

THE CHURCH OF THE LORD

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Introduction

A. Importance of This Study

The church of the Lord is very prominent in the New Testament. It is found from Matthew to Revelation. The word "church" is mentioned well over 100 times. Jesus built the first one and promised that His kind of church would not disappear from the earth. After Jesus ascended to Heaven this church became the leader on earth in the work of the Lord. From this church new churches began and the truth was spread throughout the inhabited world. Paul worked as a missionary through one of these churches to establish many churches throughout the Roman Empire. He always worked through a church to establish other churches. The Lord's church is the only organization that Jesus began to carry on His work until He comes again. Every saved person is expected to join one of the Lord's churches and serve the Lord through it. An examination of the New Testament reveals a doctrine of the Lord's church which should be followed by every church until Jesus comes again.

Today there is great confusion concerning the Lord's church. Many different kinds of churches are found in the world. They vary in membership requirements, ordinances, government, officers, mission, etc. Because of the confusion among professing Christians today concerning the Lord's church and because of the prominence of the Lord's church in the New Testament it is very important that we study the subject and see what the New Testament teaches concerning the church of the Lord.

B. Plan of This Study

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A. Importance of This Study

B. Plan of This Study

I. Its Meaning

A. The Word "Church"

B. The Word "Ekklesia"

II. Its Nature

A. Membership

B. Government

C. Purpose

III. Its History

A. Predicted

B. Founded

C. Commissioned

D. Accredited

E. Perpetuated

Conclusion

A. Summary

B. Responsibility

I. Its Meaning

To understand the teaching in the New Testament concerning the church it is very important to correctly understand the meaning of the word "church" and the word it translates in the New Testament which is "ekklesia" or "ecclesia." It can be transliterated either way.

A. The Word "Church"

1. In the New Testament

The word "church" appears 114 times in the King James Version or Authorized Version of the New Testament. In 112 times some form of the word church is used to translate the Greek word "ekklesia." The other two times that "church" appears are in Acts 19:37 and I Peter 5:13. In Acts 19:37 "robbers of churches" translates the Greek word "hierosulos," which means robbers of temples. In 1Peter 5:13 the word "church" does not translate any Greek word. The translators assumed that the definite article "the" in this verse implied the word "ekklesia" and therefore translated the implied Greek word by the English word church. For this reason the word church in I Peter 5:13 is put in italics in some Bibles. The translators' assumption is probably correct. However, the fact remains that the word "ekklesia" is not in the text and the word "church" is not translating any particular word.

In this book we will study the teaching concerning the church in the King James Version of the Bible. When we refer to the Greek text, it will be the Greek text of the King James Version, any differences between the King James Version and its Greek text and the other standard versions and their Greek texts are very small and are of no doctrinal significance.

In Acts 2:47 the word church is found in the King James Version and ekklesia is in its Greek text, however, some other versions do not have the word "church" in this place but the word "them," a translation of a pronoun in their Greek Text. The "them" in these versions is referring to the church at Jerusalem as is seen from the general context so there is no change in teaching.

In Acts 9:31 the word "churches" is found in the King James Version and the plural of ekklesia in its Greek text. In some other versions we find the singular "church" and in their Greek texts the singular for "ekklesia." If one notes the general context there is no change in doctrine concerning the church. In Acts 8:1 the church at Jerusalem was scattered by Paul's persecution. From some of these scattered members of the Jerusalem church new churches were begun. These churches, 9:31, had rest from Paul's persecution when he was saved. This is the teaching in the King James Version which we accept. The other versions would indicate that the church in Jerusalem was scattered by Paul's persecution in 8:1. After Paul was saved this church which had been scattered had rest from persecution. Even if one took the singular of these versions it would not change any doctrine concerning the church.

These differences from the King James Version noted in Acts 2:47 and Acts 9:31 that we find in some other standard versions are the only differences found concerning the word "church." And, as one can see, they are of no doctrinal significance.

In the New Testament the word "church" and the word "ekklesia" which it translates refers to an assembly of people. It never refers to the building which believers meet in, or the clergy or all believers, etc. in the New Testament.

The word "church" itself probably came from the Greek word "kuriakos." Many scholars

agree with this. This word is an adjective which means "pertaining to the Lord." "Kuriakos" might be used to modify some word to indicate that what that word refers to is the Lord's or pertains to the Lord. It is only used twice in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 11:20 it is used to modify supper, "the Lord's supper." In Revelation 1:10 it is used to modify day, "the Lord's day." "Kuriakos" is never used in the New Testament to refer to the "ekklesia" the Lord began. But, beginning about the third century A.D. "kuriakos" is used in some form to refer to the house an "ekklesia" met in. Later it was used to refer to the "ekklesia." It became a common name given to the Lord's "ekklesia" and other things closely related to it. As "kuriakos" was used widely it came into the various languages of Europe. The spelling was changed according to the language it came into and time and usage had their effects on the word. This seems to be the reasoning of many scholars concerning the origin of the word "church." This word is found in several languages. In English it is "church", in Old English "cirice", in German "kirche", in Scottish "kirk", in Old Scandinavian "kyrka", etc.

2. In Our Day

In our day the word "church" has many meanings. This is verified when we note the way it is used or when we look it up in a good English dictionary. Some of the most common meanings are (1) the building in which Christians meet, (2) the assembly of Christians, (3) the worship service, (4) the clerical profession, (5) all of a particular denomination, (6) all professing Christians living or dead.

Because the word "church" has many meanings in our day, it creates a problem for the student of the Bible. If one is not informed on the subject it is very easy to take these modern day meanings and assume these meanings are also meant when the word "church" is used in the New Testament. Every scholar knows that all of these meanings are not found in the New Testament.

Our goal in Bible study is to find the meaning of the words in the Bible. What did these words mean when they were written? This is our concern. In Bible study we are not concerned with what the words mean today. We must be careful not to read modern day meanings into the New Testament which was written almost 2,000 years ago.

Since we are particularly concerned with the meaning of the word "church" in the New Testament we must make a mental effort to forget the meanings of this word in our day. We must concentrate on what this word meant in the New Testament. We can only know this by examining the word that "church" translates in the New Testament. This word is "ekklesia." What did "ekklesia" mean in New Testament days? This is the question which we must seek to answer.

Before we study "ekklesia" we should note why the word "church" was used to translate "ekklesia" in the New Testament. Why was a word with many meanings used to translate a word that did not have all of these meanings? Why was such an ambiguous word used which could easily create confusion since much better words were available in English to translate "ekklesia?" The answer to these questions is very simple.

The King James Version of the Bible which came out in 1611 was authorized by James I, King of England. In his instructions to the translators he gave 15 rules which they were to follow. Rule 3 states, "The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, viz., the word church not to be translated congregation, etc." H. W. Robinson, The Bible in Its Ancient and English Versions, p. 199.

In the long preface to the King James Bible of 1611, which is not printed today and has

not been for some time, it says, "Lastly, we have on the one side avoyded the scrupulositie of the Puritanes, who leave the old Ecclesiasticall words, and betake them to other, as when they put washing for baptisme, and congregation instead of church." J. R. Dore, Old Bibles: An Account of the Early Versions of the English Bible, p. 377.

B. The Word "Ekklesia"

1. In The Period Before The New Testament

The word "ekklesia" was used in the period before New Testament days. It had one meaning only. It meant "assembly" or "congregation." All Greek authorities testify to this. Liddell and Scott in their lexicon define "ekklesia" as, "an assembly of the citizens summoned by the crier, the legislative assembly." Thayer's lexicon says, "an assembly of the people convened at the public place of council for the purpose of deliberating." All other authorities in Greek say essentially the same thing.

"Ekklesia" was used to refer to the assembly of citizens who governed a Greek city. This assembly would meet regularly to carry on the business of the city. It was used of an assembly gathered for social purposes, such as some private club. It referred to some organized group of people who assembled from time to time to carry on their business of whatever kind it might be.

The etymology of "ekklesia" according to Thayer's lexicon is "fr. ekkletos called out or forth, and this fr. ekkaleo." This appears to be the unanimous opinion of all Greek scholars. We should make a careful distinction between the etymology of a word and its meaning. "Salary" means the pay given for some service but its etymology comes from the word salt and it meant salt originally. "Hussy" means a worthless female or a pert girl but its etymology comes from "huswife" and it meant housewife. It is incorrect to say that "ekklesia" means "called out" in the New Testament or in the period prior to the New Testament. It meant "assembly" or "congregation" in the period prior to the New Testament and in the New Testament. It never means "called out" during that time. Hort says, "There is no foundation for the widely spread notion that ekklesia means a people or a number of individual men called out of the world or mankind." F.J.A. Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, p. 5.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint which was made in the period just prior to the New Testament the word "ekklesia" always means "assembly."

"Ekklesia" is used about one hundred times in the Septuagint. It is used to translate the Hebrew word "qahal" which meant "assembly" or "congregation." "Edhah" is a Hebrew word which referred to the society of people whether they assembled or didn't assemble. "Ekklesia" is never used to translate this word.

In the period before the New Testament was written "ekklesia" meant "assembly" or "congregation" and only this. If it was ever used to mean anything else in this period it was so rare that it has escaped the attention of all the Greek scholars.

2. In the New Testament

There was only one meaning for the word "ekklesia" when Jesus began His ministry. That meaning was assembly or congregation. If there was any other meaning we have no knowledge of it. If there was any other meaning it was so rare that assembly would have to be assumed to be the meaning every time the word "ekklesia" would occur unless the context would reveal that the word was given a new meaning or a rare one. In interpreting any writing we must always assume that the common, ordinary, usual meaning of a word is intended unless the

context makes it clear that the common meaning is not meant and another meaning is revealed by the context. Just because a new or rare meaning could make sense is not enough to justify giving that meaning to the word. It must be shown clearly by the context that the ordinary meaning is not meant and also another meaning is meant.

All scholars work on this principle. They may misapply it at times but they recognize the principle. This principle is brought out in the following quotations.

Berkhof states, "It is an arbitrary procedure to render *ki* in Isaiah 5:10 "yea," seeing that the conjunction is not known to have an explicative meaning, and the usual sense is perfectly appropriate." L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 4th ed., p. 98.

Broadus says, "The word cannot have any other meaning here than the obvious one. The attempts to establish for it the sense of race or nation have failed. There are some examples in which it might have such a meaning, but none in which it must, for in every case the recognized meaning will answer, and so another sense is not admissible." John A. Broadus, Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I of An American Commentary on the New Testament, pp. 187-188.

If one will examine the New Testament and give "assembly," the common meaning of "ekklesia," to the word every time it occurs it will be clear that it makes good sense in every instance. Because some Bible scholars believe that the word "ekklesia" has a new meaning given to it in a few places, we will examine each time the word occurs. As long as the common meaning makes good sense in each place, we will not have to look for another sense. If there is a new meaning then the context should make this clear. The burden to prove a new meaning is upon those who contend for a new or rare meaning. They must show that the common meaning will not fit the context and a new one must be the meaning because of the context.

The word "ekklesia" appears 115 times in the Greek text of the King James Version of the New Testament. In 112 times it is translated "church" and in 3 times "assembly." In 93 times of the 115 times "ekklesia" appears there can be no question that the word means "assembly."

In Acts 19:32,39 and 41 the word is translated "assembly" and refers to the political organization which governed the city of Ephesus. The context in this passage helps us to understand an "ekklesia." The people gathered together in one place, 29-32. The town clerk spoke to the "ekklesia", 35-41. The "ekklesia" was dismissed and the people left, 41. From this we see that an "ekklesia" is an organization that meets in some location and can be seen and addressed. It comes together and then after its meeting, it is dismissed. By its nature it is local, visible and organized. This "ekklesia" had met on this occasion in an unusual fashion and the context seems to imply that their meeting that day was not according to their rules. This "ekklesia" was told that any business in the future should be determined in a properly called meeting, "a lawful assembly." See verses 38-41. The basic principles of an "ekklesia" seen in this passage can fit every other time the word appears in the New Testament. For this reason the common meaning of the word should be accepted in every place.

The location of an ekklesia is mentioned 23 times in Acts 7:38; 8:1; 11:22; 13:1; 15:4; 20:17; Romans 16:1,5; 1Corinthians 1:2; 16:19; 2Corinthians 1:2; 16:19; 2Corinthians 1:1; Colossians 4:15,16; 1Thessalonians 1:1; 2Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1:2; Revelation 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14.

The word occurs in the plural 36 times. In 3 times it is accompanied by the words "every" or "no". In 4 times it is in a context that mentions a coming together of people. In 8

times the context makes it clear it is speaking about the Corinthian ekklesia. In 7 times in Acts the context is clear that the ekklesia at Jerusalem is meant. In 9 times the general context is so clear that no one questions the fact that the word means "assembly."

The remaining 22 times are just as clear as the 93 we have surveyed. There is nothing unusual about the language and there is nothing in the context that would not fit perfectly the ordinary meaning of the word in every instance. But, some believe the word "ekklesia" has a new meaning in these 22 occurrences so we will examine them more carefully to see if there is any justification for this belief.

Three passages refer to Paul persecuting the church. 1Corinthians 15:9 says, "because I persecuted the Church of God." The other 2 places, Philemon 3:6; Galatians 1:13, are very similar. The common meaning makes good sense. Many individual churches have been persecuted throughout history. Paul persecuted the Jerusalem church before he was saved, Acts 8:1. It appears certain he is referring to this. Perhaps he has in mind that kind of organization and is speaking generically. This will be discussed later. There is nothing in the context that would show that the common meaning of "ekklesia" would not make sense and a new meaning was intended. For this reason the common meaning must be retained in these passages.

"Romans 16:23 has been claimed by some as referring to all believers because of the word whole. There is no real need for such an interpretation; the usual meaning makes good sense. It is probably referring to an ekklesia that meets in the home of Gaius who is the host of both Paul and this ekklesia. This

entire ekklesia which might be quite small salutes the saints in Rome. Acts 15:22 speaks of the whole ekklesia where none can doubt it means the whole of the Jerusalem ekklesia and the same sort of language is used of the Corinthian ekklesia, 1Corinthians 14:23." E. H. Overbey, The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament, p. 28.

"Hebrews 2:12: 'Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.' Assembly makes good sense here; the question is to what ekklesia is it referring? This is speaking of Jesus and His church we believe and it refers to the time He instituted the Lord's supper. Matthew 26:30: 'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.' Some think this is too early for a church but why is it? Jesus had already declared He would build His ekklesia, Matthew 16:18. He had given it a procedure for discipline which assumed an ekklesia was already in existence, Matthew 18:17. The members were baptized believers, they had the gospel and had been preaching it and baptizing their converts. The essential elements of a New Testament Church are seen in the gospels. In Acts 1 the disciples seem to be already organized as they meet to decide on Judas' successor to his office. The only answer that seems consistent with the information of the New Testament is that Jesus sang in the ekklesia begun during His earthly ministry when He gave it the second ordinance." E. H. Overbey, The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament, pp. 28-29.

"Acts 20:28 is another passage thought by some to teach a different meaning for ekklesia. The reason for finding a new meaning here would be due to the fact this church is said to be purchased with his own blood, a statement thought by many to be too great to be said of any local church. We don't believe this is a good objection. Paul speaking of himself in Galatians 3:20b says, 'and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Why can't it be stated that Jesus purchased with His blood an organized group of professed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? This does not exclude other churches of believers or

individuals from making the same statement. Paul states the same idea referring to himself. If it be objected that some may be only professed believers and not truly purchased by His blood we would agree that some are but this is no objection to the word church having its common meaning. The Scriptures refer to professed believers as saints, brethren, children of God, and by other terms which only truly apply to the ones who have been actually born again. Yet the Scriptures recognize that some professed believers are false professors and in such cases they are as much lost as the one who has rejected Christ. The Bible warns such but still speaks according to the appearance. If a person professes to be a believer and there is nothing to make one think contrariwise he is referred to by all of the wonderful terms which only really belong to the true child of God. In 1Thessalonians 1:1 it says, 'unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.' Could such statements be said

of any but the saved? We think not, yet Paul writes by inspiration that this church at Thessalonica is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are a group of professed believers with perhaps some in their midst who are false professors still they are recognized as saved and given the terms of such. Purchased by His blood can be stated of every New Testament Church and every individuals believer. This statement is no objection to the church in Acts 20:28 being a local one. The context makes it clear that this is referring to the church in Ephesus. Notice verses 17 and 28 in particular and examine the terms Ephesus, elders of the church, flock, and overseers and see if any church other than the church at Ephesus can be the one spoken of here." E.H. Overbey, The Meaning of Ecclesia in the New Testament, pp. 30-31.

Perhaps the main reason some believe there is a new meaning for ekklesia in these 22 places is their failure to recognize a common principle of grammar. This principle is called the generic use of the article and noun. This principle is manifested in many of these 22 places. Often when the words, "the church," occur it is assumed by those who fail to recognize this principle that these words mean that there is one church composed of all believers. This church is considered to be universal, invisible and never assembles. After all they argue, "the church" is one only. Local churches are many; you can't refer to them as "the church", they insist. Such reasoning completely overlooks a common principle of grammar in the Bible and in our every day speech and writings. This principle is usually called the generic use of the article and noun.

"The automobile is a useful invention," is a sentence with an example of the generic article and noun in it. If one would say, "the automobile" must mean there is only one automobile which is universal and invisible in the world and it is therefore different from local visible automobiles, he is using the same type of reasoning used by those advocating a new meaning for ekklesia in the New Testament. If the advocates of a new meaning for ekklesia were consistent then they would reason this way for "the automobile" but they don't for subconsciously they recognize the generic article and noun whether they have ever consciously recognized it or not.

The generic use of the noun and article is found often in English. When it is used the definite article is used to distinguish one kind of thing from other kinds of things rather than distinguishing one particular thing of the same kind from other things of the same kind. In the sentence, "The automobile is a useful invention," "the automobile" kind of thing is distinguished from all other kinds of things such as airplanes, boats, dogs, etc. But, in the

sentence, "the automobile parked across the street is mine," "the automobile" refers to one particular automobile and "the" distinguishes it from all other automobiles.

When the generic article is used what is said about the one mentioned refers to every object in that class generally speaking. It is like one would take an example from a class and what is said about the one example would apply to every object of the class normally. The object in the singular with the generic article is often but not always equal to the object in the plural without the generic article. The verb must be changed to agree with the plural and any other words that require a change to agree grammatically must be changed. For example, "the automobile is a useful invention" is equal to "automobiles are useful inventions." These sentences mean the same thing.

I said the generic article with a word in the singular is not always equal to the word in the plural without the generic article. This is true because there can be one of a kind and it can be spoken of as a particular object or as a kind that potentially could have many examples. This would be particularly true when a new kind of thing has just come into existence and there is only one of the new kind.

