and church membership.

All the proof texts used by the Universalist in this manner can be easily explained by the language of accommodation. We would inquire of the Universalist, **Why would Paul address those local churches which He founded by any other way than in**

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**redemptive terminology?** What reason would there be for him not to address them as such?

***Question:** If the body of Christ can refer to each and every local church then why do we find plural “churches” of Christ, but never find the mention of plural “bodies” of Christ? Does not this prove there is one universal invisible body of Christ?*

**Answer:** This argument is based upon ignorance of the rules that govern the use of a **metaphor**. The phrase "*body of Christ*" in reference to the church is a **metaphor**, or figurative expression, rather than a literal expression, as no one believes the church is literally the flesh, blood, and bones, of the physical Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

A **metaphor** is defined, as the transfer of characteristics found in one noun (body) unto another noun (church). Both must first be understood in their literal sense in order to determine what literal characteristics may be transferred figuratively to the second noun. That is, when "*body*" is used **metaphorically** to characterize the church, it has reference to literal characteristics found in a literal "*body*" that form the basis for what can be transferred in figure to the church.

For example, a literal "*body*" is composed of individual but diverse members, which are visibly assembled, and under the direction of, its literal head. Hence, literal characteristics such as *members, unity, visibility, and submission*, under *authority* are all legitimate characteristics that can be transferred **metaphorically** to the church.

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It would be an illegitimate use of a **metaphor**, to transfer characteristics not found in the literal body, to the church. Things such as plurality of heads over one body or plurality of *bodies* under one head cannot be found. Moreover, such things as *invisibility* or *unassembled scattered members* are directly opposed to such a literal body. Hence, the phrase "*the body of Christ*" could never convey universality, or invisibility, or scattered, unassembled, body parts. The singular expression could never convey either plurality of *bodies*, or plurality of *heads*. The metaphor cannot express such and therefore cannot be used for such.

Second, this is ignorance of **metaphorical** significance. The metaphor of "*head*" simply conveys authority, and when used in conjunction to a **metaphorical** "*body*" infers the *submission* of the body to that authority. Who is the "*head*" or "authority" over each singular New Testament church body? Isn't it Christ? Hence, each individual church is a **metaphorical** "*body of Christ*," if Christ is its **metaphorical** *authority*, or "*head*". If the local church is not a **metaphorical** "*body of Christ*" then composing it, should never be described as "*individual members thereof*" (1 Cor. 12:27), as the term "*members*" is a metaphor of body parts under the same "*head*".

Third, the term "*church*" is not a **metaphor**, and so there is no violation in using it in the plural. The "*body*" is a **metaphor**, and as such cannot be used, or found in the plural without violating the rules that govern the proper use of **metaphors**. However, both can be used generically without violating any rules. The generic use of "*the church*" is the singular expression for a plurality of individuals within one class, or kind. Likewise, "*the body of Christ*" is the singular expression of the metaphor for all within one class or kind. Just as the singular "*the church*," finds concrete expression

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in a particular “*church*” (Mt. 18:17), so the singular “*the body*,” finds its only concrete expression in a particular “*body of Christ*” (1 Cor. 12:27).

Fourth, every single **metaphor** in Scripture used for the church is always found in the singular, and such metaphors are applied by context to an individual local church “*body*.” For example, in 1 Corinthians 3, where Paul is directly speaking about those ministers God used to build the church at Corinth, he describes the church at Corinth by the following **metaphors**, all of which, are found in the singular - “*Ye are God's husbandry...Ye are God's building..Ye are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.*”

Therefore, if the argument by the Universalist was correct, we should never find any of these singular **metaphors** used for the local church, but all such singular **metaphors**, including the **metaphor** of “*the body*” should exclusively apply only to the supposed universal invisible church. However, we do find such **metaphors** used for the local church. Moreover, none of these **metaphors** are found in the plural. Why? The rules that govern the use of **metaphors** do not allow the plural to be used, but will allow them to be used in the generic sense, so it can be applied in the singular to each of that class. Therefore, the universal argument is wrong, and based upon improper understanding of the correct use of **metaphors**.

**Question:** *In the book of 1 Corinthians 10 and 12, as well as, Romans 12:4-5, does not Paul use the plural pronoun “we,” indicating that all true Christians make up the body of Christ?*

**Answer:** In Romans 12:4, and in 1 Corinthians 12:12, Paul also uses the plural pronoun “*we*” when introducing the literal physical

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human body, as the basis for its metaphorical application to the church. Do any rational minded theologians draw the conclusion that the use of the plural pronoun, with the singular literal physical human body, demands that all believers compose one big literal physical human body? No, as that would be nonsense.

Paul clearly means that “*we*” all share in common, one kind of literal physical human body, rather than, we all share one numerical literal physical body. Likewise, he brings the plural pronoun “*we*” right over to the metaphor, as well as, indicating that “*we*” all share in common one kind of church body. Most of the New Testament was written to churches, as all believers were baptized into the membership of churches that were like faith and order – one kind.

However, when Paul addresses a particular church body (1 Cor. 12:27), and a particular “*espoused virgin*” (2 Cor. 11:2), he always drops the “*we*,” and says “*ye*,” as He was not a member of that particular church body, or espoused virgin.

During the Apostolic era there was no other kind of churches, other than those instituted under the direction of the apostles. Hence, Paul when speaking of the institution that was common among them, he would say “*we*”. However, today that is not possible, as there are many different kinds of churches of different faiths and orders.

Now, as to the particular passage in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, where “*we*” is found, it is clear from the context that this passage is a generic truth, applicable to all churches, and members in particular. However, when Paul changes from abstract teaching, applicable to all members in all churches, to a concrete application of this truth, he drops the “*we*” and uses “*ye*.”



