

# The Meaning of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 1 of 13

No one will deny that the Bible talks about a church. But whose church? Which church? What church? These questions, and many others, will be answered in time. Right now we want to find out what the church is. Let us begin by pointing out what it is not. The church as described in the Bible is not Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. It is not denominational, interdenominational, or sectarian. It is not a political organization. It is not a social organization. It is not a building. Since it is none of these, what is it? Most people do not understand the church. Why? Because they do not know what it is. As a result, they do not understand the purpose of the church, the importance of the church, or the work of the church. But the Bible plainly tells us what the church is. The word church comes from the Greek word "ekklesia." It means "the called out." So the church is a called out body of people. They have been called out of the world into the kingdom of God's dear Son ([Colossians 1:13](#)). It is the spiritual body of Christ ([1 Corinthians 12:27](#)). It is made up of those who have obeyed Christ ([Hebrews 5:8-9](#)). The church are those who have been saved by Him. He adds them to His church ([Mark 16:16](#); [Acts 2:47](#)). Another way of saying it is the church is made up of the followers of Christ.

The word "church" appears in the Bible in two ways. First, it is spoken of in the world-wide way. This is what Christ had in mind when He said, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" ([Matthew 16:18](#)). There are many other verses where the word "church" is used to speak of it in the whole-world way. That is, everywhere the church may be found in the world, if it is the Bible church, then it is that church which Jesus said He would build. Second, it is spoken of in the local way. For instance, when Paul was writing to the church at Rome, and speaking of the various congregations, he

said, "...The churches of Christ greet you" ([Romans 16:16](#)). He wasn't speaking of a number of churches or denominations. He was speaking of a number of local congregations of the Lord's church. To further explain, you will note that the Scriptures speak of the church at Philippi, etc. ([1 Corinthians 1:2](#); [Ephesians 1:1](#); [Philippians 1:1](#)). All of this is confusing to some people because they are used to thinking of the church only in the terms of denominationalism. But you will not read of any denomination in the Word of God. In the churches just mentioned, there are several congregations spoken of. Each congregation is the Lord's church in its particular community. All of them together make up the church world-wide. It is so simple when denominationalism is forgotten. All one has to do is go to the Bible and see the church as the Lord gave it. To help us to understand the meaning of the church better, let us realize that the Bible speaks of the church as being:

1. The body of Christ. It is the spiritual body of Christ. Christ is its head ([Ephesians 5:23](#)). There is but one body ([Ephesians 4:4](#)). The one body is the one church ([Colossians 1:18](#)).
2. The household of God. The word "house" in the Bible suggests family. This helps us to understand that the church is the family of God. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul says that the house of God is the church of the living God. God is the Father and we are His children ([Galatians 3:26-27](#)).
3. The kingdom of God. Kingdom suggest a King. Christ is the King ([Revelation 17:14](#)). But to be a king, the kingdom has to exist now, and it does ([Acts 8:12](#)). We are Christ's people. The world is His territory. The New Testament is His law. This is the church ([Matthew 16:18-19](#)). The kingdom and the church are the same.
4. The vineyard of the Lord. Christ is the vine. Individual Christians are the branches ([John 15:1-8](#)). Christians must work in the church and bear fruit for the Lord. We now can see what the church is. Please study these matters in light of the Bible and see for yourself. If you will see the church as God intended for you to see it, then your whole attitude will be changed and perhaps even your life.

# The Coming of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 2 of 13

The church did not happen overnight. It was planned, prophesied, and established. The Bible shows all of this clearly.

First, the church existed in the mind of God. Paul says this to the saints at Ephesus: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved"* ([Ephesians 1:3-6](#)). Please note that he is talking to the church at Ephesus. He says God had chosen them before the foundation of the world. That means that God was thinking about the church even before the world was created. That is, He was planning it at that time. It had its beginning in the mind of God. How terrible it is to say that God did not plan the church from the beginning! Second, the church was spoken of in prophecy several times. Isaiah said, *"And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it"* ([Isaiah 2:2-3](#)). Joel stated, *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit"* ([Joel 2:28-29](#)). Then Daniel pointed out, *"And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"* ([Daniel 2:44](#)). Now let us draw some conclusions:

1. The kingdom would be established in the last days.
2. It would be established in the mountains.

3. All nations would flow to it.
4. The Lord would pour out His spirit upon all flesh.
5. It would be established in the days of the fourth world empire.
6. It would consume all other kingdoms and stand forever.