A word can be referred to generically without using the generic article. An example, "Man is an intelligent creature." "Man" is used generically. The generic article is emphasized because it is so important in this study. All advanced grammars in English and Greek recognize this principle of the generic article.

"The with a singular noun sometimes indicates a class or kind of object. The scholar is not necessarily a dryasdust. The elephant is the largest of quadrupeds. The aeroplane is a very recent invention. Resin is obtained from the pine. Note. In this use 'the' is often called the generic article (from the Latin genus, "kind" or "sort"). The singular number with the generic 'the' is practically equivalent to the plural without an article. Thus in the first example the sense would be the same if we had 'Scholars are not necessarily dryasdusts!' " G.L. Kittredge, and F.E. Farley, An Advanced English Grammar, p. 77.

"948. The article may have a generic force, marking an object as the representative of a class; e.g., ho anthropos man (in general); hoi anthropoi mankind (opposed to gods or the lower animals); hoi gerontes the aged (as a class)." W.W. Goodwin, and C.B. Gulick, Greek Grammar, p. 207.

"763. Generic Article - The generic article denotes an entire class as distinguished from other classes; as ho anthropos man (as distinguished from other beings), hoi gerontes the aged, poneron he sukophantes the (an) informer is a vile thing." H.W. Smyth, A Greek Grammar for Schools and Colleges, p. 210.

"It is very common to find the singular used with the article in a representative sense for the whole class. So in ho huies tou anthropou (Mt. 8:20, and often) Jesus calls himself the son of mankind. Of Luke 10:7, ho ergates where the labourer represents all labourers." A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 757.

Since the generic article with the singular is often but not always equivalent to the plural without the definite article, I am going to apply this principle to some of the passages where we have the generic article with the word "church" to show that these passages make good sense according to their ordinary meaning. An example of what we will do is seen in this passage with the word "labourer." Luke 10:7b, Generic article: "for the labourer is worthy of his hire." Equivalent: "for labourers are worthy of their hire."

1Corinthians 10:32

Generic article: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles nor to the church of God."

Equivalent: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles nor to churches of God."

1Timothy 3:15

Generic article: "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."

Equivalent: "but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in houses of God, which are churches of the living God, pillars and grounds of the truth."

1Corinthians 12:28

Generic article: "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."

Equivalent: "and God hath set some in churches, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

Ephesians 1:22-23

Generic article: "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 fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Equivalent: "and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to churches, which are his bodies, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Ephesians 3:10

Generic article: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

Equivalent: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by churches the manifold wisdom of God."

Ephesians 3:21

Generic article: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"

Equivalent: "Unto him be glory in the churches by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"

Ephesians 5:23-32

Generic article: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such

thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Equivalent: "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of churches: and he is the saviour of the bodies. Therefore as churches are subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved churches and gave himself for them; That he might sanctify and cleanse them with the washing of the water by the Word, That he might present them to himself glorious churches, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that they should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord churches: For we are members of his bodies, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and churches. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Colossians 1:18

Generic article: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Equivalent: "And he is the head of bodies, churches: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Colossians 1:24

Generic article: "who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:"

Equivalent: "who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his bodies' sake, which are the churches:"

There can be more than one way to express the same thoughts. This has been demonstrated in the preceding Scriptures. An idea can be stated using a common noun and an article generically. The same idea can be expressed not using the the words generically. Sometimes the generic use is smoother and the non-generic is awkward. Sometimes the smoother way is the non-generic. Generally it is best to use the smoother language but both ways still can express the same idea.

When these passages in which the generic article was used were written there were several churches of our Lord in existence. Therefore they are good examples to show that the plural of a word without the definite article is the equivalent of the generic definite article with a word in the singular. Perhaps the generic article with the singular was used in other passages which were written when there was only one of the Lord's churches in existence. The only church in existence could be referred to as a particular church or as a kind of church which would have many examples in the future. Matthew 16:18; 18:17; 1Corinthians15:9; Philippians 3:6; Galatians 1:13 could be examples of this.

In the passages where the generic article is used, some believe there is a new meaning for ekklesia because of statements in the context. These statements are considered too great for the ordinary meaning of the word in their opinion. We have seen that there is no grammatical justification for giving ekklesia a new meaning in these passages. But, are the statements in the context a justification for giving ekklesia a new meaning in the New Testament? If these statements make good sense with the ordinary meaning of ekklesia then there will be no justification for a new meaning. This is what we want to examine now.

The word ekklesia means assembly in the period prior to the New Testament; this is

its common meaning, in fact, it is its only meaning according to all the information that Bible scholars have. There are 22 places in the New Testament that some say the word receives a new meaning. If advocates for a new meaning in these places are correct then they should be able to show reasons from the context that this is true. We have noticed that grammatically there is no justification for a new meaning. But are there statements made in these 22 places that would not make good sense using the common meaning? Is there any indication of a new meaning? Briefly the answer to both questions is, no!

Notice the statements made about the Lord's ekklesia and observe that the common meaning makes good sense with every statement.

1Timothy 3:15b "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

A house is the gathering together of materials into one local, visible organization. An assembly is the gathering together of people into one local, visible organization. An assembly of the Lord holds up the truth to the community around it, like a pillar and ground holds up the roof of a building.

1Corinthians 12:28 "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

God set apostles, prophets, teachers, etc., in the church at Jerusalem as the Gospels and early chapters of Acts reveal. He set some of these gifts in other churches also. This passage does not say He set all of these in each church individually but all of these are set in that kind of thing. That kind of thing, "the church", is manifested in all the churches. All of these gifts are found in the church at

Jerusalem and some of them in the other churches also. They are all found in that kind of thing and this is what it says in this passage since we have the generic article used.

In 1Corinthians 10:32 we are told not to be a stumbling block or an offence "to the church of God."

Can a person or a church offend another church or several churches? Certainly they can so this statement makes good sense with the ordinary meaning. Can a church be persecuted? Can a person sing in a church? Can a church bring glory to God through out eternity by its work for the Lord now? Certainly all of these things can be true of a church of Jesus Christ. These statements fit the common meaning very well.

Can a church be said to be bought with the blood of Christ? Certainly it can. If an individual who professes to trust Christ as Saviour can say that, certainly an assembly of baptized believers can say that. The Lord in His Word speaks of individuals according to their profession. They are called believers, saints, disciples, and are said to be bought with the blood of Christ even though time may reveal their profession is not genuine. The Lord knows who the false professors are; yet he speaks of them according to their profession. A church is an assembly of professed believers and they are referred to as such by the various expressions used even though some may not be genuine. These statements make good sense when one uses the word ekklesia according to its usual meaning.

Does God's plan for a church display His wisdom and do the activities of a church such as teaching reveal His wisdom to all who hear and see it? Ephesians 3:10. Certainly this is true. These statements make good sense with the common meaning.

Can Jesus be the head of each church? Certainly! We read he is the head of every

man, 1Corinthians 11:3. This means he is over each man and each church. He is Lord of all. We will say more about this when we consider the figures used of a church.

Can a church be sanctified and cleansed by the Word of God? Most certainly! If an individual can, certainly a group of individuals can who are organized together to be a church of Jesus Christ. The Word of God is preached in the Lord's churches that each church might be sanctified and cleansed of their sins by the spiritual washing power of the Word. The goal of all preaching to believers as individuals and as churches is that they might come close to their Lord and get rid of the sins in their daily life that they might become perfect. This is the goal, to be without spot or wrinkle, even though it is never attained until Jesus comes again. When Jesus comes again every individual who is saved and every true church of Jesus Christ will be made perfect. There are no perfect individuals or perfect churches now but then they will be. The believers then will never sin anymore nor will true churches.

Two figures are commonly used to describe a church. It is like a house and like a body. Both figures fit well the ordinary meaning of ekklesia. A house is made of many stones, organized together into one thing. The body is made of many members, organized together into one thing. A church is made of many believers, organized together into one assembly. These figures illustrate the common meaning very well.

The house figure is speaking of a special type of house, a house of God or temple. In 1Peter, Peter is writing to churches in Asia Minor, 1Peter 1:1-2; 5:1-3. Each church is like a spiritual house or temple. Each member is a living stone in his church. Jesus is the foundation and chief cornerstone. God dwells in this house or assembly of people. This house is to serve the Lord, 1Peter 2:5-6; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17; Matthew 16:18. The foundation of the Apostles and prophets is Jesus Christ. This was their personal foundation and the one they taught or advocated to others in their inspired writings, the New Testament. Therefore, they are the foundation of every New Testament church, 1Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20. A house is local, visible and organized just as a church is local, visible and organized. The common meaning makes good sense but the new meaning doesn't make good sense because it is not local, visible and organized but universal, invisible and not organized.

In 1Corinthians 12 the church at Corinth is likened to a human body. Each member of a church is like a member in a human body. One member with his gifts is like a hand, another like an eye, another like a foot. Each is different but yet they are organized into one body. A human body has great diversity in its many members but it has great unity so that all can work together as one. A church has great diversity in its various members with their different gifts but they are organized into one church and can function as one for Jesus Christ. When the Bible speaks of one body it is not giving us the total number of human bodies in the world in the first century but it is pointing out the characteristic of oneness or unity found in each human body, 1Corinthians 12:12; Romans 12:4-5. Each church has this same characteristic of oneness. One church body does not refer to the total of churches in that day but just like the illustration of the human body it is pointing to the characteristic of oneness which should be in each church.

Notice that eyes are like a church member and yet eyes are part of the head. This observation should help us understand what is meant when it says Jesus is the head of the body. He is the head in the sense of being the Lord over the body. The physical head with its parts are like members of a church. Jesus is the authority or head over all from head to foot.

Just as the husband is said to be head of the wife; Jesus is head of the church. Ephesians 5:23. The husband is not like the physical head of the wife but he is the leader, authority over the wife in their family. Christ is head of every man, that is, He is the authority or Lord of each one, 1Corinthians 11:3. He is not likened to the physical head of each man. This is the way Christ is the head or authority or Lord of each church body. Jesus is the head of each church body as a husband is the head of his wife. Each church body is a bride of Christ, a wife figuratively speaking. Christ is figuratively like a husband to each in that He loves each and is the authority over each. Each church is to obey Christ as an obedient wife, Ephesians 5:22-33.

This is the extent of the illustration. To argue that this makes Christ immoral because He is a polygamist is to go beyond the illustration. Christ and His kind of church are like a husband and wife only in the ways the context indicates not in every respect. Christ is like a thief in the night in His coming without any prior warnings. He certainly is not like a thief in immoral respects.

In Ephesians 5:30 some have had a problem understanding the language. The physical body of Jesus Christ was made up of flesh and bones. Since His body illustrates each of His churches, the members of a particular church all together are His body figuratively speaking. Another way of saying the same thing is to say that the members of a church altogether are His flesh and bones figuratively speaking.

Ephesians 5:31 brings out the truth that husband and wife become one in marriage. This is taught in Genesis 2:24. This truth applies to Christ and His church just as the other truths that have been brought out do, that is, the husband is the head of the wife, the husband is to love his wife, etc. "This is a great mystery," (secret), that is, the relationship between Christ and His church that was illustrated by the husband wife relationship in Ephesians 5:22-31. This was no secret concerning the literal husband and wife because it was taught in Genesis but it was a secret concerning Christ and His church because the Old Testament taught little about the church Jesus would build. This secret was revealed in the New Testament.

The word "we" in these church passages have caused some to wonder if the word "ekklesia" has a new meaning in the New Testament in some places. But the word "we" makes good sense with the ordinary meaning of the word "ekklesia" in these places so there is no reason to give a new meaning to the word. The problem with "we" and its answer is clearly seen in Romans 12:4-5. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Verse 4 is speaking of the human body which illustrates the church body which is mentioned in verse 5. The "we" of verse 4 is referring to Paul, his companions and the people in the church at Rome. Altogether they do not have one human body but each of them have a human body with various members which are united together into one body. He is not teaching that there is only one human body in the world but many human bodies and each of these is one body, that is, a body of oneness or unity. Each one of the we have one human body but not the same human body. What he says in verse 4 is likened to a church body in verse 5. "So we, being many," that is, different kinds of church members because of our various gifts are nevertheless organized into "one body in Christ" but not necessarily the same body in Christ. Paul and other Christians of various gifts were organized into one body of Christ in Antioch and the Romans with their various gifts were organized into one body of Christ in Rome, etc. Paul

continues in verses 6-8 naming some of these various gifts of the churches.

Ephesians 5:30 uses "we." The previous verse had mentioned the generic article with "church." The thought was equivalent to "the Lord nourishes and cherishes the churches." He continues in verse 30, "for we" (Paul, his companions and the Ephesian church members) "are members of his (kind of) body" or "bodies" for the context makes it clear that he has been speaking generically. They were all members of one His kind of church bodies but not necessarily the same church body.

1Corinthians 12:12 is teaching the same thing as Romans 12:4-5. Paul points out that the human body has many members and yet it is one body. All of the members are organized together to function as one. He is not saying there is only one human body in the world but he is saying that each human body is one in spite of the diversity of its members and this is also true of every New Testament church. "So also is Christ" at the end of the verse means that Christ's body, a New Testament church, is like the human body in the ways pointed out in verse 12a. A church is called a body of Christ or His body so it is clear from the context of 1Corinthians 12 that "Christ" in verse 12 is referring to the body of Christ. This is using "Christ" in a metonymical way just as when it says, "they have Moses and the prophets", Luke 16:29b. They didn't literally have Moses but they had his writings. Moses in this place means, Moses' writings figuratively speaking. In the same way that many human bodies can each be said to be one body, many church bodies can each be said to be one body. There is no justification for a new meaning for the word church in this passage.

Considering what we have noticed concerning "we" and "one body" one should not have any problem in seeing that 1Corinthians 12:13 does not support a new meaning for the word church. "We" are all baptized into one body but not the same body.

Chapter 12 has been teaching us how the Holy Spirit leads us to confess Jesus as our Lord, 3. In verse 13 we are taught that the Holy Spirit leads us to be baptized and become a member of a church and the Spirit leads us to drink the cup in the Lord's Supper. In spite of our various gifts we as Christians have some things in common. The same Holy Spirit leads each saved person to confess Christ, be baptized and take the Lord's supper. The baptism spoken of in verse 13 is water baptism. The usual use of the word baptism in the New Testament was with reference to water baptism. The usual or common use should be followed if it makes good sense. Saved people were to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and saved people were commanded to be baptized. The Holy Spirit leads us by the Word of God, Acts 10:48; Matthew 28:18-20.

1Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The one Spirit is speaking of the Holy Spirit. The context of chapter 12 makes that clear. The Holy Spirit leads us through the Word of God to confess Christ as our Saviour and then to be baptized in water. The word "by" can be translated "in" but it won't change the meaning and this isn't necessary. "By the leadership of one Spirit" is essentially the same as "in the leadership of one Spirit." This is the idea expressed in the verse.

In the New Testament we see, after the Lord began His church that the saved person became a member of one of the Lord's churches upon his baptism, Acts 2:41,47. Regardless of the nationality or condition of the various members they became members of one body. All Christians did not become a member of the same particular church but all became members of one church body. Each one was a separate unit. The church at Corinth is called a body of Christ

in 1Corinthians 12:27; "the" is not in the Greek.

"And have been all made to drink (the Lord's Supper) into (because of) one Spirit." The word translated "into" can be translated "because of" which is better here, 1Corinthians 12:13b.

Another figure used of a church is a "flock", Acts 20:17,28. A church is like a flock of sheep and their leader is called pastor, shepherd. This figure illustrates the basic truths concerning a church. A flock is an assembly; it is local and visible. At times the sheep are scattered but they assemble from time to time under the leadership of the shepherd.

Another of the 22 passages wrongly used to establish a new meaning for the word church is Hebrews 12:23. To properly understand this passage we must notice its setting. Verse 23 is part of a concluding statement for the book of Hebrews. This statement begins in verse 18 and goes thru verse 24. It is divided into 2 parts. The first part shows what they did not come to when they were saved and the second part shows what they did come to when they were saved. Verse 18 begins the first part with a conjunction, a negative and the verb in the perfect tense which can be translated, "For ye have not come to." This means that they had not come at their salvation to the things mentioned in verses 18 through 21.

Verse 22 begins with a conjunction and the verb in the perfect which can be translated, "But ye have come to." This means that they had come at their salvation to the things mentioned in verses 22 through 24. This comparison was to encourage the people to be faithful. They had been greatly blessed.

One of the blessings they came to after they were saved was a New Testament church. When a person is saved he is qualified to then follow his Lord in baptism and become a member of one of his churches. This was a great blessing to become a member of the only organization Jesus began when He was on earth and to enjoy its fellowship and to enter into its work, the greatest in the world, carrying out the great commission. As one reads Acts and the Epistles it is clearly seen that the newly saved person in those days followed the Lord in baptism and church membership. This was the common procedure then. It was natural to list this blessing with the others that come after one is saved.

The word church in verse 23 is described as "church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." "Firstborn" is in the plural in the Greek and is one of the names which is given to saved people. The firstborn of a family had special privileges above the other children. This is an appropriate name, for Christians do have privileges above all of God's other creatures. A New Testament church is composed of professed believers that have been saved by the blood of Christ so this perfectly describes a New Testament Church like the one at Jerusalem, or Antioch, etc.

These church members in a particular church on earth are not physically in Heaven but their names are written there as all saved people have their names written there. Saved people on earth are said to be in Heaven now, seated in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:6. Each of the blessings of the saved listed in verses 22 through 24 have a connection with Heaven in some way. This is obvious or explained. Just as the things they didn't come to of verses 18 through 21 are connected with Mount Sinai and the law.

The words "general assembly" of verse 23 is not the word ekklesia but the word "panegurei" which means a festival assembly. It was used to describe the assembly of people of the Greek cities that assembled at times to have a festival. In this passage it further describes

the angels of verse 22. The structure of the passage in the Greek makes this very clear. My translation of Hebrews 12:22-24 which brings this out very well is the following.

"But ye have come to Mount Zion and to a city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal assembly, and to an assembly of first-born ones enrolled in Heaven, and to a judge, God of all, and to spirits of just ones made perfect, and to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than the blood of Abel."

This is not speaking of a future church for it says, "ye have come..." This is not speaking of a church located in Heaven for it only says that the names of the members are "enrolled in Heaven." This is speaking of the kind of church that Jesus began when He was on earth. It is one like the Jerusalem church or Philippian church, or Antioch church, etc. The common meaning makes good sense and a new meaning is not warranted here.

The last passage of the 22 is Matthew 16:18. "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."