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*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.*

Unfortunately, the universal invisible church error has robbed God's people of Biblical abstract teaching concerning the institutional church. Abstract teaching is something very common, even in the pulpits of those who embrace the universal invisible church error. Abstract teaching is when you take a subject, and teach it without making any particular concrete application. For example, a pastor introduces his subject as "*the ordinances and ministry of the church.*" Obviously, it is the local church that he is teaching about. In his teaching, he uses the pronoun "we" to refer to their particular denominational view when expressing what he believes to be the true view point of the ordinances and ministry. This kind of teaching is very common now, as well as, when the New Testament was written. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 is abstract ("*we*"), whereas, 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 is concrete application ("*ye*"). 1 Corinthians 12:12-16 is abstract ("*we*"), whereas, 1 Corinthians 12:27 is concrete application ("*ye*"). The prison epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, etc.) were written to be circular letters, to be read among the churches (Col. 4:16), and thus the Apostle purposely used abstract terms ("*the husband*" and "*the wife*" "*the laborer*" "*the flesh*" "*the children*" "*the body*" "*the church*" "*the old man*", "*the new man*" etc.), in an abstract form of teaching, so that it would be applicable, to everyone reading it that fit those abstract descriptions. However, universal invisible church advocates have taken every single Biblical abstract instruction that reveals what kind of relationship there should be between the church and Christ, internal relationship between the members, as

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well as, external relationship between the church and the world, and perverted it, by applying it to the so-called universal invisible church instead of the institutional church. Absolute proof of this distortion is seen by simply trying to apply 1 Corinthians 12:25-26 to “*all*” members of the so-called universal invisible church!

*That there should be no schism in the 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 honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

It cannot apply to a universal invisible body of Christ, but is applicable, and was applied in Acts 2:44-45, to the local visible kind of church such as the one 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.*

This is exactly what Paul has in mind for the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10).

*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.*

This is possible for the local church institution, but it never has occurred among the membership of the so-called universal invisible body of Christ. Why? In reality the so-called universal

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invisible body of Christ is The Great Whore of Revelation. This harlot pretends to be the bride and church of Christ, but no such unity has ever been found in her or can be found in her.

***Question:*** *Don't many ancient Baptists and Christians understand, and use "the church," to refer to the collective whole or gathered mass of churches, or saints in aggregate?*

***Answer:*** Yes. The so-called Apostolic Fathers used the terms **catholic church** in this sense. They had in mind all the churches throughout the world, unified by the same apostolic faith, and order, as a collective whole.

*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."*

Each individual church of like faith and order was also called, **the catholic church**.

*Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the catholic church which is in Smyrna. - Ibid., p. 42 (emphasis mine)*

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Ancient Baptists claimed to be the one true **catholic church** in this sense, while denying that Roman Catholics, and/or schismatic's were part of this "*church*" and "*bride*." Hence, the aggregate sense was applied to the collective unity of all churches that were like kind throughout the world.

Many historical Baptists in England and America applied "*the church*" abstractly, to convey the idea of a collective unity of all churches of like faith and order on earth at any given moment. This is close to the generic use of that term. The early English Baptists used it this way in their associational minutes when defining what they called "*assemblies of Zion*".

*That persons soe baptized ought to walk together by free consent as God shall give oppertunitie in distinct churches or assemblies 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

To them, "*Mount Zion*" expressed the world wide collective unity of all churches of like faith and order. Significantly, they denied all state churches (Rome and Protestants) were included in "*Mount Zion*" (Ibid. pp. 154, 169). They also denied that "*disorderly*" churches, or churches 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 churches each*

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*towards other, as there is betwixt particular members of one church. For the churches of Christ doe all make up but one bodye or **church in generall** 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 churches of like faith and order in aggregate, can be found among American Baptists right up to the Landmark movement.

*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 Churches, 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 churches in 1805” p. 104, The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc. Version 1.0 © 2005 (emphasis mine)*

Another common historical use of “*the church*” in aggregate had to do with the collective unity of all the redeemed, when the future glory church will be gathered. Dr. J.M. Pendleton, a prominent Landmark Baptist, believed that the future glory church, when presented to Christ, will consist of “*the redeemed in aggregate*.”<sup>39</sup> However, he did not believe this glory church presently existed.

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<sup>39</sup> J.M. Pendleton, **Christian Doctrines**, (Judson Press, Valley Forge PA) 1971, p. 329

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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, 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*

This is the way it is used in the London Baptist Confession of Faith in 1689. Few realize that article 26, and sections 1-2, in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith was patterned after the Westminster Presbyterian Confession of Faith. When this is

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understood, the stark contrasts that the Baptists made, in regard to the nature of the church, can be clearly seen. Article one in the London Baptist Confession is almost a carbon copy of article one in the Westminster Confession. Both refer to the aggregate church of all the redeemed, as “*the Catholic or Universal Church.*” However, they disagree over the use of the term “*invisible.*” The Westminster simply states this aggregate church, “is invisible”, whereas the Baptist Confession qualifies it by saying, “(with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible.”

## ***Westminster Confession***

I. 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]

II.

## ***London Baptist Confession***

1.\_\_\_\_\_ 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.

However, it is the second article where the stark contrasts between the Presbyterian Universal Invisible church theory and the Baptist view of the church is clearly seen.

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## *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]

## *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 everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.

Notice that the Westminster Confession defines “*catholic*” when applied to the visible church to mean “not confined to one nation, as before under the law,” rather than like faith and order. Notice also, that the Westminster defines the term “*church*” to consist “of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion.”

The Baptist Confession takes issue with both of these points. (1) Baptist refused to call all believers in the world “the church,” instead, they said, “*all persons through the world, professing the faith of the gospel...may be called visible saints.*” (2) They defined the church as being constituted of such saints, who did not embrace essential errors contrary to the faith, or were ungodly. They said, “*not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation....and of such ought all*



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*particular congregations to be constituted.*” In sections three, and four, they condemned all churches that contained such errors, or without holiness as “*no churches of Christ*” but “*synagogues of Satan,*” and called the Pope, “*the antichrist.*” These Baptists rejected the Protestant concept of a universal invisible church made up of all saints, in all denominations worldwide.

Many Baptists,<sup>40</sup> including myself, deny that the future glory church is the aggregate of all the redeemed, but rather believe it is the aggregate of all the faithful redeemed, who served God in the institutional house of God in all ages.<sup>41</sup> For example, there will be people of God living outside the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24), as well as inside the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1-3), and the difference is not salvation. There are guests invited to the wedding of the Lamb (Psa. 45:9,12,14; Rev. 19:8-9), and angels are not guests in heaven, nor do they need an invitation. Finally, only New Testament churches are metaphorically described as “*espoused*” unto Christ, and presently called “*the bride*” (Rev. 22:17 – present tense “say”) with hope to be presented unto Christ as a Bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27).

**Question:** *If Matthew 28:18-20 demands that those authorized are baptized believers in church condition, does not that mean that every individual church member is thus authorized to administer the Great Commission and constitute churches?*

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<sup>40</sup> Roy Mason, Milburn Cockrell, Oscar B. Mink, M.W. Hall, Roscoe Brong, James Carlin, etc.