***Now, where is all of this fulfilled? Read Acts 2!***

Third, the church was promised. John said it was at hand ([Matthew 3:2](#)). That means it was nearby, or would soon be established. Christ promised, *"And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* ([Matthew 16:18](#)). *"Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power"* ([Mark 9:1](#)). *"And he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high"* ([Luke 24:46-49](#)).

Now observe these facts:

1. The kingdom was near.
2. Christ promised to build it in spite of death (hades).
3. Some of those who were with Christ would still be living at the time of its establishment.
4. It would come with power.
5. Repentance and remission of sins would be preached in His name among all nations.
6. It would begin in Jerusalem.
7. The apostles would be given power from on high in the city of Jerusalem.

Please keep all these points in mind as we come finally to the establishment of the church and you will see all of this unfold. Turn now to Acts 2. Upon doing so, read it carefully several times. All Bible scholars admit that the church was established at this time. The place was Jerusalem. The time was the last days. These were the days of the kings of the Roman Empire. The power came. Repentance and remission of sins were preached to all nations. The church has been in existence ever since. The church that God had in His mind was established. The prophecies about it were fulfilled. The promises about it were kept.

# The Establishment of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 3 of 13

In our last lesson we noticed from [Isaiah 2:2-3](#), [Joel 2:28-29](#), and [Daniel 2:44](#) that the Lord's kingdom (or church) would be established in the last days. It would begin in Jerusalem, at the coming of the Spirit. All nations would flow into it. It would last forever. Then Christ promised that He would build His church ([Matthew 16:18](#)). It would come with power ([Mark 9:1](#)) and that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in His name among all nations ([Luke 24:46-49](#)). Now, by turning to Acts 2, we will see that in this chapter alone all of these prophecies were fulfilled. All of these promises were kept.

As we read Acts 2, we find that the Apostles were in the city of Jerusalem. *"And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language."* ([Acts 2:1-6](#)).

The Bible continues to tell of the many nations that were represented, *"And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this? But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams" ([Acts 2:12-17](#)).* *"And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" ([Acts 2:21](#)).*

All that was happening was in fulfillment of the prophecies of old. Peter begins his sermon. He shows how Jesus was a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs. God did these by Him among them. Next he tells how Christ had been taken and delivered up to the council. By wicked hands, He had been crucified and killed. Then he points out that God had raised Him up. He had removed the pains of death. To prove this, he quoted David to show that Christ lived, died and had been buried and resurrected. He then ascended into heaven to sit upon the throne at the right hand of God. Continuing, he said, *"This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" ([Acts 2:32-41](#)). "Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved" ([Acts 2:47](#)).*

In the verses just mentioned, the Lord's church was established. You will notice that all of it took place in Jerusalem. The power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles. What took place was in fulfillment of the prophecies of old. Peter plainly said, *"but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel" ([Acts 2:16](#)).*

There can be no doubt about this. The prophets had said these things would happen in the last days. Peter said it was occurring as the prophet had said it would. The church was established in the last days. All nations were present on that day. Repentance and remission of sins were preached, and about 3000 were obedient. They were saved. They were added to the church. Christ established His church in Jerusalem in A.D. 33. It has been in existence ever since.

# The Identity of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 4 of 13

How would you set out to locate a long lost friend? First, you would gather all of the marks of identification and then begin the search. Only after finding the individual that matched every mark of identification would you accept him as being the one that you were seeking. Likewise, there are many churches in the world. How can one know which is the right one? The genuine one? How can one know which one is Christ's church? You must take all of the marks of identification. Then compare the various churches with these marks of identification. Only after you find the church that matches every mark of identification can you be sure you have found the right church. But what are the marks of identification? Where are they found? The Bible is the answer.

The Bible gives all the true marks of how to identify the church. Therefore, let us turn to it to see what they are:

1. Christ established the church. *"And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* ([Matthew 16:18](#)).

2. It had its beginning in Jerusalem. This is seen in [Luke 24:45-49](#) and [Acts 2:5](#).

3. The date of origin was A.D. 33. This is also based on Acts 2. The church was started on the day of Pentecost following Christ's resurrection.

4. The church wore the name of Christ. Speaking of the various congregations, Paul wrote, *"...All the churches of Christ salute you"* ([Romans 16:16](#)). He further says, in speaking to the church at Corinth, *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof"* ([1 Corinthians 12:27](#)). But what is the body? It is the church ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#)).