Is there anything in this verse that would make it impossible or very unlikely that the common meaning of the word "church" would be meant? No, there isn't. The church is likened to a building in this verse by the use of a rock foundation and the verb build. We have seen in other passages that the figure of a building or temple is used of a church. In a church, an assembly of baptized believers, each member is like a living stone and all the stones are fitted together to form the walls and Christ is the foundation. The Lord dwells in this building. This figure of a building which is local, visible and organized fits perfectly a New Testament Church which is also local, visible and organized. It does not fit the new meaning proposed which is universal, invisible and not organized.

But, even if it did the common meaning must be used as long as it makes sense. And, the common meaning makes very good sense. Can an assembly of baptized believers be organized or built? Yes, new churches of this kind are built all the time. Certainly Jesus could build the first one. And He did! This verse fits the common meaning of assembly perfectly. A new meaning is not justified by this verse.

The first church of the Lord was the one that was located in Jerusalem. The book of Acts tells us about it. This is the one that Jesus began when He was on earth. From this first church other churches came directly or indirectly. As important as this church was it seems reasonable that Jesus would tell about building it and He does. Matthew 16:18 tells about Jesus building the church at Jerusalem. This was not only a particular church but a pattern for the churches that would be built later. It was a prototype. This kind of church was to continue. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It would continue because it began other churches of the same kind and they would begin still other churches of the same kind so that the Lord's church would not go out of existence. He calls this kind of church "my church."

Jesus personally used the word, "church" 23 times in the New Testament. Once in Matthew 16, twice in Matthew 18 and 20 times in Revelation. In 22 times no one doubts that he is using the word "church" in its usual meaning. It would seem strange indeed for Jesus to mention building a universal, invisible church and then never mention it again but mention instead local visible churches 22 times that he never promised to build. However, the common meaning for church makes very good sense in Matthew 16:18 so it should be

considered the meaning there also.

We have examined the 22 times which are used incorrectly to justify a new meaning for the word "church" in the New Testament. The common meaning of the word makes good sense in every place so there is no justification for giving a new meaning to the word in these passages. What facts have been brought out in these passages about a church? Christ built it and promised it wouldn't be destroyed. The whole church was referred to at times meaning every member of the assembly. Jesus sang in it. Jesus loved it and died for it. The church was persecuted. We are not to offend a church. The church is God's house and upholds God's truth to the world. There are various gifts in the church. God's wisdom is manifested by the church. Christ is the head of the church. The church is to obey Christ. The Lord cleanses the church through the preaching of the Word of God and has a goal for it to be without spot and wrinkle. The church is like a human body. The church is a blessing to the saved. These are the facts. Are these facts true of the church at Jerusalem? Do these truths apply to each church in the New Testament? Yes, to both questions. When you read the New Testament, it is obvious that these facts fit the ordinary meaning of the word "church." Which facts in these passages will not fit the ordinary meaning of the word "church?" There aren't any. Those who believe in a new meaning for the word in the New Testament should explain in what passages we find this new meaning of a universal invisible church. They should explain in what way this universal invisible church is distinct from the local visible church and where are these distinctive facts mentioned in the Scripture. They can't do this. According to their statements the characteristics which they give to this universal invisible church are true of the ordinary meaning of the word, a local visible church. They have never shown one distinctive fact from the New Testament that justifies a new meaning for the word. They have never shown one grammatical truth that justifies it.

Another word is used as a synonym in the New Testament for ekklesia which helps us to see that the word means assembly, something local, visible and organized. The word "sunagoge" refers to a New Testament church in James 2:2 and is translated "assembly."

It should be noted that the well-known Greek dictionaries or lexicons for New Testament Greek state that ekklesia has a new meaning in some places of the New Testament. When a dictionary states that a word has a certain meaning that usually settles the issue with most people. This is a final authority to them and they aren't willing to listen to any different opinion. But, one should stop and consider the fact that all dictionaries are man-made. They are not inspired and infallible.

One should also remember that meanings are assigned to words by dictionary makers because of how the words are used in literature. The dictionary is made based on the usage of the language. Either the dictionary maker or some other scholar that the dictionary maker uses interprets how a word is used in literature and gives his conclusion. Mistakes are made because human interpretation is involved. But, this is often forgotten and Greek lexicons are almost considered infallible authorities that can not be questioned. If one examines the Greek lexicons for the New Testament period he will find that all believe that ekklesia means assembly in the period prior to the New Testament and in almost all cases in the New Testament itself.

The only place a new meaning is suggested is in a few places in the New Testament. But, they don't give reasons to justify a new meaning. The dictionary maker has examined a few

places in the New Testament and concluded that it has a new meaning in these few places. He does not give his reasons. However, most people will accept what the lexicon says without questioning its interpretation or desiring to know the reasons that prompted the lexicon to give a new meaning to the word. This is very sad indeed. This is not meant to undermine the usefulness and great value of lexicons. The makers of the lexicons have done a great service and all can appreciate their work but none are infallible. This should be realized. When new meanings are assigned to words in the New Testament one should examine to see if the lexicon's interpretation is correct. One can do this by examining the contexts of the word under study. Lexicons are human productions developed by interpreting how words were used in New Testament times and before. In this book all appearances of ekklesia in the New Testament have been examined to see if the word does indeed have a new meaning in a few places in the New Testament. The examination has revealed that the meaning of assembly makes good sense in every place and a new meaning is not justified by the evidence in the contexts.

The word ecclesia and the word church which is used to translate it in the New Testament only has one meaning in the New Testament and before that time. That meaning is assembly which refers to an organization of people which assembles from time to time. This assembly is local visible and organized. But after New Testament times as some began to change the teachings of the Bible, the word ecclesia and the words used to translate it took on new meanings. The meaning of universal visible church became a meaning because people changed the teaching of the church of the New Testament and used the word of their new organization. Later the word took on the meaning of universal invisible church because some taught such a church even though the Bible didn't. The various meanings given to the word church came about in the history of Christianity as some began to change the teachings in the New Testament. This was true of other words also. The words grace, baptism, bishop, etc. accumulate new meanings after New Testament times because some began to change the teachings of the New Testament but continued to use the same words used in the New Testament. A study of the history of Christianity reveals this.

We have devoted a number of pages to show the meaning of the word "church" in the New Testament. Some may wonder if this is necessary. For a complete and accurate understanding of the doctrine of the church we believe it is necessary and very important. When 22 passages or more are taken away from the local visible church and given to an invisible universal church these results have followed. Saved people who have been brought up in a church which is not like the local visible churches of the New Testament can justify there staying in such an organization by believing the local church is not very important, the main thing is to be a member of the universal invisible church they reason. Saved people who are members of a church like the local visible churches of the New Testament can justify more easily accepting local churches not like the ones of the New Testament as churches in various ways because in their minds the local churches of the New Testament are not really too important. The main thing is the universal invisible church of which every believer is a member, they think. Some saved people decide not to be a member of a local church like the ones in the New Testament because they aren't too important and they are full of imperfections which they can easily blame for many past failures in the world. The main thing is to be a member of the universal invisible church, they think. This is an easy way to dodge the responsibility each Christian has of becoming a member of a church like Jesus built

and justifying his disobedience. I am not questioning their salvation or sincerity but I question their understanding of the Bible teaching on the church.

If one uses the same principles used in finding a "new meaning" for the word church as has been used then many "new doctrines" can be established. We believe these false principles have affected the understanding of some words in other areas of Bible study. Correct principles of interpretation are very important.

It is important to study this thoroughly that we might obey the teaching found throughout the Bible that urges us to study the truth, know the truth, and teach the truth.

II. Its Nature.

We have seen that the word *ekklesia* which is usually translated church in the New Testament always means assembly. It is local, visible and organized. However, there are three kinds of *ekklesias* mentioned in the New Testament. They are all local, visible, organized assemblies but they differ in their nature having different membership requirements, governments and purposes. The first kind of *ekklesia* is found in Acts 19. The word *ekklesia* is used three times for the political assembly of the city of Ephesus in Acts 19:32,39,41. *Ekklesia* is translated assembly in these Scriptures. This assembly was composed of qualified citizens of the city of Ephesus. It was not governed by the Bible. Its purpose was to govern the city of Ephesus.

Another kind of *ekklesia* is mentioned in Acts 7:38. This assembly was composed of Israelites and was governed by the Lord through Moses. Their purpose was not to carry out the great commission but to hear the law and enter into a covenant with God.

The third kind is mentioned in all the other passages where *ekklesia* is used. It is also referred to by other terms in the New Testament. Its nature is unique. It has a distinct membership, government and purpose. We will study its nature under these three headings: Membership, Government, Purpose.

A. Membership.

1. Qualifications.

The word *ekklesia* means assembly. But, what kind of assembly did Jesus begin? Who composed His assembly? The New Testament is very clear that it was an assembly of baptized believers. The qualifications for membership in one of the Lord's churches was for one to believe on Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and then to follow Him in baptism. The member had to profess to be saved and he had to be baptized. But what kind of salvation did he profess and what kind of baptism did he receive? The salvation professed was one based entirely on the work of Christ, His life, death, burial and resurrection, to make one free from sin and right with God. It was not by the believer's works. He received it freely by God's grace through faith. Any other profession of faith did not meet the qualifications for church membership. The baptism received was an immersion of this kind of believer to picture what Christ had done for him and it was administered by a person working through one of the Lord's churches. More will be said about the ordinance of baptism later.

Acts 2:41, 47 points out that new members were added to the church at Jerusalem when they heard the message of salvation and received it and then were baptized.

Throughout the New Testament unbelievers were outside of the membership of the churches until they believed. The record is also clear that very shortly after they believed

they were baptized. Baptism naturally followed as the first step after belief. 1Corinthians 12:13 teaches that after salvation the Holy Spirit led the believer to be baptized and with the baptism he came into the membership of a church, the one body. There was no required wait before baptism until one learned the doctrines. The only reason for delaying baptism was to ascertain the reality of ones conversion as much as humanly possible, Matthew 3:7-9. It was not delayed for teaching purposes, Acts 8:35-37. If there was doubt about conversion then baptism would be delayed. The order in the New Testament is conversion then baptism and church membership then teaching and growing in spiritual matters.

Some of the epistles are addressed to churches and the language makes it plain that in those churches all are recognized as professed believers who have been baptized, 1Corinthians 1:2,14,15; 4:14-17; 1Thessalonians 1; Acts 14:23; 16:5; Matthew 18:17; Philippians 1:1; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 10:48; 16:14-15,31-34; 18:8.

But aren't some members lost? Yes, the New Testament makes it clear that some are only professed believers. Some are rebuked because they are only professed believers but they are all professed believers. The first qualification is not to be saved but to profess to be saved. No one but the Lord can look into ones heart and know if the profession is genuine. Even the Lord who knows every heart did not turn Judas from church membership in the first church, 1Corinthians 12:28; John 13:18,21. He was a professed believer who followed the Lord in baptism so he was qualified to be a member and was. The first church is a pattern for other churches to follow. Since we cannot look in the heart to see the reality of ones belief the Lord did not turn anyone away from church membership in the church at Jerusalem because of what He knew about their true heart condition.

But, aren't there passages that imply some weren't baptized? No, there aren't. There may be passages that could be interpreted that way but none which must be interpreted that way. When we consider the plain Scriptures which indicate one must profess salvation and then be baptized before church membership then we believe that these other passages which can naturally be interpreted that way ought to be and they ought not to be interpreted in a way that would contradict the plain statements of the New Testament on this matter. Those who professed faith in Christ and were baptized were received or not received into a church by its membership. See Acts 9:26-28. The way of church government will be presented later.

The main difference among professed Christians are not if the qualifications are professed faith and baptism but what is salvation and baptism.

2. Responsibilities.

Every church member has responsibilities which should be met. The following sum them up. The New Testament clearly teach them in many passages directly and indirectly.

a. Attend.

Every member should faithfully attend his church. We see this by precept and example. It is the only reasonable thing to do. Since Jesus began the first church then every saved person should become a member and attend regularly. How can one do less for our Lord? If a member moves away and can find a New Testament church he should move his membership and attend his new church. If he is only away temporarily then he may find it best to attend regularly but not move his membership. The Lord uses His churches to help His people so it is important for a member to attend regularly, Hebrews 10:25.

b. Study.

Every member should faithfully study the Bible. This is the guide for his life and his church's life. He has a responsibility to know and follow the truth of the Bible, 2Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11.

c. Live.

Every church member should live a dedicated Christ-like life. His life should be a testimony in word and deed, Romans 12:1-2.

d. Pray.

Every church member should pray every day. It should be regular and sincere and according to the Bible. There should be private and public prayer. Every person should pray personally in private. Every person should pray publicly through the one leading in prayer in the church services. The men of the church should lead in prayer in the public services. The women are not to do this. The reason for this is that the men have been selected by God to be the leaders. The

women can pray when there is a women's meeting or a children's meeting and no men are present. They are not to usurp authority over the men, 1Timothy 2:8. The word for "men" in this verse is the word that means men rather than women, 1Timothy 2:11-14; 1Corinthians 14:34-35. The men's headship was not based on the time or the place or local custom. It was based on creation and the fall, 1Timothy 2:11-14.

The women were to wear a head covering in the church services to symbolize that the men were to be the leaders in the church. The head covering and the long hair of the woman are to symbolize the truth that God has a visible head over the women in the men. The men are to be the leaders in spiritual matters. The head covering of the women and the long hair show that the women believe and accept this truth, 1Corinthians 11:2-16. The long hair taught this everywhere the woman went and the head covering emphasized this when the women were in the church services.

e. Use.

Every member is to use the gifts God has given him in the service of the Lord. There are many gifts which the Bible mentions. Some of these were temporary and others were permanent. The gift of tongues was given to accredit the church of the Lord and its message. This was done in New Testament days and then this gift was not given any more because its purpose had been accomplished. Miracles and gifts of healing were to accredit the message of the New Testament and the New Testament church and they passed away at the end of the first century. The New Testament was complete by that time and the church had been accredited. The gifts of teaching, preaching and helps were permanent. These have been given to Christians in every generation. They are needed for the on going work of the churches. The gifts of preaching and teaching publicly in the church services are to be done only by the men. The Lord has given the work in all phases of leadership to the men. The women can use their gifts of teaching privately or in women's or children's classes but they are not to teach or lead the men. It is the same principle as we noticed in public prayer. 1Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:6-8. "Helps" is a general term to refer to various gifts used to carry on the work of the Lord.

f. Witness.

Every member should be a personal witness for Christ. Their desire should be to win people to Jesus Christ by their personal witness, Acts 1:8; I Peter 3:15.

g. Give.

Every member should give of his material substance to support the work of the Lord. They should give according to what they have. They should give their tithe and offering. It should be through the church in which they are a member, Malachi 3:8-10; 1Timothy 3:15; 1Corinthians 16:2.

3. Discipline.

To discipline is to disciple or to teach one to observe all things taught in God's Word. It is more than informing. It is informing so that the truth is received and observed or practiced. Each member is to be taught to observe all things. Discipline can be divided into three parts: Teaching, Correcting, Excluding.

a. Teaching.

Every member is to be taught to observe all that the Lord has commanded saved church members to obey. A church member should be willing to be taught by God's Word, James 1:19-25.

b. Correcting.

Church members should be corrected of their disobedience to God's Word by preaching and teaching in the services and by personal contact when necessary. A church member should be willing to be corrected by God's Word, 2Timothy 3:16-17.

c. Excluding.

Sometimes it becomes necessary to exclude a church member from the membership because of word or deed. The New Testament teaches that the churches are to practice this. It is very important that it is done in a Christ-like spirit and according to the teachings of the Scriptures. If it is not done it can hurt the unity of the church. Each church should work together in love as one body. Each church should have a clean and consistent testimony before the world. Exclusion at times is necessary for a church to maintain a good testimony. Exclusion can be used to help the guilty person get right with the Lord. If the person is lost it can be used to show him this and lead to his salvation. Exclusion when done as the Lord teaches will bring glory to God, help the guilty one and help the church practicing it. Two types of offences can lead to exclusion: Private Offences and Public Offences.

(1) Private Offences.

These offences are things said or done against some person. It is a private offence. It breaks the fellowship between the saved people who are members of the same church. It hurts the fellowship and unity of the church when two people are out of fellowship with each other. It can spread until several are on each side and the fellowship and work is greatly hurt in the church. It should be corrected according to the teaching in Matthew 18:15-20. Even if the two Christians involved are not members of the same church they should desire to be reconciled to each other. The basic principles should be followed except for the third step. There are three steps to follow if necessary if both are members of the same church.

The person wronged should take the first step and go privately to the person who wronged him and seek to get the matter corrected. The matter should not be told to all since that can only make it worse. Go privately and in the right spirit. The person who did the wrong can begin the action also, Matthew 5:23-24. If this step corrects the problem then nothing more should be done. It should be forgiven, forgotten and not talked about.

The second step is taken when the first step did not correct the problem. The person wronged should take one or two people from his church with him to help him get the matter

corrected. The person wronged selects the one or two to go with him not the church. Others should not be told about it. It is not an official committee of any type. It is two or three Christians seeking to work out a problem between two Christians. If this step is successful then the next step is not necessary. It should be forgiven, forgotten and not talked about.

If the second step is not successful then the third step is necessary. The person wronged should bring the matter to the church. If the person who did the wrong will not listen to the church and correct the matter then the church should exclude him from the membership. He will then be like any non-member until he gets right with the Lord and comes and gets right with the church. If he gets right later he can be voted back into the membership, 2Corinthians 2:6-11; Matthew 18:21-22. In private offences this procedure should always be followed.

(2) Public Offences.

Several public offences are mentioned in the New Testament which should bring exclusion from the membership. Teaching false doctrine and persisting in it after being shown different is an offence for which one should be excluded. There should be no church fellowship with such a one. To obey this would make it impossible for such a one to remain a church member. There should be a united front in preaching and teaching. This does not mean that everyone must interpret every passage alike but the basic doctrines must be the same. The doctrines of the verbal inspiration of the Scripture, the doctrine of God, the Deity of Christ, His substitutionary atonement, His literal resurrection, His literal coming again, total depravity of the sinner, salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone, the new birth, the doctrine of the church, etc. must be agreed on. This does not mean that every one fully understands these doctrines. A new Christian who has just come into the church cannot be expected to understand these doctrines, Romans 14:1. He is a babe in Christ and knows very little. But no one in the church should be teaching against the doctrines believed and taught by the church. If one does then he should be warned and instructed. If he persists warn him again and teach him but if he persists he should be excluded. A set procedure is not set down as there was for personal offences. Some offences of this nature may warrant immediate dismissal, Romans 16:17; I Timothy 6:3-5.

Certain offences which we would call moral offences would demand exclusion immediately. The facts should be checked to make sure the person is guilty but there is no need of a trial in exclusions from a New Testament church, 1Corinthians 5. The Bible doesn't teach the need for a trial. Moral offences are mentioned in 1Corinthians 5:11. Fornication, adultery, stealing, lying, drunkenness, etc. are what we mean by moral offences.