<sup>41</sup> Mark W. Fenison, **The Bride of Christ**, (Challenge Press, Emmaus , PA) 2008

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**Answer:** This text does not address the individual church member but rather a plural "ye" in church capacity. In the very same book, such authority is never given to the individual church member (Mt. 18:15) or even plural church members (Mt. 18:16) in less than church capacity (Mt. 18:17-18).

To suggest that every individual church member is being given this authority in Matthew 28:18-20 is to suggest that women and children members are given the authority to preach the gospel, baptize and administer the ordinances and teach. That concept contradicts other scriptures (1 Tim. 2:11; I Cor. 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 3:1).

To suggest that it refers to individual qualified church members who are ordained to evangelize, baptize and teach is to admit to one of two positions: (1) It refers to those whom the church qualifies, ordains and sends forth as authorized representatives or (2) It refers to the ordained ministry in distinction from the church and thus the Great Commission is preacher authority.

The latter (preacher authority) flatly contradicts Matthew 18:15-18, and the authority symbolized in the use of the "keys" since the keys of the kingdom represent authority in various areas other than merely church discipline. If it were preacher authority the text should read "tell it to **the elders**" rather than "tell it to **the church**."

Furthermore, in the book of Acts we find the church sending out the missionaries, and exercising authority over them (Acts 11:22; 11:1-5; 15:1-2). We find the church selecting, and qualifying men to be ordained (Acts 6:4-5).

Finally, it is unwise to place such authority in the individual as there is no accountability, and power corrupts and total power

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totally corrupts. It promotes an oligarchy. There are many more scriptural arguments and practical arguments that could be set forth.

**Question:** *Does the Greek term “ekklesia” translated “church” mean “called out of the world”?*

**Answer:** No! Prior to the writing of the New Testament this term has never been understood to mean “*called out of **the world.***” It is never used this way in either classical Greek or in the Septuagint Greek Old Testament.

It’s etymological meaning is simply “called out of” (*ek* = out of, *kaleo* = called) and its meaning by usage referred to *qualified citizens “called out”* to assemble in order to conduct citizen affairs in the Greek cities.

When this historical usage and etymology is applied to the New Testament, then it will be seen that only those who are qualified citizens of the Kingdom of God are called out to conduct kingdom affairs. This involves the use of the “*keys of the kingdom.*” The local *ekklesia* is the visible representation of the professing Kingdom of God on earth.

**Question:** *Does not Ephesians 1:21 demand the spiritual union between the church body and its head? Does not that prove the existence of a universal invisible body of Christ?*

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

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

Notice that Christ is “*the head*” not only to “*the church*” but also “*over all things*.” Universal invisible advocates interpret “the head” to be spiritual union between Christ and the church. However, this would teach pantheism as Christ is also said to be “*the head*” over “*all things*” as well.<sup>42</sup> If **spiritual organic union** is what Paul intends by “*the head*” then this would teach that Christ is in spiritual union with “*all things*” thus making Christ and creation to be one and that is **pantheism**. This is what happens when simple metaphors are abused and misused.

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

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

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

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<sup>42</sup> Much of these thoughts were borrowed from Charles L. Hunt’s excellent book, “*The Body of Christ: Separating Myth from Metaphor*” published by Grace Baptist Church Printing Outreach, Florence, KY in 2006

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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 is meant by “*the fullness of him that filleth all and all*”? The church acts in Christ’s behalf upon earth and is the final administrative authority He has established upon earth for kingdom affairs. This is made clear in Matthew 18:17 in the words, “*tell it to the church*” in connection with the keys of the kingdom in verse 18. This is also made clear in Matthew 28:17-20 in the giving of the Great Commission. Hence, the meaning of the passage above is that Christ is the final authority over his churches, as He is over all things, but the churches represent the fullness of His authority on earth in the administration of His kingdom affairs. Thus the authority of Christ “*filleth all in all*” over creation and in the administration of His kingdom on earth.

**Question:** *Is not the local visible congregation merely a visible representation of the true universal invisible church?*

Those who embrace the universal invisible church theory often refer to it as the so-called **true** church. Of course this degrades the churches found in the New Testament as something less than **true**. However, in response to that charge they insist that the local church is nothing more than the visible expression of the so-called **true** church which is the **ideal** or **model** church described in such passages as I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Hence, according to this idea, the goal of every church should be to strive more perfectly to be the visible expression of the **true** or **ideal** church. The closer the visible church model’s the **true** church the more scriptural it will be according to this thinking.

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Many Reformed Baptists are embracing this very concept in regard to their own church membership. John MacArthur and John Piper both argue for receiving members that were sprinkled or poured. Piper says that if his church by-laws would allow it he would accept Presbyterian sprinkled R.C. Sproul and Sinclair Ferguson as members in his church. John MacArthur made the same argument in his question and answer aspect of the debate with R.C. Sproul as John Piper's church makes below:

*“10. Therefore, where the belief in the Biblical validity of infant baptism does not involve baptismal regeneration or the guarantee of saving grace, this belief is not viewed by the elders of BBC as a weighty or central enough departure from Biblical teaching to exclude a person from membership, if he meets all other relevant qualifications and is persuaded from Bible study and a clear conscience that his baptism is valid. In such a case we would not require baptism by immersion as a believer for membership but would teach and pray toward a change of mind that would lead such members eventually to baptism”*[http://www.jpbc.org/pdf/Piper's\\_Baptism\\_and\\_Membership\\_Proposal-ets\\_version.pdf](http://www.jpbc.org/pdf/Piper's_Baptism_and_Membership_Proposal-ets_version.pdf)

If the local church is designed to be the **visible expression** of the so-called **true** church and the so-called **true** church is the “ideal” or model for all local churches to strive after, then, what would be the logical consequences of such a theory? It would be this; the so-called **true** church completely disregards baptism. You can be unbaptized, sprinkled, poured or immersed and be a member in the so-called **true** church. How is the local church an expression of such an idea?

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The so-called **true** church completely disregards all doctrines. You can be a sacramentalist, Pentecostal, Baptist, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Church of God, etc., etc. in doctrine and still be in the so-called **true** church. How is the local church an expression of such an idea?

The so-called **true** church completely disregards all discipline exercised by local churches. You can be under church discipline, cast out of such churches, and still be a member of the so-called **true** church. How is the local church an expression of such an idea?

The so-called **true** church completely disregards the necessity for actually assembling all of its members together on earth. You can never assemble with the so-called **true** church and yet be a member of it. How is the local church an expression of such an idea?

The so-called **true** church does not have a Pastor, deacons, treasurer or choir, takes no offerings and yet it is the so-called **true** church. How is the local church an expression of such an idea?