The Bible makes it clear in this passage that when this is known, swift action should be taken. If the person repents and asks to be forgiven, the church should forgive and keep him as a member. If after he is excluded he repents and asks to be forgiven, he should be forgiven and received back into the membership.

The Bible teaches that a person should be excluded for disorderly offences also. This is a general term that would cover many sins just as moral offences cover many sins. Both are so general we might use them as synonyms. But, we are limiting them to the way described. One should follow the faith and order as revealed in the Word of God. Not to work when one can for a living but to be lazy is walking contrary to the order of the Bible. Not to attend church when one can is to walk contrary to the order of the New Testament, 2Thessalonians 3:6,14.

These public offences hurt the testimony of the church that permits them to go on without dealing with them the way the Bible teaches. The church preaches one thing but permits the opposite to go on which undermines their message.

The procedure to deal with them is not explained. It is left to the church to handle in a fair, Christ-like way but swiftly. There should not be unnecessary delay.

The New Testament is clear that when one repents of his sin he should be forgiven and received back into the church membership. We are always to forgive as Christ forgave which means we should forget also.

B. Government.

The government of the church has three elements which are the Head, the Assembly, the Officers. We will study the government under these three headings.

1. The Head.

Jesus is the head of each of His churches. He rules them. He is their Lord and King. Each is to be governed by Him. But, how does a church know the will of its head? The Word of God is His Word and the church is guided by the Holy Spirit in understanding and applying it, Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Galatians 5:16; I Corinthians 2:14; II Timothy 3:16-17; etc.

When Jesus was on earth with the first church He guided them directly. All decisions were in His hands. He is the final authority in all matters. Now that He is in Heaven He guides His churches indirectly. Each church should desire to have Christ make all decisions but the members must seek to know His will through the Bible illuminated by the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:15-26.

2. The Assembly.

Each assembly is to be guided by Jesus in making decisions. Although Jesus is their head the members must make the decision after seeking to find what He teaches on a matter. Each assembly is self-governing under Christ. They are independent of all other individuals or groups outside of themselves other than the Lord in making decisions. The political government, other churches, other organizations, other individuals cannot govern them in religious matters. The church at Jerusalem did not govern the other churches, the apostles did not govern them, Rome did not govern them. They might give their opinion on some matter if asked but the decisions were made by each church on its own. Each church was self-governing, independent, autonomous, 1Corinthians 5; Matthew 18:17-18; Acts 1:15-26.

Since God has given political governments the authority to rule in secular matters then they can govern churches with regard to property use, building regulations, fire regulations, etc. as they do all others in the territory they rule over. They can rightfully receive taxes for these services if they so desire. They have the right to control these matters but not in such a way as to make the work of a New Testament church impossible. The Lord's churches must put the Lord first and obey God rather than men, Romans 13:1-7; Acts 4:18-20.

Churches may fellowship together and work together if they do not give up their independence or autonomy in so doing.

The assembly was not only self-governing but also democratic. Each member of the assembly had one vote in all church decisions. The apostles did not make the decisions for the assembly, neither did the pastors or deacons. Any member might make a suggestion in the

proper way but no individual even if he has an office can make the decision for the assembly. Each man, woman or child who is a member has a vote in the assembly. There is no Scripture which forbids women and children from voting. There are Scriptures that mention that the whole assembly chose a certain person to an office. Since the churches had women and children who were members then they were among those who voted. If a child professes faith in Christ and asks to be baptized then he can certainly vote in the church he joins. Women members are restricted from speaking out in the assembly when men are present but they are not restricted from voting. They are restricted from speaking before the assembly because God has chosen men to be the leaders in the churches.

In voting each member should desire to vote as Jesus, the head of the church, would want him to vote. Each member should have the mind of Christ, should pray and follow the Bible as illuminated by the Holy Spirit in making decisions. If each member does that then the vote will be unanimous and the same thing that Jesus would have decided had He been there physically. When Jesus was on earth He made all the decisions for the Jerusalem church without any vote. Many decisions are very easy when there is a specific statement in the Bible to go by. When a person professes faith in Christ and follows the Lord in baptism and there is no evidence it is not genuine then the Bible is clear that each should vote to receive that person into the membership. If one does not have a specific statement of Scripture on a matter then he should notice the principles of Scripture and pray that God would guide in making the decision Jesus would want. The Holy Spirit will never lead one to go contrary to the Bible. One should never vote for anything that is contrary to the Bible directly or indirectly.

All of the examples in Scripture teach us that each church governed itself and did so democratically, Acts 1:15-26; 6:2-6; 14:23; 1Corinthians 5:1-13; 2Corinthians 8:18-19,23. "Ordained" in Acts 14:23 in the Greek means to choose by raising the hand. Paul and Barnabus conducted business meetings in each church new church and the members chose their Elders by each raising his hand. The same Greek word is used in 2Corinthians 8:19 and is translated "chosen." Several churches gave an offering for a worthy cause and each church chose a man who was traveling with Paul to be responsible for getting their offering to its destination.. Each member in each of these churches voted by raising their hand for this man to carry their offerings. In Acts 1:26 Matthias was chosen to be an apostle by the members of the church at Jerusalem by casting forth their lots or ballots. They could have voted by voice, ballot or raising the hand but it appears that the most common way was by raising the hand.

But, when a church votes on a matter it must have some one or ones to administer the decision. There are matters that no administrator would be necessary but often it is necessary. Does the Bible teach us how the decisions should be administered? Yes, it does. Concerning offerings which were voted by a church to be sent to someone or some other church the Bible is clear that the church could vote to have whoever they wanted to see that the offering got to its destination. The person or persons given the authority by the church to see that the gift got to its destination could be a member of the church sending the gift but he did not have to be, 1Corinthians 16:3; 2Corinthians 8:18-19,23. Pastors or deacons or teachers or any others can be asked by a church to carry out many decisions made by a church.

3. The Officers.

a. Temporary.

The officers of New Testament churches are of two types, temporary and permanent. The apostles and prophets were temporary. Pastors and deacons were permanent. The apostles

and prophets were gifts placed in the churches of New Testament days. The prophets were led of the Holy Spirit to write the New Testament. The message preached by the churches in the first century was put in writing over a period of about fifty years. It was inspired of the Spirit that we might all have confidence that our message is God's Word, the same message Paul, Peter, etc. had. Until the New Testament was completed it was necessary for the churches to have prophets who could speak authoritatively concerning the message of the churches. Some prophets only spoke by inspiration and others spoke and wrote. When the New Testament was finished this gift or office was no longer necessary. The churches have not had this gift since the first century. We have the permanent results, the New Testament, of the temporary office, the prophets.

Some prophets were also apostles but not all were. All apostles were also prophets. The apostles held an office that was prepared to give special leadership for the churches in the first century. They had all seen the Lord Jesus Christ and had learned the message from Him. They were given special gifts that enabled them in those early days to guide the churches until the message was made permanent in written form and the churches were well established. The prophets gave an inspired message in permanent form, the New Testament. The apostles gave a special leadership to the churches being established until the New Testament was given. The apostles could lay their hands on people and give special miraculous gifts. No other office could do this. In the New Testament we have that same message and leadership for the churches today so we need not have these offices today. No one is qualified to be a prophet or apostle today and none have been since the completion of the New Testament. We have the benefit of both offices today and have had since the completion of the New Testament. We have all that the New Testament churches had in the first century in the New Testament. We have not been slighted in any way.

With the special offices there were special miracles in the first century which accredited the offices and their work which was the New Testament and the churches. In the New Testament we see this accreditation. Again the New Testament shows us the results of these miracles, the accreditation of the apostles, prophets, their decisions of leadership, doctrines, and this new organization started by the Lord, the church. Today what they saw we see through an inspired book, the New Testament. As long as we have the New Testament we need not have the special offices and miracles today. In the New Testament we have all that the Christians of the first century had. They had it by personally seeing and hearing but we have it by the inspired book. We lack nothing today in this respect, Acts 1:15-26; 6:1-6; 8:5-25; 10:1-11:18; 1Corinthians 12:28; 13:8-10; 15:7-9; Ephesians 2:20; 1Peter 1:20-21; Galatians 1:1, 11-12, 15-18; etc.

The offices of the apostles and prophets received Jesus Christ as their foundation and revealed Jesus by inspiration in the New Testament as the foundation for the Lord's churches and every individual Christian. Jesus was their foundation. Jesus as revealed by the apostles and prophets is the foundation of every New Testament church then and today. The revelation of Jesus Christ they gave is still with us today in the New Testament. The individuals have died but the work of the offices continues on. We need the same foundation for every true church but we do not need any new individuals in these offices, Ephesians 2:20-22; 1Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 16:18; 1Corinthians 10:4.

b. Permanent.

The permanent offices of pastor and deacon were given in New Testament days and we

still have them today. These offices were to be in the churches in every generation.

(1) Pastor.

(a) Names. The pastor is called by several names: Pastor, Elder, Bishop, Angel. Pastor means shepherd. Since a New Testament church is like a flock of sheep and the leader of a flock is called shepherd or pastor then the leader of a church is called pastor, Acts 20:17,28; 1Peter 5:2-4; "Feed" in the Greek is the word which means "pastor" in the verb form. Jesus as the head of each New Testament church is called the chief shepherd. As the pastor leads, feeds and protects the sheep so the pastor should do the same spiritually for his church or flock.

Elder was a term used to indicate someone older, mature and therefore the natural leader of the younger. Since a pastor should be older and mature spiritually and is to lead the younger spiritually then the term fits the office well; Acts 20:17; 1Peter 5:1,5.

Bishop means overseer and is a shortened transliteration of the Greek word, "episkopos." This is one of the main functions of the office of pastor. He is to oversee the work of the church and to guide all the affairs, Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1Timothy 3:1-2.

Angel is a transliteration of the Greek word "angelos" which means messenger. This word is used of the creatures who are of a higher order of beings than man such as Gabriel. It is used of human messengers in general. It is also used of pastors because this is a main function of the office, to carry God's message to the church and the lost, Revelation 1:20;2:1,8,12,etc.

These terms are used directly or are implied for this office. In Acts 20:17,28 three of the names are given or implied; see elders, overseers and feed which means pastor in the verb form. All terms refer to the same people that Paul had called together. In I Peter 5:1-4 all three terms are stated or implied again of the same people that Peter was addressing; see elders, feed which means pastor in the verb form, taking the oversight which is a participle form of bishop meaning overseer.

This office is for a New Testament Church. The pastor of each New Testament church is called by each of these terms. The terms are synonyms as far as referring to the same office. There is no office in the New Testament over several churches or many churches or a small or large territory or over all churches. The ideas of the Catholics and others of Bishops ruling areas with all the churches in them and Archbishops and Cardinals and Pope, etc. is all contrary to the Bible.

A church might have several pastors but need not. The church should have several if it needs them. Because of size some need several.

(b) Qualifications. This office requires the highest of qualifications. He must be saved and have a godly, consecrated life. His testimony should be good in this respect before all. He should be the head of his family and lead them well. If he cannot rule his family then he certainly will not be able to rule the church. His wife should follow his leadership. His children should be well-behaved. He should not be divorced. He does not have to be married but it implies that ordinarily he will be and that he will have children. But he does not have to be married and have children.

The pastor must be a man. Since he must teach and lead the church, he must be a man. This is implied also when it says he must be the "husband of one wife," 1Timothy 2:11-12; 3:2; etc.

1 Timothy 3:2 says he must be the "husband of one wife." This does not mean he must be married as Paul was not married during his ministry. It does not mean he can't be remarried if his wife dies, 1Corinthians 7:8-9; Romans 7:1-3. He should not be a polygamist but this

Scripture is not referring to that specifically. See 1Timothy 5:9 where widows must be "the wife of one man" to qualify for support. Divorce was a great problem at this time in the Roman Empire. It appears to be referring to divorce in both 1Timothy 3:2 and 5:9. One could be a member of a church and be divorced as these Scriptures imply but a divorced man was not qualified to be a pastor. The person in this office must not have anything questionable in his life that might hurt the work God had called him to do. This Scripture implies there were men that were outstanding Christians in the churches that might be qualified except for their divorce. Divorces can be very complicated and impossible to correct in this life. This does not keep the divorced from church membership. Polygamy can be corrected in this life and should be. If this phrase refers to polygamy then it is difficult to understand why people guilty of it could be church members when this sin could be corrected. This phrase was a way of referring to divorce. It does not imply anything as to whether it is a Scriptural divorce or unscriptural or what is meant by this phrase.

He must have grown spiritually from a babe in Christ to a mature person in Christ. He may be young in years but he must not be young in Christ. He is not to be a novice. He must know God's Word and its teachings. He must be sound in doctrine. He cannot teach others as a pastor should unless he has a good understanding of the Bible and its doctrine. He must have the ability to lead and to teach. It is an office for qualified men only, 1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

(c) **Duties.** He is to lead the church in all matters. He may have others do things for him but he is in charge of all areas of his church. He is to "rule" the church, 1Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 13:7,17; 1Peter 5:2-3. He is not to do it as a dictator but as a shepherd rules or leads the sheep. He is to do it by preaching the Word of God and recommending that the Word be applied in the church and each life. The responsibility of the elders to rule is not to be interpreted in a way to contradict other Scriptures. Jesus is the head of the churches. The elders rule must be according to Christ's supreme rule. Each church member is to vote and meet his responsibility as a member according to the teaching of Scripture. The elders rule must not be such as to take away this responsibility of each member. The elders rule is defined by all the Scriptures. He is to study the Word and pray, 2Timothy 2:15; Acts 6:4. He is to teach the Word to the church. He is to do the work of an evangelist. He is to tell people how to be saved and seek to win them to Christ, 1Peter 5:2; 1Timothy 4:12-16; Acts 20:17-38. He is to warn of dangers. He is to rebuke sin, 2Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:9.

(d) **Support.** The church should support their pastor if possible. His material needs should be supplied, 1Corinthians 9:1-14; 1Timothy 5:17-18. He should be supported well so that he need not work at another job to support his family. The pastor should be willing if necessary to work at another job. However, if there are ten regular wage earners the pastor can be given a wage the average of the ten provided each is a tither. Other needs in the church such as paying for a building would probably require more. The pastor's attitude should be good. He should not be covetous or preaching for money. His purpose should be to do what God has called him to do even if he never gets any support. He should always in every situation work cheerfully.

(e) **Ordination.** Pastors are ordained by the church. Ordained means appointed. A church should choose the man they believe God wants. The man should accept because he believes God has called him. Each church chose or ordained their own pastor to the office, Acts 14:23, "ordained" in this verse means to choose by raising the hand. Paul and Barnabas

conducted business meetings in each church and each church chose their own pastor by a show of hands. The church votes for officers, see also Acts 6:2-6.

When a man was first chosen to be a pastor there was an ordination service or ceremony. When the word "ordained" or "ordination" is used today, usually the ceremony is referred to rather than the appointment itself. Little is said about the ceremony in the New Testament and it does not appear to be required but it was practiced. It was a simple ceremony in which hands were laid on the ordained man. There was prayer and a reminder of the purpose of the ceremony. This was to symbolize that he was appointed to the office, Acts 6:6; I Timothy 5:22. This is for life unless the church recalls it.

(2) Deacons.

(a) Name. The name deacon means servant. He is to serve the church in an official capacity so this office is given this name. This term is used of every Christian in an unofficial way. Men, women and children who are saved are God's servants and servants of the church of which they are members. But, the term is used of an office of the church also. There are special qualifications and duties given for this office, Philippians 1:1.

(b) Qualifications. To be a deacon one must be saved and a dedicated Christian with a good testimony before all. He will represent the church in an official way in serving so his life should be a credit to the Lord and his church. His family life is to be outstanding. He is to have a family which is not an offence to his work in the church. He is not to be divorced. In life the qualification for a deacon is the same as the pastor. Both should be of the highest order.

He should have grown spiritually to a mature person in Christ. He should be sound in doctrine. He must be a man. This is implied when it speaks of him having a wife, I Timothy 3:8-13. The apostles led the first church to appoint seven men to this office, Acts 6:2-3.

He should have the ability to serve the church. He should have wisdom. In Acts 6:1-7 the word "serve" in verse 2 is the verb form of the word deacon. See also I Timothy 3:8-13.

(c) Duties. He is to serve the church in ways to relieve the pastor that the pastor can concentrate more on study, prayer and teaching the Word of God, Acts 6:2-4. The pastor should not feel the work is beneath him and if necessary he should do what needs to be done in the work of the church whatever it may be. But, if qualified men are available then they should be put in the office to relieve the pastor. This will help so that the Word of God can be preached even more.

The deacons are not a governing board. They are not to rule the pastor or church. It is an office for men only, I Timothy 3:12. All women are to be servants as Phebe was and as all men and children are who are members of the church, Romans 16:1; 6:18; etc. But the office is only for qualified men. This is according to the principle of the Bible that God has placed men in the place of leadership.

(d) Support. The deacons are not to be supported by the church. There is no Scripture to that effect.

(e) Ordination. Deacons were appointed by each church according to their needs as taught in the Bible. They had a simple ceremony of prayer and laying on of hands and a reminder of their responsibility, Acts 6:1-6. There is no set way which must be followed.

(3) Others.

There are other needs that may arise in a church that will require someone to be appointed by the church to do it. The principles to follow in filling these offices would be the same ones in general seen in selecting pastors or deacons. The person should be saved, a

member of the church, consecrated in life, sound in doctrine, faithful, not a novice, ability to do the particular job. Such offices would be secretary, treasurer, trustees, etc. A person can hold more than one office at a time as seen by Judas' example. He was an apostle and treasurer, John 13:27-30. These offices of secretary, treasurer, etc., can be filled by the deacons if the church wants but need not be.

C. Purpose.

The purpose of a church is threefold: worship, fellowship, work.

1. Worship.

A church should worship the Lord. God should be worshipped in the assembly of the believers by teaching, preaching, praying and singing. This is evident from a reading of the New Testament in many places.

2. Fellowship.

A church should have fellowship in Christ. The believer can find little fellowship in his daily activities in the world. Usually the believer is with lost people in the work places, schools, etc. The world considers the believers strange and the believer is a stranger and pilgrim in this world, I Peter 2:11. In the assembly of the believers the saved person finds fellowship. He feels at home. There he is understood and accepted.

3. Work.

a. The Great Commission.

The church which Jesus began during His ministry was given the great commission by Jesus and we see in Acts this church which is also called the church at Jerusalem carrying it out. The churches which were started directly and indirectly from this first church have continued to carry out the great commission. The great commission commands the Lord's churches to go into all the world and preach the gospel that people might be saved. It also commands to baptize those who are saved and then teach these believers to observe all things, Matthew 28:16-20. See also John 20:19-23; Luke 24:45-49; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8; 1Timothy 3:15.

To whom was this commission given? In Matthew 28:16 it says that Jesus was speaking to the eleven disciples. But, He was not speaking to them as individuals for they all died in the first or second century and Jesus said that He would be with them while they were carrying out the commission until the end of the world or age when Christ would come again, 20b. Jesus was speaking to them as a church, this was a church meeting. Not all of the members were present but the leaders were. The eleven apostles were members of this church and special officers in it, 1Corinthians 12:28. This kind of church was to continue until the end of the world when Christ would come again, Matthew 16:18. The eleven would be dead when Christ comes again but this kind of church would still be alive on the earth.

The church was sometimes referred to as "the disciples." A few days later this church met together and more members were present. Peter, the apostles and others were there, about one hundred and twenty, and they are called "the disciples." These members were saved and baptized and organized to carry on the work of Christ. Their organization is seen by their business meeting and choosing Matthias. It states that these disciples "have companied" or assembled from time to time since the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Acts 1:12-26. In the next chapter these disciples are called the church, Acts 2:47. Later "the disciples" chose deacons at another business meeting in Acts 6:1-7. These same disciples were called the church at Jerusalem in Acts 8:1. A number of times the church at Jerusalem is called "the disciples."

"Church" in the New Testament means "assembly" and the ones who made up the assembly of Christ were disciples who had followed the Lord in baptism. Both names are appropriate for this organization.

Another reason for believing the commission was given to the kind of church Jesus began is that those receiving it were responsible to teach and observe all the truth and this specifically is given to the kind of church Jesus began, Matthew 28:19-20; 1Timothy 3:15. Individual believers also have the responsibility to witness to others concerning salvation and other matters but they were not given the responsibility to baptize, discipline church members, etc. as individuals. But a New Testament church has the responsibility to teach and practice all the truth, the church ordinances, church discipline, etc.

The history of the New Testament churches, after the great commission was given which is revealed in Acts, the Epistles and Revelation, indicates that the churches understood this commission to be their responsibility. The Lord spoke to each of the seven churches in Revelation about their responsibility to make the truth known which is to carry out the great commission. Jesus founded only one organization while on this earth, a New Testament church. He gave the responsibility of carrying out the commission to them and to no other organization or individual. John the Baptist as an individual had authority to baptize which was given to him by God; this authority expired at his death, John 1:29-34. He had a unique ministry; he was to be the forerunner of Christ.

Who gave this commission? Jesus did. The word "power" in Matthew 28:18 means authority in the Greek. All authority was given to Him and He gave some authority to His kind of church. He is the head of each of His churches and tells them what He wants them to do. They have authority to do what He commands them in the Bible. The Bible is their final rule or authority.

What was the church authorized to do? Jesus authorized them to do three things in the commission. They are: First, to make disciples or get people saved; Second, to baptize the disciples, Third, to teach them to observe all things Jesus commanded, 18-20. "Teach" in verse 19 in the Greek comes from the verb form of "disciples" and means to make disciples. A lost person becomes a disciple when he believes on Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. "Teach" in verse 19 is a different word than "teaching" in verse 20 in the Greek; "teaching" means what we generally mean by teaching.

b. The Gifts.

The Lord has placed the gifts needed in the churches to do the work given to them. Some gifts were temporary until their purpose was accomplished. Their purpose was to establish the early churches and put the message believed and preached into a written inspired form, the New Testament. These special gifts were apostles, prophets, miracles, tongues, etc., 1Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8. The permanent gifts were to enable the churches to do the work in every generation. They are preaching, teaching, helps, etc. 1Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8.

c. Make Disciples.

To make disciples one must preach or teach the true gospel. The gospel is how Jesus who is God and a perfect man lived a perfect life and then died for the believer's sins, was buried and arose for the believer's justification, 1Corinthians 15:1-4; etc. When a person believes the gospel to be saved from sin and have eternal life he becomes a disciple.

d. Baptism.

The churches are to baptize those who are saved. There are four marks which true baptism must have: the mode, the subject, the administrator, the purpose.

The mode is immersion. Sprinkling or pouring is not baptism as taught in the New Testament. The Greek lexicons give the meaning of baptize as immerse. Baptize, baptism, etc., are transliterations of the Greek words. The translators of the King James Version did not translate the Greek word "baptizo" because King James forbid it in his rules given to the translators. They obeyed him and most English translators have followed their example since then.

The context also makes it clear that the word means immerse. "Buried...by baptism," Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12; "much water" needed, John 3:23; "they went down both into the water," Acts 8:38; "they were come up out of the water," Acts 8:39. These circumstances are normal for immersing but not for other modes. To sprinkle or pour water on a person does not require a burial in water or to have much water or to go into the water or to come out of the water. But, immersion does.

The subject is a believer. In every place there is some explanation as to the subjects of baptism in Scripture, it is clear that only professed believers were baptized. When there is no explanation concerning the subject of baptism it should be assumed that the subject is like every place there is an explanation. In the places where it states that a man's family or house, was baptized, it is clear that the man's family believed also or it is silent and will harmonize with the places where there is an explanation concerning the subject. In every place where it mentions a person or persons were baptized it states they believed, or what is said fits a believer or it is silent. In everyplace it will harmonize with the subject of baptism being a believer, John 4:1-3; Acts 2:37-41; 8:5,12,13,35-39; 16:14-15,30-34; Matthew 28:18-20; etc.

The administrator is a believer working through a church. There are no cases of self-baptism. There is always an administrator. Because it is a symbolic ordinance it needs interpretation. It is interpreted verbally or by the doctrine believed by the administrator and the church he works through. The church authorizes the administrator to baptize.

John the Baptist had authority from God and the New Testament confirms this. He was not a member of a church. His ministry began before Jesus began His public ministry and began His church. He is unique but his baptism was not. It is same kind of baptism as Jesus taught and His church practiced. John's baptism was an immersion of believers in Jesus Christ. He administered it on divine authority just like the churches of the New Testament did. It symbolized the salvation of Jesus Christ, it did not save or help save. The disciples that Jesus took and organized into his first church had their baptism from John. John's baptism was approved in Acts 19:4-5. John preached that people should believe on Christ. Then the people who heard John preach this were baptized. "They" appears three times in verses 4-5. All three refer back to the "people" in verse 4.

All after John the Baptist were to work through one of the Lord's churches, 1Corinthians 12:28; 1Timothy 3:15. These verses make it clear that each administrator was to work through a church. Each administrator might be checked by the church he came from as to how he worked whether he was baptizing or doing something else in the Lord's work. These administrators were under church authority, Acts 8:5-17; 10:45-48; 11:1-18.

The apostles had been administrating material things to the widows for the church at Jerusalem but they had so much to do they needed help. The church chose seven deacons to do this work for the church so the apostles could concentrate on administrating the Word of God to

the people for the church, Acts

6:1-7. A number of churches took up an offering for a special need. Each church voted for the same man to be responsible for administering their offering for their church with Paul and others, 2Corinthians 8:18-21. The Lord gave different administrations for a New Testament church to be able to carry out the work the Lord gave to it. A New Testament church is likened to a human body. Each member of the body has different gifts, administrations and operations. For example a hand can administer food for the whole body which is different from the ear which can administer sound for the whole body. Some can administer baptism to a new convert for the whole church whereas others cannot. But the church authorizes a member or members to administer for it. See 1Corinthians 12:4-6, 12-15, 27; Acts 8:5-17; 10:45-48; 11:1-18.

The whole assembly cannot baptize an individual but they can authorize someone in the assembly to administer it for them. The church at Jerusalem baptized about 3,000 believers in Acts 2:41. It does not indicate who the church authorized to administer it. Some places in the New Testament indicate who baptized new believers. Philip baptized some and worked under the authority of the church at Jerusalem. He was a member of that church and an evangelist and deacon of that church. Jesus, the head of the Jerusalem church and every church like it, is said to baptize disciples although He didn't administer it, His disciples did it for Him and His kind of church, John 4:1-2; Acts 6:3-5, 8:12; 21:7.

The authority of a church comes from the Lord as revealed in the New Testament. A church is only authorized to do what the Lord has told them to do in His Word. The Lord has all authority; a church has only some authority which was given to them by the Lord. A church can send missionaries from their church to carry out the great commission and then check on them to see if they are doing that. If they aren't they can stop them from doing it for their church as long as they are members of their church. If someone is preaching and baptizing who is not a member of their church and the church believes it is contrary to the New Testament they cannot stop him but they do not need to accept his baptisms and shouldn't. See Matthew 28:18-20; 1Timothy 3:15.

The purpose of baptism is to picture what Jesus did for us. It can not save or help save. It is symbolic only. It is the testimony of the believer as to what he believes about Christ. He believes that Jesus died for his sins, was buried and arose from the dead. Romans 6:4-5 teaches that baptism is a likeness or picture of Jesus' death burial and resurrection. 1Peter 3:21 says it is a like figure. It is a figure or symbol that pictures our salvation in Christ. It is like the salvation in the ark in Noah's day. Those in the ark went safely through the flood, the judgment. Those in Christ, the believer's ark of safety, go through the death, burial and resurrection to be saved. Baptism pictures this, being in Christ and going through the death, burial and resurrection judgment of Christ. Baptism is said to save. It saves in a picture not in actuality. The "filth of the flesh" refers

to our sin which comes from our old nature which is called "the flesh" often in Scripture. Literal dirt is removed by water as all know. Baptism is the answer of a good conscience. When one trusts Christ as Saviour he has a good conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ and this conscience answers or requests I want to be baptized to picture what Christ has done for me.

Salvation is always by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. It is based upon what Jesus is and what He did. Nothing we can do saves; our good works or going through ceremonies can not save us in any way. Baptism pictures our salvation. One need not have baptism to be saved. Abraham was not baptized but he was saved and he is used as the

example of the believer in the New Testament. None of the saved of the Old Testament were baptized. The Bible makes it clear there is only one way of salvation for those in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The thief on the cross who believed was saved but he was not baptized, Acts 10:43.

The ceremonies of the Old Testament did not save but they pictured Christ's salvation for His people. The Bible says the person who brought the sacrifice laid his sins on the sacrifice and the sacrifice died and the sacrifice took away his sins but only in a picture not in actuality for it says that these sacrifices can never take away sin literally, Hebrews 10:1-10.

In the same way baptism takes away our sin and saves us in a picture not in actuality. The language should be interpreted to harmonize not to deliberately make it disharmonize and create two or more ways of salvation, Acts 22:16. Jesus' death and resurrection takes away our sin and baptism pictures this.

Acts 2:38 reminds us to "repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins." The word "for" has several possible meanings, one of which is "because of." This is the better translation in Acts 2:38. One should be baptized because his sins were forgiven when he repented and believed. The uniform teaching of the Bible is that baptism pictures salvation. It does not take away our sins. One follows the Lord in baptism because he is saved and his sins have been forgiven.

The preposition "for" can mean "for the purpose of" or "because of" depending on the context. Examples are seen in the following sentences: John went to the store for or for the purpose of food. John went to prison for or because of stealing. In Acts 2:38 "for" translates the Greek preposition "eis" which can have the same two meanings mentioned above as the preposition "for" depending on the context. See A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament by Dana and Mantey, Macmillan, 1950, pp. 103-104.

In the very next chapter Peter makes it clear that sins are taken away by repentance, Acts 3:19. If baptism were necessary he would have mentioned it. Repentance and faith go together. Repentance implies faith in Christ and faith implies repentance. Repentance means a change of mind. A person when he is saved changes his mind that he is a sinner and facing judgment and only Christ can save him. He changes from unbelief concerning sin and Christ to belief in Christ to take away his sin. Repentance and faith go together. In Ephesians 2:8-9 it is clear that baptism is not necessary for salvation.

Galatians 3:27 uses the word "into Christ" but it is better translated "because of Christ." "Into" is translating the preposition "eis." A saved person is baptized because of Jesus. Jesus saved him through faith, verse 26, and baptism is a testimony to this. Baptism is like an outward uniform "put on" by the believer to picture Christ's work for him.

Titus 3:5 speaks of "the washing of regeneration." This work is done by the Holy Spirit. He gives new life on the inside and washes us from our sin's guilt in applying the salvation of Christ. This does not refer to baptism which is on the outside.

Mark 16:16 makes it clear that the person who believes and is baptized is saved. But, it also makes it clear that baptism is not necessary for salvation if one reads the rest of the verse. The person who believes and sings is also saved but singing is not necessary. But the saved do sing praises to God.

Water is used symbolically at times in the Bible. In John 3:5 water symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The word "and" is better translated "even" in that verse. Spirit explains what water symbolizes in this verse. In this verse "water" is not referring to baptism. Water symbolizes the

Spirit in John 7:38-39 also.

Water is used symbolically of the Word of God at times. Each context should be studied for its meaning. The evidence is usually clear in the context. See Ephesians 5:26 and John 3:5.

Romans 6:3-5 makes it clear that baptism is a likeness; it pictures the death and resurrection of Christ which saves us through faith. The word "into" appears three times in this passage. It should be translated "because of" in each place. In each place "into" is translating the Greek word "eis." The saved person is baptized because of Jesus Christ and specifically because of His death. He wants to give a likeness of Jesus' death and resurrection by baptism.

e. The Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance that is to be observed regularly by the Lord's churches. There are four marks necessary to have a Scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper: the elements, the observers, the administrator, the purpose. The New Testament describes the Lord's Supper four times in Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19-20; 1Corinthians 11:23-34. Each description is brief. There are other Scriptures which refer to it.

The elements are the bread and the cup. The one element is a general word for bread and is translated bread. However, from the context we know it was unleavened bread as that would be the only kind allowed for any reason during the Passover season. And, this ordinance was begun during the Passover season at the end of the Passover meal on the 15th of Nisan. Leaven was a type of sin and no leaven in the bread pictures well the no sin in Jesus' life. Matthew 26:17; 16:5-12; 1Corinthians 5:7-8. Since the word "bread" is used and it is general in meaning, perhaps this was used to allow leaven or unleavened bread.

The other element is spoken of as the cup or fruit of the vine. These are very general terms and require some interpretation. No one literally uses an empty cup or just any juice that comes from any kind of vine. It is obvious from the Bible context that juice from the grape vine was in the cup. It was at the Passover season and we know from Jewish practice at this time that wine was used in the Passover meal. We know that the Corinthian church used wine because they misused it and were drunken, 1Corinthians 11:21. Grape juice when it is first squeezed from the grape does not cause people to become drunken. The Lord condemns their misuse at the Corinthian church not their use of wine. The term "fruit of the vine" in New Testament days was used to mean wine at times. See A Dictionary of the Bible by John D. Davis under "Wine." Some Christians today believe wine should never be used because it has alcohol and could make one drunk. Wine had proper uses in the Bible. There were religious uses, Exodus 29:40; Leviticus 23:13, and medical uses, Luke 10:34; 1Timothy 5:23, and other uses. Because of the misuse of wine and other alcoholic drinks many Christians rightly do not use them as ordinary drinks because of their Christian testimony and do not wish to be a stumbling block. Some feel it might cause them to go into alcoholism because of a weakness. However, there is a proper use of wine today. It can be used in religion and medicine. The alcohol which is the reason that many object to wine is found in many medicines today. These medicines are used internally and externally. They are not considered a stumbling block or to inevitably lead to alcoholism. The taste of it does not lead to drunkenness. The attitude of mind will lead to drunkenness. The Bible condemns gluttony but the glutton does not give up all food for fear the taste will lead him back into gluttony. He needs the

Lord's help which he can receive and the Lord can help him to overcome this sin.

Wine pictures well the blood of Christ. Wine was used to cleanse or help one get well externally and internally in Bible days. The good Samaritan poured oil and wine into an external wound. Wine would cleanse of germs and oil would soothe and help heal, Luke 10:34. Grape juice would not cleanse but would possibly cause infection. Wine was taken internally to help cleanse and heal, 1Timothy 5:23. Wine pictures the cleansing power of Christ's shed blood, 1John 1:7-10.

Grape juice will naturally have leaven in it but in the process of becoming wine this leaven is removed. Wine pictures well the pure blood of Christ. Wine was poured on the altar in the Tabernacle but leaven was never permitted on the altar, Exodus 29:38-40; 23:18; Leviticus 2:2-3, 9-11. If wine had leaven in it then it could not be put on the altar, but it had no leaven.

However, since the Scriptures use terms for the unleavened bread and wine which are general in nature which might permit the words to be interpreted either unleavened or leavened bread and wine or grape juice many have not made this a test of fellowship between churches. The reasoning would be this. Since general terms are used perhaps the Lord meant they could use any kind of bread and any kind of juice from the grape. Perhaps the symbolism is only intended to picture the fact that His body was given and His blood was given to obtain our salvation. The purity and purifying aspect of Jesus' body and blood was not under consideration even though they were perfectly pure and His blood does purify us. It is always right to follow the Scripture and also not to insist on more than it actually teaches for fellowship.

As true as this reasoning may be the fact remains the churches had to use something. What were the elements used then? For the previous reasons we believe they consistently used unleavened bread and wine, all indications point that way and none point any other way. Desiring to be like the New Testament churches we follow their example but do not break fellowship with those who use leavened bread and grape juice because of the terms used.

Can one use any element because it is difficult to get unleavened bread and wine? No. We should seek to follow what the Lord teaches. This is true of baptism also. Even though immersion may be inconvenient at times it must still be followed. We should not change the ordinances.

The observers are the members of the church taking the Lord's Supper. The first time the Lord Supper was observed it was observed only by members of the church at Jerusalem. Not all members were present but it is rare when every member of a particular church is present at the observance of the Lord Supper or for any particular service of a church.

Only a few places mention the observance of the Lord Supper. But every place harmonizes. Only the members of the observing church observed the supper. Lost people and saved visitors did not take the Lord Supper with the particular church observing it.

It should be noted that to break bread is used to refer to the Lord's Supper at times but not every time the term is used does it refer to the Lord's Supper. The context should always be observed. It is used of the Lord Supper in Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1Corinthians 10:16; Matthew 26:26; etc. It is used of an ordinary meal in Matthew 14:19; Acts 20:11; 27:34-35; etc.

When Jesus began the Lord's Supper only members of the church at Jerusalem were present. Although Jesus knew all things as God He did not bring Judas up for exclusion. Even before Judas betrayed Him, He knew that he was a false professor yet Jesus did not mention it.