Therefore, if the local church is supposed to be a **visible expression** of this so-called **true** church, then, the local church should disregard baptism, disregard doctrine, disregard discipline, and disregard actual assembling together, disregard church officers, disregard offerings and the like, in order to become more of a visible expression of the so-called **ideal** and so-called **true** church!

On the other hand, why would the Lord demand such things of the local visible church, such as separation and withdrawal from “*any brother*” (2 Thes. 3:6) who walks disorderly if the **true** or

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**ideal** church embraces them? Why would God require the local church to mark and avoid those who teach false doctrine when the so-called **true** or so-called **ideal** church embraces them? Is God the author of confusion? No, this so-called **true** and **ideal** church is really **the Great Whore** of Revelation as this harlot is inclusive of all such confusion.

Often the Universalite says that Ephesians 4:4 and “*one body*” mean that the local is one with the universal as it is inclusive of the universal. However, it cannot possibly be inclusive of the universal if it is **different in kind**.

For example, the “*churches*” are *local in kind* but the so-called **true** church is *universal in kind*. The “*churches*” are *visible in kind*, but the so-called **true** church is *invisible in kind*. The “*churches*” are the kind that members can be removed by church discipline, but the so-called **true** church is the kind that such discipline does not remove any of its members. The “*churches*” are the kind that can assemble all of its members together, but the so-called **true** church cannot do that. The “*churches*” are the kind where if one member rejoices, all members can rejoice with it, and if one member suffers, all can suffer with it, but the **true** church cannot do this with its membership. The “*churches*” are like faith and order in the New Testament but the so-called **true** church contains heretical and orthodox members. The “*churches*” are the kind that receives only baptized believers as members but the so-called **true** church contains unbaptized, immersed, sprinkled and poured.

The “*churches*” in the New Testament are not the same kind as the so-called *Universal Invisible Church*. **However, the Universal Invisible Church is the same in kind as the Great Whore in Revelation.**



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Augustine is the author of all universal church theories. He based the universality of the church upon the parable of the tares in Matthew 13:38. The Lord said that the “*field*” is the world and both the good seed and the tares are scattered throughout the world. However, this was a parable concerning the nature of the professing kingdom of God on earth and not the church of God. He confused the “*kingdom*” of God with the Church of God. Martin Luther and the Reformers followed Augustine in this erroneous confusion between the church and the Kingdom. Augustine thought the “good seed” and the “*tares*” made up the visible church. Martin Luther introduced the idea that the “*good seed*” made up the true church which is invisible while the “*tares*” were only part of visible churches. The ancient Anabaptists (Donatists) repudiated Augustine’s theory and the Anabaptists of the Reformation repudiated Luther’s theory. The Anabaptists charged both Augustine and the Reformers in creating two different kinds of Churches by confusing the Kingdom of God with the Church of God.

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## GOING BEYOND THE GOSPEL WITNESS

The Great Commission requires going beyond the gospel witness in order to “*make disciples*.” It requires us to baptize, and bring the baptized believer into the membership of a New Testament church. However, when we are witnessing to people, and discover they are saved, many times it is difficult to make the transition from a gospel witness to the next two aspects of the Great Commission, or a church witness.

The following approach is based upon two Biblical truths. There are two basic arguments to define, and defend the Lord’s kind of churches; (1) the argument of like faith and order and, (2) the argument of historicity.

### Part I: The Argument of like faith and order

#### A. Get their attention, and interest, by asking the following questions:

**Question:** *Did you know that there are literally thousands of different contradictory, and conflicting kinds of “Christian” denominations in the world today, and that they are growing at a rate of 270 per year, or 5 new ones every single week?*

**Question:** *According to 1 Corinthians 14:33, do you think that God is the author of this mass confusion?*

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**Question:** *How can you know the difference between true and false denominations? How can you know, whether your particular denomination is authorized by Christ to make disciples for Him?*

What these questions have brought to the discussion is:

- (1) there are thousands of different kinds of Christian denominations;
- (2) The Word of God clearly denies that God is the author of such confusion;
- (3) How can you know the true from the false?
- (4) How can you be sure that their denomination has authority from Christ to make disciples?

Now, it really doesn't matter how they answer the above questions. You have effectively raised the issue. Just listen to their answer and proceed to the next question below.

### **B. Defining Who Christ authorized to make disciples**

**Question:** *Do you believe that Christ authorized anyone to go preach another gospel, or administer another baptism, or teach another faith and practice than what He commanded in the Great Commission?*

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If they say it does not matter what gospel, baptism, or doctrine may be used to make disciples, then simply point out the following problems to that answer:

1. Any other gospel is accursed - Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:4
2. There is only “*one*” baptism – Eph. 4:4
3. We are to contend for “*the faith*” once delivered – Jude 3
4. Those who depart from the faith are regarded as heretics – 1 Tim. 4:1; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes. 3:6

On the other hand, if they agree that Christ would never commission anyone to go preach **another** gospel, administer **another** baptism, or teach **another** faith and practice other than what he commanded, then proceed to point out the following obvious conclusions.

### C. The Necessary Conclusions

1. Therefore this is a commission to make disciples of **like faith and order** by the same gospel, same baptism, and same faith and practice, as He commanded.
2. Therefore those who preach another gospel are “accursed” (Gal. 1:6-9). Those who administer another baptism, and teach another faith and practice have departed from the faith once delivered (1 Tim. 4:1), and Christ would never authorize them to make disciples.

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Now, you have brought them to the restrictive limitation that Christ has placed upon the administration of the Great Commission, “whatsoever I have commanded.” It is time to make the application to them.

## D. The Application

**Question:** *Does your denomination/church preach the same gospel, administer the same baptism, and teach the same faith and order that Jesus commanded, and if so, how do you know?*

At this point, go to the section in this book that defines the essential characteristics of Christ’s gospel, baptism, and doctrine (Chapter Two). Point out the essential characteristics of each, and compare what Christ teaches with what they say their church/denomination believes and practices.

## Part II: The Argument of Historicity

If you make no progress by the above approach, then, proceed to this next approach. The next following set of questions will lead the person to the same conclusion as you sought to achieve using the strategy above.

### A. Ye versus them approach

**Question:** *There are two classes of people mentioned in the Great Commission, those identified as “ye,” and those identified, as “**them.**”*

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*Which class of people did Christ authorize to make disciples?*

This question draws an easy and obvious response. Christ commissioned those identified as “**ye**.” However, you have brought this question up to really define who Jesus did **not** authorize (“**them**”).

Point out that those identified, as “**them**” are those still unbaptized and unassimilated into the teaching assembly thus untaught. Therefore you have defined “**them**” as those who are **not** like faith and order with Christ in the **same** baptism and **same** faith and practice.

Since Christ has only authorized those identified as “**ye**” rather than those identified as “**them**” to administer this commission then the following must be true:

1. No unbaptized believer has authority from Christ to administer the Great Commission to themselves or to others.
2. No unassimilated and untaught believer has authority from Christ to administer the Great Commission to themselves or to others.

## **B. Draw the obvious Conclusions**

1. This means that “**ye**” cannot be unconverted, unbaptized, or unchurched, or unobserving, or apostate people, because if they were, there would be no difference between “**ye**” and “**them**.”

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2. This means that the only ones commissioned to make disciples for Christ are converted, baptized, and churching persons, who are like faith and order with Christ in these things.
3. This means that no apostate churches (another gospel and/or another baptism and/or another faith and practice) have authority from Christ to make disciples for Him (as that would only reproduce apostate churches).

Now you have eliminated all (“**them**”) who are not like faith and order with Christ, as possible authorized administrators of this commission. You have eliminated “self-administration” or apostate administration of this commission.

### C. Ask the definitive Questions

**Question:** *What would happen between the time Jesus gave this commission and the time he returns, if this kind of “ye” ceased to exist?*

Point out that such a complete cessation of authorized administrators would leave only “**them**” (the unconverted, unbaptized, unobserving or apostate). Christ has never given authority to such people (“**them**”), and thus if those authorized ever ceased to reproduce themselves, there would be no one authorized by Christ to administer this commission. Now, on to the next question:

**Question:** *Did you know that Christ promised those whom He commissioned that they would never*

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*cease to reproduce after their own kind, even for one single day, until the end of the world?*

Point out that the phrase “*always, even unto the end of the world*” is a translation of the Greek text, which literally reads “*all the days until the end of the age*.” This was a colloquial expression, which meant “*day in and day out until the end of the age*.”

Therefore, those Christ authorized to make disciples are not only like faith and order with Him in the same gospel, same baptism, and same doctrine, and practice, but they are not “Johnny come lately.” They are those churches in the pages of the New Testament which Christ promised would reproduce after their own kind in every generation until He comes again. All true churches of Christ originate with a preceding “*ye*” as no others are authorized in the Great Commission and no true church of Christ originates with “*them*” (self-administrators or apostate Christianity). The faith was “*once*” delivered (Jude 3).

### D. Make the Final Application

**Question:** *When did your denomination begin?*

If a denomination did not begin with the personal ministry of Christ in the apostolic age, in the land of Palestine, with the first church at Jerusalem, and if it has not continued to reproduce after its own kind up to this present day, then it has originated by “*them*” (self-administration or apostate Christianity).

Go to chapter three and provide historical quotations by non-Baptists to demonstrate that historical Baptist churches have continued since the first century.



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## Part III: Conclusion – Two Characteristics

The Great Commission provides two essential characteristics to identify those Christ authorized to make disciples for Him.

1. **The Doctrinal Identity:** They are like faith and order in the same gospel, same baptism, and same faith and practice – the test of like faith and order
2. **The Historical Identity:** They were commissioned and authorized to reproduce after their own kind continuously from the time He gave this commission, until the end of the world – the historical test.

Hence, out of the 37,000 plus denominations in the world today, the true churches of Christ are clearly identified by these two essential characteristics.

This is an argument by process of elimination. Start this process with the gospel, proceed to baptism, and then to orthodox essential doctrines. Conclude by historically eliminating all new denominations, as any new denomination could only come into existence through “*them*” (unconverted and/or unbaptized and/or unchurched), or through those who apostatized from the “*once*” delivered faith (Jude 3).

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## Conclusion

The problem addressed in this book is the argument that if a person embraces “church truth” as taught by Sovereign Grace Landmark Baptist Churches, it eliminates the vast majority of institutional churches as acceptable ways of service and leaves on a very tiny (“few”) number of churches for true Christian service. Therefore, it is assumed that the “church truth” view is irrational and unworkable.

However, if we use two essential inseparable truths (the truth of the gospel, the truth about God) as valid tests to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable religious public institutions nearly 90% of professed Christendom will be found within unacceptable public institutional ways of service. Only Baptist type public institutions remain as acceptable after this test is concluded. If we add the church ordinances as essential to defining an acceptable public institution for worship, then, we eliminate all but our own kind of churches.

Moreover, the whole tenor of the New Testament teaching is that it is among the “few” that essential truth will be always found rather than in the “many” or majority.

If we study the use of ekklesia by the founder of the church, then it is unquestionably a local visible institution that He built. The builder’s own usage demonstrates the two primary uses of the term ekklesia throughout Scripture (1) Institutional sense; (2) Concrete sense.

Indeed, the only type of church that can possibly exist that does not involve any doctrine of church salvation is the kind defined and defended by our churches.

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We are the only Christians and churches on planet earth that hold a view of the church that separates and distinguishes the church from the gospel of salvation. All other professed Christians and public institutional churches/denominations hold to a church doctrine that demands church salvation.

Therefore, our view of the church is essential in properly distinguishing the way of service from the way of salvation without confusing or mixing them with each other.

That being true, we should never shrink from maintaining this distinction between the way of salvation and the way of service, as that is the only way the gospel or the church will not be perverted into “another gospel.”

We should wear it as a badge of honour to be among the “few” that embrace “church truth” as an essential to preserving and preventing gospel truth from being perverted into a church salvation doctrine.

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## Appendix I – The Great Commission Method

*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*

There is no scripture more important than this scripture in regard to the debate between universal invisible church advocates and our position on “church truth.”

The purpose of this chapter is to 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 church of Christ.

This chapter will explore the Great Commission under the following subheadings:

1. Why is it called the “Great” Commission?
2. The Authorized Administrator
3. The Qualified Administrator
4. The Orthodox Administrator

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5. The Age long Administrator
6. The Organically Reproduced Administrator

As you read each of these sections, remember that each builds upon the other. So don't skip a section, but try to see the relationship between each section.

### 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 church 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 church to exist. No church can be found in the New Testament that exists without the gospel, without baptism, or without observing what Christ commanded. No true church can come into existence without these things. Where there is no scriptural gospel there is no true church. Where there is no scriptural baptism there is no true church. Where there is no scriptural observation of the commandments of Christ there can be no true church of Christ. These are the essentials of the Great Commission, and these are essential for the existence of all true churches of Christ. If a church does not have these **Great**

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Commission characteristics, it is clearly not a true church of Christ, but an apostate one.