Why? As God He knew these things but as man He didn't know them. We must judge fairly as human beings and have facts that warrant a judgment which would lead to exclusion. Jesus as a man judged Judas setting an example for us. The teachings in 1Corinthians 5 were from God. He did not contradict His teachings there by the way He as God would judge Judas. But He as a perfect man sets an example for us as to how to judge a person in exclusion cases. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit know all about every church member but God does not reveal that to the church members but permits people who deserve exclusion to continue members and eat the Lord's Supper. God will do His judging in His time but He has commanded us to do our judging as a church according to His Word; that is the responsibility of each church, 1Corinthians 5:12.

In Acts 20:7-11 Paul met with the church at Troas on Sunday when the church met to observe the Lord's Supper and for preaching. The church also had a meal after the preaching and Paul met with them and ate the meal. The expression to break bread or the like which is found in verse 11 and other Scriptures is used of the Lord's Supper and of a regular meal. Only the context can indicate which is intended. It is used of a regular meal in Luke 24:30, 35, Acts 27:34-36; etc. I believe Paul did not take the Lord's Supper with the church at Troas but did eat a meal with them after he preached. Paul clearly taught closed communion in 1Corinthians 5; I do not think he contradicted that teaching by an example at Troas of eating the Lord's Supper with them unless he was member of that church. A clear teaching of Scripture should not be contradicted by taking an interpretation of a passage where another possible interpretation wouldn't contradict it. Churches have taken the Lord's Supper and later had a fellowship meal. This is a common thing. All of the Scriptures which teach on the Lord's Supper harmonize when closed communion is the interpretation but they do not harmonize when another interpretation is taken.

But, some argue that it is for any Christian and he can take it wherever he is. One might make a case for this using some of the Scriptures but it will not harmonize with all the Scriptures. But, every Scripture will harmonize with the doctrine that a Christian observed the Lord Supper only in the church where he was a member. He should take it in the church where he can vote and where he was received into the membership and where he could if necessary be voted out because of sin. The Lord Supper is a church ordinance. The church is local, visible and organized. Church membership by the nature of the church makes one a member of only one church not every church.

1Corinthians 5 makes it clear that the church at Corinth had authority over the Lord's Supper they observed. The man who had sinned and was to be excluded from that church was to be excluded so that he couldn't take the Lord's Supper. If the Lord Supper was an individual matter and any one could take it then excluding wouldn't keep him from the privilege. If the Lord Supper was for all the family of God then excluding wouldn't keep him from the Lord Supper. But, if the Lord Supper is a church ordinance then excluding a sinful member can keep him from the observance of the Lord Supper, voting, holding office, etc. If all churches of the New Testament observed this doctrine then church discipline would be very effective. As far as we know they did observe this.

The administrator of the Lord's Supper was each church. It was not an individual responsibility but a church responsibility. 1Corinthian 5 makes it clear that the church at Corinth was to observe the Lord Supper and they were to exclude from their membership any who because of sin should not observe the supper. This indicates clearly that the church was

to be the administrator. In this passage the members are seen to be under the authority of their church and could be excluded or received back into the membership, 2Corinthians 2:6-8. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is under the authority of the church not the authority of the individual. The church could keep the Lord Supper from a member by excluding him from the membership. If the individual had the authority then excluding him could not keep the ordinance from him. If it were an ordinance for the kingdom of the Lord then excluding a person from a church could not keep the ordinance from him. If the church was universal and had the authority over the Lord's Supper then excluding a person from a local church could not keep the person from the ordinance. But the church spoken of in the New Testament is a local assembly always and it has the authority over the ordinance and it can keep a person from the Lord's Supper by excluding him. Individuals who seek to observe the Lord's Supper on their own apart from a New Testament church are not really taking the Lord's Supper. They are disobeying the Scriptures.

In 1Corinthians 11:17-20 we are taught that a divided church is not to take the Lord's Supper. In verse 20 it says, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." The word "therefore" refers us back to the previous verses where it reveals the divisions in the Corinthian church. When the church comes together divided this is not the time to take the Lord's Supper is what this verse teaches. Until the divisions are corrected a New Testament Church can not properly take the Lord's Supper. It has authority to observe the Lord's Supper with a unified membership but not to those divided. God's Word limits the church's authority in this matter.

Divisions caused by false doctrines and immoral practices and personal offences need to be corrected by the church before it should take the Lord's Supper. Since a church cannot correct divisions outside its membership then it cannot observe the Lord's Supper outside its membership. The ordinance is a church ordinance and the church is local by its very nature. People who profess to be Christians and differ on the way of salvation, baptism, etc; are divided over matters that make observing the Lord's Supper unscriptural. No New Testament church can observe the Lord's Supper with those of other denominations because of this reason alone. No New Testament Church can observe the Lord's Supper with other New Testament Churches because of various divisions also. A New Testament Church has the authority to observe the Lord's Supper within its membership but it doesn't have the authority to observe the Lord's Supper beyond its membership because it has no authority beyond its own membership in this matter. A church can not judge those outside its membership. Therefore, a New Testament Church has authority to observe the Lord's Supper in its church only. But it does not have authority to observe the Lord Supper in its church when it is divided and it has no authority to observe it outside its membership because it has no control over those without its membership. The Bible limits the use of the church's authority. And individuals and other organizations have no authority in this matter at all. See Romans 16:17; 1Timothy 6:3-5; 2John 9-11; Galatians 1:6-10; 2Thessalonians 3:6; etc.

The purpose of the Lord's Supper was to picture the body and blood of Jesus Christ. When we observe it we show forth the Lord's death till He comes. It is to remember Jesus, that is why we take the supper, 1Corinthians 11:24-26; 10:16,17.

Those who argue that the bread and wine become the literal body of Christ and that eating it causes Christ to literally come into you and help save you have perverted the

Scriptures. Jesus said, "This is my body," "This is my blood" in referring to the bread and wine. What does this mean? It means, "This represents my body," "This represents my blood." The verb "to be" regularly is used that way in the Hebrew, Greek and English. There are many examples in the three languages. In Genesis 41:26 we read, "The seven good ears are seven years." In Luke 8:11 we read, "The seed is the word of God," in Matthew 13:38b we read, "the tares are the children of the wicked one." We say, "This dot on the map is New York City and this line is the Hudson River."

When Jesus, standing before His disciples in His literal body with literal blood flowing through His veins, said concerning a piece of bread which He was holding, "This is my body," it should be obvious to all that He was speaking symbolically. The meaning is obvious, "This represents my body."

There are many ceremonies which God gave in the Old Testament. Every one was symbolic. They were all given to teach us. None were given to literally save anyone, Hebrews 10:1-4.

This is also true in the New Testament; the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are symbolic only. They can not save any one literally. They picture salvation.

f. The Way.

The last part of the great commission is to teach those who are saved and baptized. They are to be taught to observe all things.

This commission outlines the work of the churches. This work is to be done out of love for Christ and a love for people, 1Corinthians 13:1-3; Revelation 2:1-7; Ephesians 5:1-2. This work is to be done without fear of men even if the Lord's people are persecuted, Matthew 10:23-33; Revelation 2:8-11. The churches should practice what they teach and preach. They are to depend on the Lord's power to do the work. In ourselves we cannot do this work, John 15:4-5; Revelation 3:7-9. The churches should stick with the work given them, John 14:15. To do other good things will cause them to neglect what they are suppose to do. The churches are not called to heal people or feed people. That is not their mission. We should pray for one another, pray that the sick get well if it be the Lord's will. We should help the needy as need presents itself. But, we should be careful not to divert the mission given to the Lord's churches to doing other good things. The main purpose of a New Testament church is to carry out the great commission. Members in the churches needing special help in physical matters should be aided but each family has the primary responsibility to take care of their own members. When churches carry out the great commission and individuals are saved and their lives are changed they will have concern for other individuals and help them spiritually and physically. They will become better citizens and neighbors. Individual members should and will be concerned and seek to help those in genuine need, James 1:27; 1Timothy 5:1-16; 2Thessalonians 3:6-16; Matthew 25:34-40; etc.

The great commission outlines our work and the example of the churches of the New Testament shows us how they carried out the great commission. The churches made disciples, baptized them and taught them to observe all things. In doing this new churches were begun. Churches reproduced themselves. Members went out to areas around the church and some were sent far from the church to start new works. The work involves missions far and near. They were authorized to go and they were supported by prayers and offerings, 1Corinthians 16:1-3; 2Corinthians 8; 9; Philippians 4:10-20.

g. Authority.

The authority of the church comes from the Lord. It is authority to do what He says in His way. In Matthew 28:18-20 the Lord gave His church authority.

"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."

The word "power" in this place means authority. Jesus gave authority to go into all the world to make disciples, baptize them and teach them to observe all things taught by the Lord. He gave this authority to people organized into the first New Testament church who were already disciples because they believed on Jesus as their Savior. They were baptized after they were saved and they were seeking to observe all things that Jesus taught them. They were already saved, baptized and observing. They were following or practicing what they would be seeking to get others to do. Later in history new kinds of churches were started which did not believe the same kind of salvation, baptism, etc. These were not New Testament churches and did not have the authority to carry out the great commission. Some of the new kinds of churches might believe in the same kind of salvation but they differed on baptism and other matters. An individual from a New Testament church might be able to fellowship with an individual from another kind of church because both believed in the same kind of salvation. But, they couldn't fellowship on church matters because of different beliefs on these matters. To work together the saved must agree and practice what the Lord taught concerning a New Testament church and its commission.

The Lord has all authority in Heaven and Earth. He gave a small amount of this authority to His church. It is to go to the whole world and carry out the three parts of the commission. This is the authority His church has for work in outline. A church's authority is great but it is limited to what the Lord gave. A New Testament church can start new churches but after they have organized a new church they cannot cause it to cease from being a church. They cannot take away its candlestick; only the Lord can do that. The church does not have all authority. Only Jesus has that. The church does not have authority to rule nations; this authority is given by the Lord to governments, Romans 13:1-7. The church does not have authority to rule homes; this authority is given by the Lord to the husband, Ephesians 5:22-24; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21.

But, is this limited but great authority to work for the Lord given to the Lord's church or to individuals? The word "church" is not used in the Matthew 28 passage but the word "disciples," Matthew 28:16. But, the church at Jerusalem was spoken of by other terms. They are called the disciples at times. Only the context can determine if the Lord is speaking to the disciples as an organized group, a church, or as individuals. In Matthew 28:20b we read, "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." As a group, the Lord's kind of church, the disciples have continued and will continue unto the end of the world. But, as individuals, they have died and have not continued. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord's kind of church was promised perpetuity, the gates of hell would not prevail against it. It is obvious the Lord gave the commission to the disciples as a church. Individuals are not to continue but New Testament churches are and have.

In Acts 1:15 the church at Jerusalem is called "the disciples." You can read Acts from this point on and "the disciples" here are later called the church at Jerusalem. The next events after Matthew 28 are given in Acts. These events show "the disciples" working

together as a group, or company, or church to carry out this great commission. They did not work as individuals to carry out the great commission. Their practice in the early chapters of Acts makes it clear that they understood the commission was given to them as a church.

The book of Acts and the Epistles are the practical interpretation. They reveal who was given the great commission, who had the authority. Individuals go out from churches, report back to churches, are sent out to start new churches, are questioned by churches. Statements and actions show that the great commission was given to the Lord's kind of church. This kind of church had this authority.

1Timothy 3:15b states, "which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The Lord's church is like a pillar and ground or foundation to hold up the truth. This verse teaches that the church has the authority to hold up the truth. The great commission outlines the truth they are to hold up. Each church has authority to receive members and exclude members according to the teachings of the Bible. This authority is limited to what God's Word teaches. Churches do not have a blank check of authority to do anything they please. Each church has the authority to do what the Lord tells them to do in His way in His Word. In Matthew 18:17-18 the church is given power to discipline its members. It has authority to bind and loose on earth in this matter. Other Scriptures as we have seen give the church the authority to receive members and to exclude according to the teachings of the Bible. See Acts 9:26-28; I Corinthians 5; etc.

Each church has the authority to forgive sin according to the terms of the gospel, John 20:21-23. If a church goes as Jesus went and preaches the gospel and people believe it then the church can say their sins are forgiven. If they reject the gospel the church can say their sins are not forgiven. They can make these declarations based on the teachings concerning salvation given in the Bible.

Churches in exercising their authority are not infallible. They can make mistakes in using their authority. The Lord is infallible; His Word is infallible. Churches are not infallible and should therefore be very careful how they use it. The Word of God should always be carefully followed and constant prayer made to avoid misusing the great authority God has given His churches. If a church goes contrary to the Word of God and makes an unscriptural decision, other churches do not have to recognize that decision, in fact, they shouldn't. It is not binding on them. Other churches may recognize that this is a church and has authority but this particular decision is wrong. The other churches can not interfere in any other church's decisions but they are not bound to accept what is wrong according to the Word of God. New Testament churches should recognize each others authority but not any church's infallibility.

What do the Lord's churches have authority to do?

1. Receive members
2. Exclude members
3. Carry out the great commission and start new churches
4. Preach the gospel and declare that those who receive it are forgiven by God forever
5. Baptize
6. Observe the Lord's Supper
7. Choose officers
8. Send out missionaries

9. Send offerings by whomever they choose
10. Receive tithes and offerings

All of these things and others mentioned in the New Testament, a New Testament Church has the authority to do. These things are authorized by God, the Supreme authority. These things are explained by the Bible and should be done according to the Bible. This authority is very great because it deals with the soul and eternity.

Is this authority the exclusive authority of the Lord's church? Yes and no. It is the only organization begun by the Lord in His personal ministry and the only one to which He has given this authority. Religious organizations that may have saved people in them do not have this authority. One can not form an organization with different membership qualifications, a different government, etc. and rightfully call themselves the Lord's church. The Lord's church is a certain kind of organization that is explained in the New Testament. Any thing that is basically different, regardless of the name one may give to it, is not the Lord's church and does not have the authority to carry out the great commission. Therefore, New Testament churches should not accept them as churches just as a false gospel is not accepted, a false baptism is not accepted, etc.

But, in certain respects this authority, is not the exclusive authority of the Lord's churches. An individual Christian as an individual in his daily life can tell people about Jesus Christ and win them to Christ. He can testify to all the truth of the Bible. We know this because the Lord commanded individuals to do this. This part of the authority of the church is not their exclusive authority. But, the rest of their authority is their exclusive authority given by the Lord to them, the churches, from New Testament days until He comes again. Individuals can and should join one of the Lord's churches, then they can with the other members exercise this authority in God's way. Religious organizations that are not true churches can correct their errors by disbanding and then organizing according to the New Testament. If a saved person works according to the New Testament he will be a member of a New Testament Church and will work through it. As an individual he will be a daily witness. As a church member he will work through his church to do what the Lord teaches and authorizes a church to do.

The Lord can give authority to whom He will. The Bible reveals to whom He gave authority. John the Baptist was given authority to prepare a people for the Lord and to be the forerunner of Christ. He was to introduce Christ to Israel. This he did. No one else was given this authority. The Lord has given New Testament churches the authority to do certain things and some of this authority is given exclusively to them.

Churches can have fellowship among themselves and cooperate in the Lord's work, 2Corinthians 8; etc. They can share in supporting missionaries, Bible schools, etc. But, it must be done in a way not to violate other teachings. They must always maintain their independence as a self-governing body and be true to all doctrines. They should only fellowship with true churches.

When does a church cease to be a church or when does it begin to be a church? What is the minimum to be a church? We know from Scriptures that new churches began and churches could cease to be the Lord's churches. What is the minimum is never mentioned. The Lord urges us to follow all the truth. He wants us to meet the maximum. The Bible reveals that some churches were not what they ought to be as a church and still they were the Lord's churches. The church at Corinth is an example; Laodicea, Sardis, etc. are also examples.

From a study of the New Testament it appears that to be a New Testament church it must have the following marks.

1. Membership - Assembly of baptized believers according to Bible meaning of these terms.
2. Government - Christ is head and the assembly is self governing under Christ.
3. Purpose - Seek to carry out the great commission.

The Lord is the only one who can decide when a church ceases to be one of His churches. In working with sister churches we can only make decisions on what we know. We exclude people from church membership because they are in certain errors not because they are

lost because we can't know that for sure. They may be in error and be lost or saved. Yet we exclude them for error. This is what we know. We stop fellowship with some churches at times because of known errors that are of such a nature that Scripture principles require it. We do not stop fellowship because they aren't a church anymore but because of error. They may still be a church but in error. If we know for sure some organization isn't a church we of course would stop church fellowship with them. If a person is saved we can have fellowship as an individual Christian but if he is in an organization that is not a church we cannot have church fellowship. A New Testament church should not be yoked together with organizations which are not New Testament churches to have revivals, etc. If such people should be excluded from a church's membership, this church should not join with such in some other religious organization, 2Corinthians 6:14. The purpose of a New Testament church is to carry out the great commission. To do this a church must agree on what it means to make a disciple, to baptize and to teach all things. If another organization wants one to work with them then all must agree on what it means to make a disciple, to baptize and to teach all things. To work together to accomplish the purpose the Lord gave His church then all need to believe in the same kind of salvation, the same kind of baptism, etc.

Summary Chart
of
The Nature of the Church of the Lord

- A. Membership
 1. Qualifications
Baptized believers according to the Scriptures
 2. Responsibilities
Attend-Study-Live-Pray-Use-Witness-Give
 3. Discipline
Teaching-Correcting-Excluding
- B. Government
 1. The Head
Jesus is the Head-Leads through Bible illuminated by the Spirit
 2. The Assembly
Self-governing-Democratic
 3. The Officers
Apostles and Prophets (Temporary) - Pastors and Deacons (Permanent)
- C. Purpose
 1. Worship

- Worship the Lord only
- 2. Fellowship
Fellowship with believers
- 3. Work
Carry Out Great Commission - Observe Ordinances

III. Its History.

The history of the Lord's church began when the Lord predicted its beginning in the Old Testament. Jesus built the first one in His personal ministry. This kind of church has continued down to our day and the Lord promised that it would. Other churches came directly and indirectly from this first one in New Testament days. These churches were persecuted and were attacked by false doctrines but they have continued to carry out the great commission and to start new churches. Their history will continue till Jesus comes and their work will last for eternity. The history of the Lord's church will be studied under the following five headings: Predicted, Founded, Commissioned, Accredited, Perpetuated.

A. Predicted.

The church of the Lord was predicted in the Old Testament. In Zechariah 6:9-15 the Lord promised that Jesus was to build the temple of the Lord. He emphasized this point by repeating it twice, 12-13. The first time the word church is used in the New Testament, Matthew 16:18, this truth is pointed out. Jesus said He would build His church. Jesus likened His church to a building, a sacred building or temple. See Ephesians 2:20-22; 1Corinthians 3:16-17; I Timothy 3:15. He said that He would build it and emphasized that He would also be the rock foundation of this Spiritual building, Matthew 16:18.