Perhaps you are thinking that all churches have these characteristics. In this chapter, the focus of our study will 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 churches of Christ from false churches.

By a process of elimination, all churches and denominations failing to measure up to these Great Commission credentials will be regarded as false churches. Hence, the ultimate question will be, “*Is your church a Great Commission church?*” 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.

## **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?

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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 this commission 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. Hence, this is more than mere evangelization. Any child of God can evangelize another, but they cannot do what they have not experienced.

**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 may yet be either 1) unbaptized and/or, 2) baptized but untaught. Therefore, Christ

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never authorized anyone to administer this commission if they were unconverted, and/or unbaptized; and/or untaught.<sup>43</sup>

**Finally, why are these questions and answers significant?** They are important for the following reasons:

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 authorized administrators identified as “*ye*” who are distinct from those that stand in need of these things.<sup>44</sup>

But who are those identified as “*ye*”? In this section we have learned that they are not of that crowd identified as the

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<sup>43</sup> This rules out the vast majority of professing Christendom.

<sup>44</sup> 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.



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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 untaught believers.

### **The Qualified Administrator – “*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*.” Therefore, there is no Biblical authority from Christ 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 and/or 2) baptized, but uninstructed/unobserving 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 that what they are to administer to “*them*” is what Christ “*commanded*.” They know by experience, as they have already been discipled by this process.

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*“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”* dictates that the authorized *“ye”*, are those who **have** already gone through this threefold process and already **have** been made *“disciples”* of Christ, before they were 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 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 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)

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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.<sup>45</sup> Let's examine Acts 1:21-22 a bit closer. Proper qualifications are defined by the use of three tenses. 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 church 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 how to observe "*all things*" commanded. They had continued in this process for nearly three and half years before being commissioned by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20. Notice the future culmination point was until his "*resurrection.*" 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). Hence, those authorized and identified as "*ye*" in Matthew 28:19-

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<sup>45</sup> 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.

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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 church 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.

### **The Orthodox Administrator**

*whatsoever I have commanded you* – v. 20

We have established by the immediate context that Christ has appointed an authorized agency for the administration of all these

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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 disciple or is it designed to reproduce a disciple of like faith and order with Christ? To ask this question in another way, did Christ commission anyone to go preach **another** kind of gospel other than what Christ preached and commanded? Does not the Scriptures call such accursed who preach “**another gospel**” (Gal. 1:6-9)?

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)?

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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.

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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*

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*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

4. **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.
5. **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 churches (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 churches 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”]



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*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 churches of Christ? It means that all true churches of Christ will be *like faith and order with Christ* simply because they originate from materials provided by the Great Commission “*ye*” who are *like faith and order with Christ*.

All apostate Churches originate from one of four sources.

1. **They originate as a true church but later depart from the truth.** The Church at Rome is an example of this. Rome was a true church 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 churches can apostatize and become false churches.
2. **They originate by members departing from a true church to form a competing denomination.** This is how the modern denomination **The Church of Christ** and **The**

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**Christian Church and The Disciples of Christ** denominations all began (Ac 20:29-30).

3. **They originate from an apostate church.** 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 Churches (Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals, etc.). They claim that the gates of hell did prevail against apostolic Churches and God sent prophets to restore apostolic Christianity.

The key to identifying the true churches of Christ is that they preach the **same** gospel Jesus preached and commissioned, they administer the **same** baptism Jesus submitted to and administered, 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.

## The Church 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

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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 mediatory 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 and a teaching and observing **churched** “*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).

## A. The Churched “*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 church at Jerusalem understood this commission to be inclusive of church membership. For example, if you compare Matthew 28:19-20 with Acts 2:41-42 you will see they interpreted church membership as a necessary integral part of the commission:

### **Mt. 28:19-20**

1. “*go teach*”

### **Acts 2:41-42**

1. “*as many as received the word*”

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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) church membership.<sup>46</sup>

In Acts 2:41-42 this addition is to an existing church – the church at Jerusalem. However, when the commission is carried out on the mission field by a church 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).<sup>47</sup> That is the essence of church constitution.

If the above arguments don’t convince you that the Great Commission is inclusive of regular church 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?

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<sup>46</sup> 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.*”

<sup>47</sup> The third aspect is a covenant relationship. It is a covenant to observe all things commanded by him.

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For example, how could they be taught to **observe** what Christ commanded them in Matthew 18:15-18 apart from membership in a church?

*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)*

No unchurched person can obey this command “*tell it to the church.*” This command assumes that disciples are members of such a church. Matthew 18:17 assumes that all **observing** parties involved are members in the same church they tell it to.<sup>48</sup> This procedure is part of the “*all things*” that the contextual “*ye*” is to

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<sup>48</sup> 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.

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teach “*them*” to observe. Hence, the third aspect of the commission requires habitually assembling together as a New Testament church.

In addition to Matthew 18:15-20, it is impossible to **observe** what the Lord commanded in Matthew 26:26-30 apart from physically being 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 I Corinthians 11:18, Paul says in regard to the observance of the Lord’s Supper – “*when ye come together in the church.*” There is no example anywhere in Scripture of the Lord’s Supper being **observed** by anyone but baptized believers assembling together. No one can rationally or Biblically deny that church 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 church or the formation of a new church, 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 church 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,*

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*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 church? The selecting and placing of apostles in the church 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 church member was selected and placed in office before Pentecost.<sup>49</sup> Hence, the church 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 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 present during this meeting.

The church 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

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<sup>49</sup> Paul was not chosen as part of the twelve. He was chosen as an apostle to the gentiles (Gal. 2:9)

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baptized believers to assemble with Christ (Jn. 1:37-51). Peter tells the house of Cornelius that the gospel ministry of the church began after the baptism of John (Ac. 10:37). Jesus speaks of the church 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 church. Therefore, those being commissioned were already members in the first church at Jerusalem. The third aspect of the Great Commission includes church membership (Ac. 2:41 “*added unto them*”) as well as authority to constitute baptized believers into a church if no church exists.

### **B. The Contextual “*ye*” is the Church of Christ – *some doubted***

Was the church 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)



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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 church 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:

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*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 in 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 church (“*women*” “*brethren*” “*his disciples*”) met with, and saw Christ. Therefore, those being addressed in the Great Commission were already in a church condition, 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 church. Previously, they had been given a commission to go only to the nation of Israel:

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*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 church in Acts 1:15-22. It was out of these that the church chose a successor to fill the church office vacated by Judas. The “*ye*” in Matthew 28:19-20 is this assembled church 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).