Jesus is called, "The Branch," Matthew 2:23; Isaiah 11:1. He will "grow up out of his place". Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, the home of His human family, the house of David. But, He grew up in Nazareth which was in northern Palestine. He grew up out of His place. As a branch, He grew up in the city which means Branch that He might be called, the Nazarene, which means the Branch. "He" and no other will build. Jesus built His first church personally while He was on earth. "He shall bear the glory," 13. Jesus would carry the glory of His church because it belonged to Him. His church preaches Jesus as the only Saviour who saves by grace through faith. All of His church is designed to give Him glory, Ephesians 3:21. As God He brings glory to God, John 1:14. He "shall sit and rule upon his throne," 13. Jesus sits on the throne in Heaven at the right hand of the Father and rules all things and His churches. He is the head of the church, Ephesians 1:20-23. "And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord," 15. The Gentiles are called those who are "far off," Ephesians 2:11-14. Gentiles have been saved and joined the Lord's churches and worked in them.

Jesus sang in His church and the Old Testament predicted that He would, Psalm 22:22; Hebrews 2:12. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper He sang in the church, Matthew 26:26-30.

These Scriptures indicate that the Old Testament predicted that Jesus would have a church someday.

B. Founded.

Jesus began His church early in His earthly ministry. Acts 1 makes this clear. Peter speaking to the church at Jerusalem spoke of them companying or assembling since the days when John the Baptist was still working before he was put in prison, 21-22. This would make the founding of the first church early in Jesus' ministry, in the first six months.

This church or organized assembly had all the necessary marks to be a New Testament church even at that early time. These basic marks are its membership, its government and its purpose. It was composed of those who had believed on Him and were baptized. John the Baptist prepared the material which Jesus took, organized and added to, Luke 1:17; Acts 19:4-5; John 4:1-2. It was governed by the Head, Jesus Christ, who was visibly in their midst. The congregation did not have to vote then on what they thought was the will of their Head. He was there to make every church decision. The purpose of voting today in a New Testament Church is only that each member might indicate what he believes is the Head's will. The church was carrying out the great commission in its three parts throughout Israel. These basic marks were seen in the church at Jerusalem from the early days of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Later Jesus put gifts and offices in this church. He gave a plan for church discipline and He gave the Lord's Supper. A church may not have any one in the offices of Pastor and Deacon and still be a New Testament Church. A church can neglect church discipline and still be a New Testament church even though they ought not to. The church at Corinth did and so did Thyatira and still they were New Testament churches. A church can neglect the Lord Supper as it ought to be observed even though they ought not to. The church of Corinth did and they were still a New Testament Church.

This first church moved as Jesus did. It was a traveling church. It had no permanent building or city of location during Jesus' earthly ministry. After Jesus ascended to Heaven its location became permanent as far as meeting in one city. This city was Jerusalem and we usually call this first church the church in Jerusalem because that became its permanent location. It evidently had 500 or more members at the ascension of Christ. About 120 were present in the meeting in Acts 1:15. This is understandable since it is rare for every member to be present at any one service in any church and especially since this church evidently had members who lived throughout Palestine.

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus did not say he would begin or found His church. He said that He would build it. It had already been founded early in His ministry and now He reminds His disciples that He will build His church on Himself. He had been building by adding members to it and He would continue doing so in the future. This can be translated "I will build" or "I will be building," neither necessarily means to begin or found. If a builder had begun a building a few months before and then said to some friends I will build on this foundation he would only be reminding them of his future intentions as far as that building was concerned. This is what Jesus did.

The foundation of the Lord's church was Himself. He refers to Himself as "this rock." The word in the Greek means large rock. Peter means small rock in Greek. The idea is, you are Peter, a little rock, upon this rock, big rock, Jesus, I will build my church. This word which means large rock often refers to Christ when used in the New Testament in a

figurative way. Before Jesus refers to Himself as the rock, He and his disciples were talking about Him. He had asked who the people and the disciples thought He was and after that He refers to Himself as the rock. See Matthew 7:24; 16:13-18; 1Corinthians 10:4; 1Peter 2:6-8.

Jesus is called the foundation of the church in 1Corinthians 3:10-11,16-17. The foundation of the Apostles and Prophets is Christ. These two offices taught Christ as the only foundation. They did not preach themselves. They had also personally received Him as their foundation. Jesus is also the chief corner stone which determines where every stone fits in a building, Ephesians 2:20.

The Lord promises on this occasion that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This kind of church would never go out of existence. It would continue until Jesus comes again. This promise has been kept for over 1900 years and it will continue to be kept. Jesus in Matthew 16:18 was speaking about the first church He began, the one at Jerusalem. It was to be a pattern for other churches which were to come later. Since this particular church was also the first of a kind what was said about it applied to it as a kind. Jesus was not promising that any particular church would continue until the second coming but that the kind of church He was building would continue till He comes again. Particular New Testament churches have gone out of existence but the kind of church Jesus founded, a New Testament church, would not go out of existence.

C. Commissioned.

While Jesus was on earth He and His church went only to those in the land of Israel; during this time they reached mainly Jews. They made disciples among them, baptized them and then taught them to observe all things, John 3:22-26; 4:1-2; etc. But before He ascended He gave them the commission to go to all nations and make disciples, baptize them and teach them to observe all things, Matthew 28:16-20.

After the ascension the church at Jerusalem began to carry out the great commission in Jerusalem. Thousands were saved and baptized and added to the church there, Acts 1:8; 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7. Great persecution against the church at Jerusalem scattered the members throughout Judea and Samaria. The Jerusalem church continued to carry out the great commission and more were saved and baptized, Acts 8:1, 5-25, 26-40. New churches were organized, 9:31. The churches began to carry out the great commission in the uttermost parts of the world. More people were saved and baptized and organized into churches, Acts 13:1-4; 14:21-27; 16:9-15; 18:1-11; 20:17-38; etc.

In the middle of the first century all of the churches were the kind that Jesus began. This continued to be so for sometime. Then false doctrines concerning salvation, baptism and the church began to creep into some churches. After this the responsibility of carrying out the great commission became more difficult. With counterfeit ways of salvation and baptism and new kinds of churches, the New Testament churches had to be more discerning to recognize what was true to the Bible. They had to reject that which was contrary to Scripture. As time went on the true churches were in the minority and a distinctive name developed for the true churches, Anabaptists. Through the centuries true churches received other names but Anabaptists has been the name used longer than any other. Today the usual name given to true churches, ones like the kind Jesus began, is Baptist. Not every church called Anabaptist or Baptist has been a true church but many have been. The word Anabaptist means rebaptizer. They received the name because they rebaptized those who came to join their church from another kind of church. They believed the baptism they first received was not

according to Scripture so they rebaptized to be true to the Lord and His Word.

D. Accredited.

When Jesus ascended to Heaven there was only one church in existence, the one He personally founded early in His three and a half year ministry. Shortly after His ascension He accredited this church and its message which was that Jesus is the Christ and has fulfilled the Old Testament promises of salvation by His death for our sins and resurrection to life.

This accreditation took place on the day of Pentecost. It was when the day had "fully come," Acts 2:1, that is, when the sun had come up. The day came technically when the sun went down at 6 PM in Israel but this new day did not "fully come" until about 6 AM with the first light of the new day. Peter addressed those who came to hear. He said it was the third hour of the day, that is, between 8 and 9 AM, Acts 2:15. The events that are described in Acts 2 are not the fulfillment of the ceremonies of the Day of Pentecost. There is no indication of that. That would be fulfilled by Christ at a later time.

The church at Jerusalem was assembled together when the room where they were meeting was filled with the Holy Spirit. They were immersed in the Holy Spirit. This fulfilled the promises God had made, Matthew 3:11; Joel 2:28. Jesus did this immersing in the Holy Spirit as promised, Acts 1:4-5. The members were also filled with the Holy Spirit. The members began to speak in languages, tongues, which they had never known. The tongues were real languages of the day. The miracle was that they were able to speak instantaneously a language they had never known before; it was a foreign language to them which they could now speak. Along with the speaking was a visual manifestation, a cloven tongue, that is, a divided tongue like fire which rested on each of the members. It was evidently resting on each head and it looked like a tongue of fire that was divided. The gift of tongues had two aspects, the hearing and the seeing, Acts 2:1-11, 32-33.

What was the significance? It was a fulfillment of prophecy. It symbolized the work of this new organization, the church, which Jesus had begun a few years before. It had been in the background until now because Jesus had been physically on earth. But, now He is in Heaven and this organization would be in the forefront. It would be doing the work Jesus had been doing when on earth. This church and each one like it is a body of Christ doing the very work which Christ did of making disciples, baptizing and teaching all things. The work the church is to do is to preach the gospel, teach about baptism, teach all things and to go into all the world doing this. The tongue will be the main tool of the work given them by the Lord. This is symbolized by hearing and seeing. They are to go into all the world doing this; the foreign languages they are instantaneously allowed to speak symbolizes this aspect of their work.

In Acts 1:8 the Lord had told this church, "ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The gift of tongues symbolized this. The Holy Spirit would enable them to carry out this work as He has always enabled God's servants to do the work they were called to do, Exodus 31:1-3; Zechariah 4:6. Their immersion in the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Spirit symbolized this.

This was not the first time the Holy Spirit had come in a special way. He had come to empower and accredit God's servants and institutions in the past so that they might do the special work they were called to do. On this occasion He came to give this institution, the church, the power to do the work and accredit it so it could do the work it was called to

do. This institution and its message was accredited and empowered. This kind of church and its message was accredited and empowered. This accreditation applies to every church like it. This miracle need not be repeated. At that time there was only one church of the Lord and from this one every true church has come since then directly or indirectly. What happened to the church at Jerusalem here happened to those like it that came from it. This miracle had not happened to this church before nor did it happen again and it did not need to happen any more. The purpose was accomplished the first time. Just as God accredited the Tabernacle once and only once and the Temple once and only once so He did with the Lord's kind of church. It was a special occasion for a special purpose.

The commission required that the Lord's church go into all the world and make disciples, baptize and teach all things. But, were the people of the world, the Gentiles, when they were won to Christ to be treated like the saved Jews? The Lord made it clear that they were to be treated like the saved Jews. They would be baptized and become church members and be equal to the Jews. They would not have to be circumcised and become Jews.

Peter had a vision from the Lord, Acts 10:1-16, in which he saw a sheet let down from Heaven with all kinds of animals in it, clean and unclean. He was told to eat. He refused but the Lord told him he had cleansed all of them and he could eat. He was not to call unclean what the Lord had cleansed. One of the main reasons the Lord had made a distinction between animals, birds, and fish was to keep the Jews and Gentiles from close contact. It was to protect his nation, Israel, from the sinful ways of the Gentiles. If a Jew obeyed God and did not eat unclean animals then his contact with the Gentiles would be very limited. Since there was nothing wrong with the unclean animals in themselves the distinction was made primarily to keep the Jews separate from the world. But, now that the Lord's church was to go to the Gentiles and win them to Christ, this ceremonial law was set aside by the Lord. The purpose of these laws in the past had been accomplished. Now to accomplish the purpose of the churches God removed these laws. They are not in force now. Any Jew can eat any food as far as the ceremonial law is concerned. He can eat just like a Gentile. Peter was prepared by this vision to go to a Gentile and treat him just like a Jew.

Cornelius, a Gentile, had been instructed also by God to ask Peter to come and teach him. He and those in His house received Jesus as their Christ and Saviour and gave evidence that they were saved. Jesus immersed them in the Holy Spirit and gave them the same gift of tongues which could be seen and heard as He gave the church at Jerusalem in Acts 2. The Lord made no difference between the saved Jew and the saved Gentile. This event revealed this. Therefore, the Lord's church was not to show any difference. The language makes it clear that the miracle in Acts 2 was just like the one in Acts 10. See Acts 10:47; 11:15,17. In Acts 2 the Lord's church and its message was accredited. In Acts 10 the equality between Jew and Gentile believers was accredited. With this all was prepared for the Lord's church to do their work till Jesus comes again.

This truth was difficult for Jewish people and even Jewish believers to accept and apply. Paul's first missionary journey brought the issue up again because he and Barnabus had started new churches and many Gentiles had been saved and had become members of these churches, Acts 15. The Jewish believers and Gentile believers had been treated alike. Even though the Jewish believers had been circumcised because of their relationship to the nation of Israel, this was not a requirement for church membership. The Jew had to be saved and baptised to be a church member. This was the same for the Gentile. The Gentile did not have

to be circumcised to be a church member or to be on equal standing with the Jew in the church.

In the first fifteen chapters of Acts several important decisions were made that were to guide the New Testament churches till Jesus comes. A special office with special knowledge and gifts were needed to guide the first churches. The Apostleship was this office. The Apostles guidance is seen in the inspired writings, the New Testament. We have the results of the office today as they did in New Testament times. There are no more special decisions to be made like these until Jesus comes so we need no apostles today. The prophets recorded the message, events, and decisions in an inspired record, the New Testament, so we do not need this office today. We have the results of the office, the New Testament, just as the churches had it in New Testament days in either verbal or written form.

The gift of tongues continued throughout the first century to accredit just as other miraculous gifts such as healing, etc., continued throughout the first century. The immersion in the Holy Spirit with the attendant gift of tongues only happened twice as we see in the New Testament. These two events came directly from Jesus. There was no laying on of hands on these two occasions. But, the various miraculous powers did come in the first century by the mediation of the apostles, laying their hands on believers. The special days of the first century needed the special miracles to accredit but with the completion of the important decisions and an inspired record these miracles were no longer needed nor the offices that produced the New Testament. These special miracles and offices have passed away with the completion of the New Testament at the end of the first century.

This period of accreditation of the Lord's church, its message, and the equality of Jews and Gentiles makes it clear that the nation of Israel and the church are not the same institution. The church is the Lord's agent to carry on His work until He comes again. Its work will prepare for the days of Israel's glory when Jesus comes again. The church and Israel are not the same institution. The church is not the kingdom of God nor the family of God. The church is a separate institution; it is God's working agent till Jesus comes again.

E. Perpetuated.

1. Opposed.

The history of New Testament churches has been one of great opposition. They were strongly opposed and cruelly persecuted. The period from New Testament days until 1689 has particularly been a period of great persecution. Because of this we will label this period, the period of opposition and divide it according to the ones who led in the opposition.

The Jews and Gentiles opposed the churches as they began to grow from about 26AD to 313. As the gospel was preached many were saved and became church members. Many new churches began and the work multiplied. But, with growth came opposition. Satan was behind all opposition and his opposition was of two kinds. The one kind is opposition from without the true churches. This was persecution which sought to cause a fear of man in the hearts of the church members so that they would stop their work for Christ. The other kind is opposition from within the true churches. This was an opposition to the teachings which sought to stop the work from going on by changing the doctrines. The purpose of this opposition was to stop the true doctrine from being preached and seeking to get new

doctrines taught which were false.

Both kinds of opposition began early in the Lord's ministry. It grew as the true churches grew. By the end of the first century the work of the churches had spread throughout the inhabited world, Colossians 1:23, 5-6. In some places few accepted the message and few churches were started. In other places there was relatively great growth. The Lord predicted both kinds of opposition and both were fulfilled in the first century, Matthew 24:9-11; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1-3.

The Jews took the lead in the opposition. There were threats, imprisonments, beatings and death. Jews in Palestine and throughout the Roman Empire persecuted as the work of the churches came to their area, Acts 4:1-22; 6:8-7:60; 8:1-4; etc.

As the work of the churches spread throughout the Roman Empire the Romans and other Gentiles began to persecute also. At first they persecuted because they were stirred up by the lost Jews. Gentiles began to persecute on their own because they didn't understand and felt threatened. They thought their gods were angry with them because they allowed the Christians to exist in their area. They felt their businesses were threatened because when people were saved they didn't buy idols or other items connected with false religions. Christians were falsely accused of many things because the Gentiles did not understand their teachings. They were accused of being cannibals because they observed the Lord's supper. They were accused of being immoral because they said they loved one another. They were accused of being atheists because they didn't use idols.

The Roman government in the second and third centuries did not usually bother Christians and their churches if responsible citizens did not complain. If the right people were stirred up against the Lord's churches then the government got stirred up in that area. Persecution was local and temporary in these centuries generally speaking.

About 250 and 305 there were two universal persecutions. These persecutions were begun by the Emperor Decius and later the Emperor Diocletian. They both felt that the decline of the Roman Empire was due to Christianity being permitted in the Empire. They believed the gods were angry. The only way to greatness again was to get the favor of the gods by destroying all of the churches of the Lord and every believer. These persecutions were great but the Lord brought His churches and believers through them.

False doctrine began to creep into the churches in the first century. There was a constant spiritual battle to keep false doctrine out. Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia condemning those who brought in a salvation by works and those who received it. Some were teaching that one must be circumcised to be saved; one must keep the law to be saved. Salvation according to this false gospel was depending upon the lost sinner.

Jesus was denied as the Christ in the fulness of its meaning. The true perfect humanity of Christ was denied or the true Deity of Christ. The false doctrine which seeks to change the person of Christ as revealed in the Bible was introduced in the first century. It has appeared throughout history in many forms.

In these early centuries every doctrine was attacked and this attack by Satan has continued throughout the centuries until today. The doctrine of Christ, the Bible, Salvation, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Church Government, Church Officers, etc., were all attacked. The churches have had a constant spiritual battle to protect the true doctrine. The roots of all false doctrines began in the early centuries. Some false doctrines grew to great proportions in these early centuries. Heathen doctrines going back to the days of

Babylon were introduced in churches which went away from the doctrines of the Bible. Mary worship, relics, etc. all had their beginnings in these early days. There would be later developments but the evil roots were planted early.

By the early fourth century there were two kinds of churches. There were churches who were true to the doctrines of the New Testament like the New Testament churches had been true. But, there was a new kind of church that had developed which had changed the doctrines of the New Testament and had added doctrines from the religion of ancient Babylon. These churches would develop into what is called the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Catholic Church.

In 313 a very significant event took place. The Roman Emperor, Constantine, began to favor Christianity and sought to make it a state religion along with the other state religions. The new kind of churches accepted his favor and his doctrine of uniting church and state. The true New Testament churches rejected it. The reason given for Constantine favoring Christianity was the influence of his mother and his conversion to Christianity. He was not converted according to the teachings of the Bible for he believed that baptism would literally wash away all of his sins and so he delayed his baptism until shortly before his death hoping to wash away all of his sins committed during his life. He was not trusting the saving work of Christ but he was trusting his works and a ceremony that was a corruption of the true doctrine of baptism. He was supposed to have had a vision of a cross in the sky which turned him to Christianity. This man who is often falsely considered a true friend of Christianity was a great enemy of the true churches and the true doctrines of the Bible. He sought to change the doctrines of the true churches. At this time a new kind of opposition began led by so-called Christian Roman Emperors and the new kind of false churches. This opposition continued the attack on the true doctrines of the Bible and the true churches of Jesus Christ. "Professed Christians" persecuted the true churches of the Lord. This kind of opposition went on from 313 to 476.