Later in the book of Acts it is the church that “*sent*” out its ordained men and apostles (Acts. 11:22; 15:1-3). It is common church members that call Peter to give an account of his actions (Acts. 11:1-3). It is the church that Jesus writes the seven letters in Revelation – “*let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*”

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(Rev. 2-3). In these letters it is “*the church*” that Christ holds responsible to teach and to observe all things He commands.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> In Matthew 18:19-20 some 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.

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The “*ye*” of the Great Commission is the New Testament congregation. Hence, this is a commission addressed to a plural “*ye*” of baptized believers existing in church membership. No authority is given by Christ to anyone existing outside the membership of a New Testament church to administer this commission. There are no clear explicit examples of anyone existing outside the membership of a New Testament church administering this commission.<sup>51</sup>

## 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 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

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<sup>51</sup> Philip was an ordained deacon in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). Those scattered preaching the gospel in Acts 11 were members of the church in Jerusalem. Acts 9:31 indicates there were other churches 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 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 churches (Acts 18:27).

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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 Church. We believe this promise confirms that identification for the following reasons.

If this “*you*” is 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 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

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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 church “*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 churches 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 church “*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 unchurched and/or uninstructed persons, as that is the very condition of those identified as “*them*”. Neither can they be Christians in general because they are Christians of like faith and order with Christ in the same gospel, baptism and doctrine.

Only the church 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 churches of Christ?

First, remember this is a commission to reproduce like faith and order.

Second, this means that New Testament churches do not evolve but are reproduced after their own kind. It means that all false

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churches originate either by departing from this reproductive cycle or originate by **self-administrating** this commission.

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 churching state that are 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.<sup>52</sup> This is the promised age long “*you*” in Matthew 28:20.

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<sup>52</sup> Some attempt to avert this strong evidence by suggesting that this commission was given to the ordained class within the church. 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 as well 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 church 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 church as the final authority in kingdom affairs when he instructs individual church members to “*tell it to the church*” but no such command can we find that says “*tell it to the ministry.*” 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?



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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 Church (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 church (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 church for the purpose to convey His command to the church (“*unto the angel of the church which is at....he that hath an ear let him ear 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 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 church through its ordained leadership on that mountain – thus commissioning the church through its ordained leadership just as he speaks to the churches 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 verbal 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).

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## The Organically Reproduced Administrator

*and, lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world. Amen* – Mt.28:20

We have demonstrated that there is an age long promise that New Testament churches 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 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 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 hand-on connection between “*ye*” and “*them*.” Furthermore, teaching

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“*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.

If at any period of time between the giving of this commission and the end of the world this direct organic relationship between “*ye*” and “*them*” ceased, then at whatever point in time it ceased, that would require “*them*” to be self-baptized and self-taught how to observe all things commanded. 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.

However, the blind cannot lead the blind and that is exactly what would be required if this promise failed. Christ never authorized the undisciplined to disciple himself or herself.

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However, nearly all of Christendom embraces one of the above alternatives,<sup>53</sup> because many 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).

The very point of this promise is to ensure that this qualified and authorized “*ye*” would not fail to be present “*day in and day out*” in every generation until the end of the age. Conclusively then, only self authorized individuals and false prophets have arisen to restart the Great Commission since Jesus built his church.<sup>54</sup>

## **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.*

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<sup>53</sup> The promise of the Great Commission is the perpetuation of *practical observance* of “all things” commanded. It is not a promise for perpetuation of abstract *truth*, but of truth being observed by New Testament churches.

<sup>54</sup> See my book *Some Non-prophet Organizations* where I list seven Biblical tests to distinguish true from false prophets

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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 church was formed, and all following churches forming that new denomination are products of the previous one of like faith and order. All present denominations operate according to this natural cycle.

However, it is Christ who started the very first church 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 churches of like faith and order. Will you suggest that Luther can start his kind of church, which naturally reproduced after its own kind for the past 400 years all the time without the continual presence of Luther, and yet Christ start His own kind and with His continual presence cannot continue 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 churches of Christ can and will reproduce after their own kind with the presence of Christ from the apostolic age until He comes again.

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### 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 devoid 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 churches found in the New Testament not only continued to reproduce after their own kind in the apostolic age but will continue to do so after the apostolic age in every generation up to the present generation in which we live. This means churches 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 church 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 church 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 Chapter entitled **The Prophetic Method**). For the present, it

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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 based upon the mistaken notion that this means every particular church must continue until the end of the age. This is not a promise that guarantees the perpetual existence of any particular church until the end of the age, but rather, a promise that guarantees that before the demise of all particular churches within any generation there will be new churches of like faith and order reproduced for the coming generation. This is an institutional promise.

Hence, the New Testament church is among 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 churches that lay claim to such historicity are the Roman Catholic Church and those they labeled “heretics.”

## **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 churches of Christ today.

There can be no question that one valid test to be the true churches 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 churches of Christ, but they must, as well, preach the same gospel, administer the same baptism and teach the same faith and

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order Jesus commissioned. Therefore, the true churches 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 expounded the historical test in the following three paragraphs and then referred to the doctrinal test in the final paragraph:

*[The apostles] founded churches in every city, from which all the other churches, one after another, derived the tradition of the faith, and the seeds of doctrine, and are every day deriving them, that they may become churches. Indeed, it is on this account only that they will be able to deem themselves apostolic, as being **the offspring of apostolic churches**. Every sort of thing must necessarily revert to its original for its classification. Therefore the churches, 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....*

*[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 churches which the apostles founded in person, by declaring the gospel to them directly themselves .*



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. . . If then these things are so, it is in the same degree manifest that all doctrine which agrees with the apostolic churches—those molds and original sources of the faith must be reckoned for truth, as undoubtedly containing that which the churches received from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, [and] Christ from God. **Whereas all doctrine must be prejudged as false which savors of contrariety to the truth of the churches 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 churches; 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 churches 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...

*But should they even affect the contrivance [of*

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*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 churches], 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 churches 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 - **The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers**, Vol. 3, Tertullian, pp. 20,21,32. (Emphasis mine)***

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*

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*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 churches 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.

The Great Commission is principled after the Genesis order of reproduction after its own kind. New Testament congregations are commanded to reproduce after their own kind until Jesus returns and they have His divine promise that they will not fail in this commission.