The church of Rome went away from the truth and became one of the false churches. The pastor of that church began to increase his power and in time claimed that he was over all churches and all Christians. The change from this office of Pastor in the Roman church to Pope over all churches took place over several hundred years. This office was recognized by some false churches but not all. The false churches in the Eastern Roman Empire did not recognize the Pope's authority over them. But, generally, all false churches in the Western Roman Empire accepted his claim over them by the time of Leo I in 440. Many scholars consider him to be the first Pope.

Some would say the first Pope was Gregory I in 590. In my opinion Leo I is the first Pope. Since it was an office that gradually developed, it is easy to understand the different opinions. The Popes claim that they go back to Peter whom they say was the first Pope. This office has been very powerful in the world from Leo I, in 440, unto today. The Pope claims he is Christ on earth. The first to make this claim was Pope Gelasius who came to power in 492. Soon he took the title Vicar of Christ and every Pope has continued to have this title. Vicar of Christ means the one in the place of Christ. The name Antichrist means the same thing as Vicar of Christ. "Anti" is a Greek word and "Vicar" is a Latin word; both mean the same thing. As Christ the Pope claims he is the king over all secular and religious authorities. He sits on a throne, wears a crown, lives in a palace. He acts like a king and is treated as one by his followers. As Christ the Pope claims he is the prophet. What he says in his office is infallible

and is equal with the Bible in authority. He interprets the Bible and his interpretation is the authoritative one. As Christ the Pope claims he is the priest. He alone has the final authority to take away our sin or not take them away. He claims to be God and takes worship.

This office not only had religious power but also political power. The political power grew just as the religious power did. At first he had political influence which developed through the years until he controlled the central portion of Italy called the Papal States. The Pope ruled that territory directly as its political ruler and did so from 756 A.D. when he received it with the help of Pepin, the Short, the ruler of the Franks. Most of this territory was lost in 1870. Today he still rules over the Vatican, a small portion of Rome and has world wide political influence. The Vatican is an independent country which the Pope rules.

True churches and true Christians were greatly persecuted by the Pope and his churches and by the political rulers throughout Europe who were greatly influenced by the Pope. In the east the Greek Catholic churches persecuted the true churches also. The Pope and his churches were the main persecutors from about 476 to 1517.

In 1517 Luther a Roman Catholic monk took a public stand to try and reform the false churches. Instead of reform his efforts led to a division among the false churches of Rome. Several reformers influenced segments of these churches that separated from Rome. These churches accepted their reforms and as a result this led to the Lutheran churches, the Reformed churches, and the Anglican churches. Although the reformers taught some truth which caused changes for the good they also continued to follow some of the false ways of the Pope and the Roman Catholic churches. The reformers and their churches still went along with the church-state concept introduced by Constantine. They were wrong on their understanding of the church ordinances, church government, etc. They also all to some extent persecuted those that differed with them including the true churches. The Pope, the Reformers, and their churches persecuted the true churches in this period from about 1517 to 1689.

True churches of the Lord continued all during this period from the first century to 1689. The ones who led in the persecuting during this period changed from time to time but the persecuting continued. The true churches were called different names. But, they were the same kind of churches as the New Testament churches. Some of the names used to identify these churches were Anabaptists, Donatists, Petrobrusians, Waldenses, Paulicians, Baptists, etc. Not every church that differed from the Roman Catholic churches and Greek Catholic churches and churches of the Reformers were New Testament churches. Not every one called by the names mentioned were New Testament churches. But, many were New Testament churches. The Lord's promise of perpetuity for His churches is fulfilled by their existence. Some churches called by various names in this period were also called Anabaptists during this whole period. Some called by these names changed in doctrine from what they believed in earlier times. The Waldenses were an example of this. Some Mennonites were also an example of this.

The true churches of the Lord were misunderstood and misrepresented throughout this period. At times they were accused of not believing in baptism. But, they did believe in baptism but not the kind taught by the Roman Catholic Church. They did not believe in infant baptism; they did not believe in baptismal regeneration. They believed in what the Bible taught about baptism.

Some would not take oaths but this was often due to the kind of oaths that the state ask

them to take. There was a state church in the various countries of Europe which influenced the wording of the various oaths. Some were asked to take an oath, for example, in the name of Mary, the mother of God. To take an oath like this might be considered an endorsement of the false statement. The oaths quite often were stated in such a way that a member of a New Testament church could not take the oath and be true to his beliefs. Many of us today could not take these oaths even though we do not believe a proper oath is wrong. However, if a church did or did not believe in taking oaths, it did not mean they were or were not a New Testament church. Also churches may vary in some beliefs and practices and still be New Testament churches. The basic characteristics of a New Testament church have already been covered in this book.

New Testament churches have been misrepresented and misunderstood throughout history. When the writings of the enemies of these churches are carefully read it is sometimes clear that these churches were assemblies composed of those who have believed the true gospel and been Scripturally baptized. Each church was self-governing with the Bible as its guide and their purpose was to carry out the great commission. Such a church is a New Testament church regardless of whatever else they might be falsely accused.

The Bible teaches that New Testament churches were to continue until Jesus comes again. Some particular churches may not have continued but that kind of church was to continue, Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Ephesians 3:21. History has confirmed this by giving us some documents telling of New Testament churches all the way back to the first century. Historians and scholars who were not members of New Testament churches have confirmed the perpetuity of New Testament churches in their writings. Notice some statements from some of these scholars.

A very good example is the statement made by a Roman Catholic Cardinal who was the President of the Council of Trent. John T. Christian says: "Cardinal Hosius, a member of the Council of Trent, A.D. 1560, in a statement often quoted, says: 'If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer and surer than that of the Anabaptists since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past that have been more generally punished or that have more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone, and even offered themselves to the most cruel sorts of punishment than these people.' (Hosius, *Letters Apud Opera*, 112-113. *Baptist Magazine* CVIII, 278. May, 1826)." John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, Vol. I, pp. 85-86.

"That Cardinal Hosius dated the history of the Baptists back twelve hundred years, i.e. 360, is manifest, for in yet another place the Cardinal says: 'The Anabaptists are a pernicious sect. Of which kind the Waldensian brethren seem to have been, although some of them lately, as they testify in their apology, declare that they will no longer re-baptize, as was their former custom; nevertheless, it is certain that many of them retain their custom, and have united with the Anabaptists.' (Hosius, *Works of the Heresaeics of our Times*, Bk.I. 431. Ed. 1584)." John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, Vol. I, p.86.

Christian gives another example: "The claim of the Dutch Baptists to apostolic origin was made the object of a special investigation in the year 1819, by Dr. Ypeij, Professor of Theology in Gronigen, and the Rev. J.J. Dermout, Chaplain to the King of the Netherlands, both of whom were learned members of the Reformed Church. Many pages might be filled with the reports that they made to the King. In the opinion of these writers:

"The Mennonites are descended from the tolerably pure evangelical Waldenses, who were driven by persecution into various countries; and who during the latter part of the twelfth century fled into Flanders; and into the provinces of Holland and Zealand, where they lived simple and exemplary lives, in the villages as farmers, in the towns by trades, free from the charge of any gross immoralities, and professing the most pure and simple principles, which they exemplified in holy conversation. They were, therefore, in existence long before the Reformed Church of the Netherlands.

"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 the history of the church received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as 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. The perfectly correct external and internal economy of the Baptist denomination tends to confirm the truth, disputed by the Romish Church, that the Reformation brought about in the sixteenth century was in the highest degree necessary, and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics, that their denomination is the most ancient.' (Ypeij en Dermout, Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk. Berda, 1819).

"This testimony from the highest authority of the Dutch Reformed Church, through a Commissioner appointed by the King of the Netherlands, is a rare instance of liberality and justice to another denomination. It concedes all that Baptists have ever claimed in regard to the continuity of their history. On this account State patronage was tendered to the Baptists, which they politely, but firmly declined." Op. Cit., pp. 95-96.

Roy Mason gives other examples:

"Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, co-worker with Luther and Calvin in the Reformation of 1525 and bitter enemy of the Baptists says: 'The institution of the Anabaptists is no novelty, but for thirteen hundred years has caused great trouble to the church.' This admits the existence of Baptists in the year 225 A.D.

"Mosheim, Lutheran historian of great note, 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.' (Inst. of Eccl. History.)

"Robert Barclay, 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.' (Inner Life of the Societies of the Commonwealth, pp. 11,12.)

"John Clark Ridpath, Methodist, author of that monumental work, Ridpath's History of the World, in a letter to Dr. W. A. Jarrell (Baptist Church Perpetuity, p. 59), says: 'I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as A.D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists.'

"Alexander Campbell, founder of the Campbellite or "Christian" church, says: '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.' (McCalla-Campbell Debate on Baptism, pp. 378, 379.)

"Sir Isaac Newton, learned English philosopher, student of the Scriptures and of history, says: 'The Modern Baptists, formerly called Anabaptists, are the only people who have never symbolized with the Papacy.' (Quoted from Baptist Law of Continuity, p.39.)

"Edinburg Cyclopedia: 'It must have already occurred to our readers that the Baptists are the same sect of Christians that were formerly described under the appellation of Anabaptists. Indeed, this seems to have been their leading principle from the time of Tertullian to the present time.' (From N. T. Church, p. 22.)

"Tertullian was a Montanist. He was born about fifty years after the death of John the apostle.

"I quote next from "Crossing the Centuries," by W.C. King, having as associate editors some of the great men of America, such as former President Roosevelt, President Wilson, David Starr Jordan, Lyman Abbot, and a number of presidents and professors of leading universities. Of the Baptists it has this to say: 'Of the Baptists it may be said that they are not reformers. These people, comprising bodies of Christian believers, known under various names in different countries, are entirely distinct and independent of the Roman and Greek Churches, have an unbroken continuity from apostolic days down through the centuries. Throughout this long period they were bitterly persecuted for heresy, driven from country to country, disfranchised, deprived of their property, imprisoned, tortured and slain by the thousands, yet they swerved not from their New Testament faith, doctrine and adherence.' (From The N. T. Church, p. 25.)" Roy Mason, The Church That Jesus Built, pp.148-150.

2. Tolerated.

In the 1600's a major change began to take place in the world's attitude toward New Testament churches. They began to be tolerated rather than persecuted. This does not mean that there has been no persecution since then. There has been persecution throughout this period from the 1600's to now. There has been persecution in various places but the main attitude toward New Testament churches has been toleration. The largest concentration of New Testament churches in this period has been in England and the United States. In these two places important freedoms were granted. In England one of the most significant acts was the Toleration Act of 1689. In the United States the Bill of Rights which granted religious liberty was passed in 1791. Where there was toleration the New Testament churches, which were generally called Baptist churches during this period, were able to come out in the open. In the previous period because of the on-going persecution the New Testament churches had to meet and work in secret. Because of this it was more difficult to write their history. With the granting of toleration, Baptists began to work openly and the gospel was spread more easily to many lands.

The New Testament churches still faced opposition but the opposition seemed to be mainly concentrated in destroying them by changing their doctrines. Just as in the early centuries this was a major effort of Satan and his followers so it is now. Every doctrine has been under attack, the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the reality of the miracles of the Bible, the reality of Heaven and Hell, etc. Satan has tried to change pastors of true churches through books and schools so that they might be used to destroy the churches. Secularism and worldliness have been great opponents of the true churches.

Another method used to destroy true churches has been to get them to enter into alliances, fellowships, organizations of various kinds with false churches. The Pope and his churches have continued to be the leading opponent of the true churches, mainly by his

teachings and strategies. Large areas of the world and its peoples are in the hands of the Pope religiously. He is able by his religious power and political influence to affect the lives of the peoples.

This period has been one of growth. The New Testament churches have sent missionaries into every part of the earth. Many have professed faith in Christ and many churches have been established. The Bible has been printed in great numbers and in many different languages. The new methods of communication have been used in spreading the gospel by the New Testament churches. The easing of opposition toward the true churches has brought blessings to New Testament churches as well as problems.

3. Finished.

The New Testament churches have a future. This kind of church will not go out of existence until Jesus comes again. At that time their work will be over. The day of salvation will be over. The churches will not continue to assemble as churches to carry out the great commission. The work they have accomplished which is according to the Bible before the second coming of Christ will last forever. The work of a church is to win a person to Christ and then to teach him. This work lasts for eternity so the work of a New Testament church, that is its results, brings glory to God forever, Ephesians 3:21. Individual Christians enjoy the blessings of being saved forever but the churches will have finished their activity as churches with the coming of Jesus Christ.

There will be rewards for faithful service to the Lord when Jesus comes. Those who have done what Jesus commanded his people to do will be rewarded. Those who have worked in New Testament churches will be rewarded. Those who are saved but have not served the Lord as He taught in New Testament churches will lose rewards. It is important to do what our Lord says and in the way He says.

Churches are being cleansed and made perfect now through the preaching of the Word of God. They never reach sinless perfection until Jesus comes but the Lord is setting apart His churches to the righteous purposes He has for them now through the preaching of the Word of God. At the moment of Jesus' second coming when the saved are caught up to meet Him in the air every New Testament Church will be made perfect.

Every lost church member will be separated from his church by being left here when the Lord raptures His people. Every saved church member will be made perfect; he will have no more sin. At that moment every New Testament church will be made perfect as well as every individual Christian. There will be no spots or wrinkles but only perfection, Ephesians 5:25-27.

All New Testament churches which are made perfect at that moment will have also completed all their church activities at that moment. The purpose that the Lord had for the churches will have been accomplished and they will not meet any more as churches.

Even though the churches do not continue to operate after this time, this in no way diminishes their greatness in God's sight. Although insignificant in the world the New Testament churches are very great in God's sight as we see by reading the Bible.

The New Testament churches were started by the Lord during His personal ministry. This is the only organization that He began to serve as His agent until He comes again. He promised that His kind of church would not pass from the earth. The last message that our Lord gave was to seven churches which were likened to seven candlesticks, lampstands, which were to shine for Him giving out His Word. The work of His churches is to bring glory to God forever and God's wisdom is to be made known through His churches, Ephesians 3:10, 21.

The figures used to describe the Lord's churches show how great they are in His sight. 1. Each one is a pillar and ground of the truth, 1Timothy 3:15. 2. Each one is a holy temple in which the Lord dwells. He built it upon Himself as the foundation and chief cornerstone, Ephesians 2:20-22; 1Corinthians 3:9-17. 3. Each one is a flock of sheep which He leads as the chief shepherd, Acts 20:28; 1Peter 5:1-4. 4. Each one is a body of Christ which is to do the same work that He did while on earth, Ephesians 1:22-23; 1Corinthians 12:12-31. 5. Each one is a candlestick or lampstand which is to shine for Christ, Revelation 1:12-20. 6. Each one is a bride of Christ which He loves and He died for and He supplies their every need. He is the Head which each church obeys, Ephesians 5:22-32; 2Corinthians 11:2.

These figures indicate the greatness of each of the Lord's churches. A word of caution should be given. Figures are only used to illustrate a point or points. They don't illustrate every truth about the thing they illustrate. The figures are not like the thing they illustrate in every respect or they would not be a figure but the thing itself. The point or points illustrated should be learned from the context where the figure is used. The Bible determines the illustration; we are not to add to it or take away from it. Figures may be used in different ways in different contexts and of different objects in different contexts. Just because an illustration or figure is used in one context to teach about the Lord's churches does not mean that every time the figure is used it will always be used to illustrate the Lord's churches. It may or it may not. Each context must be studied and it will determine and it alone how it is to be interpreted. The Lion is used as a figure to illustrate the kingly office of Jesus Christ, Revelation 5:5. In another context it is used as a figure to illustrate the destructiveness of Satan, I Peter 5:8. To insist that since the Lion is used to picture Christ in one context then it pictures Him in every context is very wrong reasoning.

Some figures when used always represent the same thing in the Bible as each context makes clear. But others represent different things as the various contexts make clear. The body of Christ when used as a figure in the New Testament always represent the kind of church Jesus began. Note: Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:24; 1Corinthians 12:12-31; etc. The bride as a figure is used of different objects in the Bible. Note: Ephesians 5:22-32; 2Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-9; Romans 7:1-6; Hoshea 1-3; etc.

Summary Chart
of
The History of the Church of the Lord

- A. Predicted
The church of the Lord was predicted in Psalms and Zechariah.
 - B. Founded
Jesus founded His church early in His ministry.
 - C. Commissioned
Jesus sent His churches into all the world to carry out the great commission.
 - D. Accredited
The Lord's church and message was accredited in the early part of Acts.
 - E. Perpetuated
The Lord's church was promised that it would continue until the 2nd Coming.
History has confirmed this promise and will until the 2nd Coming. Notice its history.
- Opposed
- The Lord's church was greatly opposed from New Testament days until 1689.
The persecutors were mainly the Jewish leaders in New Testament days.
After that persecutors were the leaders of the Roman Empire and the false churches.
From about 440 to 1689 the main persecutor was the Roman Catholic Church.
After 1517 to 1689 the Reformers and their followers also persecuted.
True churches were called: Anabaptists; Donatists; Waldenses; Baptists; etc.
True churches grew even though greatly persecuted.
- Tolerated
- From 1689 until now true churches have been tolerated in many places.
During this period there has continued to be some persecution.
There has been a great mission movement.
False doctrine has been a great problem during this period.
- Finished
- The Lord will keep His kind of church in the world until Jesus comes again.
These churches will bring glory to God forever.

Conclusion.

A. Summary.

The word church is used to translate a word which always means assembly in the New Testament. Jesus founded His own kind of church, assembly, to carry on His work until He comes again. Its membership requirements were to be a believer in Jesus Christ as one's personal Saviour and to follow the Lord in Scriptural baptism. Its government was democratic. Each member had a vote and each church was self-governing. Jesus was the head of each of His churches and He revealed His will through the Holy Spirit interpreting the Bible. Each member was to vote as guided by the Bible. Its work was to carry out the great commission in all the world. This church was founded by Jesus in His personal ministry and was accredited before the people of Israel on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus ascended back to Heaven. It has continued working for the Lord carrying out the great commission in all the world in the face of great opposition. This kind of church has remained in the world since Jesus began the first one until today and will continue until Jesus comes again. This is the Lord's promise.

B. Responsibility.

It is the responsibility of every believer in Christ to become a member of this kind of church and to work through it. It is also his responsibility to be sure that his church does not change from the kind of church Jesus founded.