### **E. The Great Commission Essentials and Historic Baptists:**

**Essential Characteristic #1:** There is a prescribed method and pattern by which a new church comes into existence. In Matthew 28.19,20, Christ distinguishes between “*ye*” and “*them*” thus making the church the only authorized administrator of the Great Commission. This “*ye*” stands in an administrative position between Christ and those who are the unconverted, unbaptized, and untaught. Christ administers unto “*them*” (the unconverted, unbaptized, and untaught) the gospel, baptism, and instruction of His commandments through this mediatory “*ye*” (i.e. the church).

*And so in regard to this commission of Christ, it was addressed, to somebody. It supposes that there*

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*will be somebody to be baptized, and it authorizes somebody to baptize them. If by commanding some to baptize, it commands others by implication to be baptized, it by the same implication commands them to be baptized by those, and only those whom it commands to baptize.* - William M. Nevins, **Alien Baptism and the Baptists**, The Challenge Press, Little Rock, Ark., 1977, p. 156.

**Essential Characteristic #2:** The authorized “ye” are “*disciples*” which by contextual definition are previously baptized believers existing in an observing church state.

*We cannot, for one moment conceive that Christ or His apostles committed the gospel to and commissioned it to be preserved and preached by, those who neither experientially understood, nor had themselves obeyed it, and whose teaching and practice tended directly to pervert and subvert it.* – J.R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism, What Is It?** 1880, p. 35

**Essential Characteristic #3:** The authorized administrators are disciples of like faith and order with Christ in the same gospel, baptism and doctrine.

*To say this commission was left to any believer, or to some group of men who hold every heresy under the sun, is to accuse the Lord of great carelessness.* – Milburn Cockrell, **Scriptural Church Organization**, 2nd Ed. p. 29.

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**Essential Characteristic #4:** The ultimate goal of the Great Commission is authority to bring baptized disciples into membership of an existing New Testament Church or into new church constitution. Observance of the Great Commission always concludes in New Testament church membership.

*In this simple analysis of the commission is presented the very process by which Baptists are now made, constituted into churches, and governed. That it was the process by which the first preachers made converts, and constituted churches, is beyond question.* T. G. Jones, **The Baptists, their Origin, Continuity, Principles, Spirit, Policy, Position, and Influence, a Vindication.** (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society) p. 27. (emphasis mine)

**Essential Characteristic #5:** The administrator of this commission is promised the presence of Christ until the end of the world. True churches have a promised historicity as a denomination that originates with the personal ministry of Christ and continues until the end of the age. Thus, true churches of Christ have two distinguishing characteristics (1) New Testament faith and practice and (2) New Testament origin as a denomination.

*From these propositions, thus established, we draw the following inferences, as clear and certain truths,*  
I. *That all churches and ministers, who originated since the apostles, and not successively to them, are not in gospel order; and therefore cannot be acknowledged as such.*

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*II. That all, who have been ordained to the work of the ministry without the knowledge and call of the church, by popes, councils, &c. are the creatures of those who constituted them, and not the servants of Christ, or his church, and therefore have no right to administer for them.*

*III. That those who have set aside the discipline of the gospel, and have given law to, and exercised dominion over the church, are usurpers over the place and office of Christ, are against him; and therefore may not be accepted in their offices.*

*IV. That they, who administer contrary to their own, or the faith of the gospel, cannot administer for God; since without the gospel faith he has nothing to minister; and without their own he accepts no service; therefore the administrations of such are unwarrantable impositions in any way.*

*Our reasons, therefore for rejecting baptism by immersion when administered by Pedobaptist ministers, are,*

***I. That they are connected with churches clearly out of the apostolic succession, and therefore clearly out of the apostolic commission.....***

*But if it should be said, that the apostolic succession cannot be ascertained, and then it is proper to act without it; we say, that the loss of the succession can never prove it futile, nor justify any one out of it. The Pedobaptists, by their own histories, admit*

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*they are not of it; but we do not, and shall think ourselves entitled to the claim, until the reverse be clearly shown. And should any think authority derived from the MOTHER HARLOTS, sufficient to qualify to administer a gospel ordinance, they will be so charitable as not to condemn us for preferring that derived from Christ. And should any still more absurdly plead that ordination, received from an individual, is sufficient; we leave them to shew what is the use of ordination, and why it exists. If any think an administration will suffice which has no pattern in the gospel; they will suffer us to act according to the divine order with impunity. And if it should be said that faith in the subject is all that is necessary, we beg leave to require it where the scriptures do, that is every where. But we must close: we beseech you brethren while you hold fast the form of your profession, be ready to unite with those from whom you differ, as far as the principles of eternal truth will justify. And while you firmly oppose that shadowy union, so often urged, be instant in prayer and exert yourselves to bring about that which is in heart, and after godliness. Which the Lord hasten in its season. Amen and Amen. - A. M. MARSHALL, Moderator. JESSE MERCER, Clerk. – Jesse Mercer, **History of the Georgia Baptist Association**, 1838, pp. 126-127. (emphasis mine)*

**Conclusion:** Some object, “*these groups commonly called Anabaptists do not believe what Baptists believe today and so how can you claim they are Baptists?*” We reply, whose word are you basing that conclusion upon? The word of Rome! What does the

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Bible predict that Rome would do and say about the true churches of Christ? Why then are you surprised by what they say and why do you accept it? The New Testament anticipates and predicts that secular history will pervert the true churches and that is exactly why Baptists can take this position, because it is a Biblical position in regard to secular Church history. Therefore, according to the New Testament prophecy, apostolic Christianity will not be found among any type of Christianity:

1. That persecutes, slanders, and kills other professing Christians.
2. Among state church types of Christianity.
3. Among those who embrace explicitly predicted false doctrines condemned by the New Testament.

Hence, in reverse the New Testament predicts that apostolic Christianity will be found

1. Among those persecuted, slandered and killed by a professed Christianity.
2. Among those who oppose state churches.
3. Among those who oppose explicit heresies predicted by the New Testament.

Only the historical Evangelical Anabaptists fit these predictive prophecies concerning the future of the New Testament churches after the apostolic age. These prophecies should be the guide for every Christian historian looking for traces of apostolic Christianity.

Every historian should remember that secular history is (1) uninspired, (2) incomplete, and often (3) inaccurate; but the Bible is inspired, complete, and always accurate. When secular history is



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used to either undermine what the Bible clearly predicts, or to reinterpret the Bible to fit secular history, the consequence will always be false ecclesiastical history and false doctrine.

This is the Landmark Baptist position on secular church History.