5. Its members were called Christians. *"...The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch"* ([Acts 11:26](#)). *"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"* ([Acts 26:28](#)). *"but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name"* ([1 Peter 4:16](#)). And finally, remember, *"And in*



*none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" ([Acts 4:12](#)).*

6. Christ is its only head. "And he is the head of the body, the church..." ([Colossians 1:18](#)).

7. There is but one body. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling" ([Ephesians 4:4](#)). But what is the body? It is the church ([Colossians 1:18](#)). There is one body. It is the church. Then there is but one church.

8. There are terms for entering the church. These include belief ([Hebrews 11:6](#)), repentance ([Acts 17:30](#)), confession of faith ([Romans 10:9-10](#)), and baptism ([Mark 16:16](#)). When one is saved, he is added to the church ([Acts 2:47](#)). Also [Romans 6:3-4](#), [Galatians 3:26-27](#) and [1 Corinthians 12:13](#) teach that one is baptized into Christ and His church. By obeying these commands, one is said to be born into the church or the kingdom ([John 3:3-5](#)).

9. The worship of the church is different. Christians are to assemble on the first day of the week ([Acts 20:7](#)), to sing ([Ephesians 5:19](#)), to pray ([Acts 2:42](#)), to study (2 Timothy 2;15), to partake of the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11), and to give of their money ([1 Corinthians 16:2](#)).

10. The teaching of the church is based on the Bible only. The Bible is accepted without addition, subtraction, or substitution ([Revelation 22:18-19](#); [Galatians 1:1-11](#)). The Bible is the one and only creed of the church. Additional books or creeds are not accepted.

11. The organization of the church must be according to God's plan. Christ is the head ([Ephesians 5:23](#)). Each congregation is to have its own elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). The Lord's church does not have any earthly headquarters. Neither does it have a national or international man-made organization.

12. The mission of the church is three-fold. Its work is to preach the gospel ([Mark 16:15-16](#)). It is to help those in need (Galatians 6; James 2). It is to edify (build up) the members ([Hebrews 2:12-14](#)).

13. Each Christian must live a faithful Christian life. We cannot love the world ([1 John 2:15](#); [James 4:4](#)). We must produce the fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). Only the faithful will receive the crown of life ([Revelation 2:10](#)).

Now these are some of the marks of the church. These are taken from the pattern, the Bible. Compare your church with these. For example, take the first four. Ask yourself, "Who established my church? Was it

established by Christ or some man?" Then ask, "Where was my church established?" Did it have its beginning in Jerusalem or some other place? Continue by asking, "When was my church established?" If it was after A.D. 33, it couldn't be the Lord's. And finally, ask yourself, "What name does my church wear?" If it is not the name of the Lord, then how can it belong to Christ? You could continue, but these are enough to help you to see whether your church is of the Lord or of man. You can also compare other churches to these identification marks to determine if they are of God or not. I believe you will be able to see the difference. Be honest with yourself.

Should you find that the church you are a member of is not the one true church of the Bible, then let me urge you to leave it behind. Learn the truth. Obey it! Be added to the church that you can read about in God's Word. Then you'll be in the one in which salvation is to be found.

# The Name of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 5 of 13

To be the church of the Bible, a church must have a Bible name. However, there are many man-made churches with many man-made names and titles. How did these come about? Some of these names were given to honor their founders, such as "Lutheran." Some of them exalt a doctrine such as baptism. Some of them glorify a day such as the day of Pentecost or the Sabbath day. Still others place emphasis on the form of government by underlining the work of the presbyters of the church. But all of these, and many others that might be mentioned, take all of the glory, praise, and honor that belong to Christ, and give it to those mentioned in these names, titles and descriptions that have originated with men.

Man-made names and titles are wrong for several reasons. First, they cause division. They make differences where God did not intend differences to be. They separate people. They oppose the very prayer of Christ as recorded in John 17. He prayed that we might all be one. Second, they are condemned in the Scriptures. In [1 Corinthians 1:10-17](#), the apostles Paul showed His brethren the error of wearing the names of men. Third, the names of men are substituted for the Lord's name. Yet, we read concerning the name of Christ, *"And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved"* ([Acts 4:12](#)). Fourth, man-made names and titles are misleading. They are confusing. They give the wrong impression among unbelievers. They cause unbelief. Fifth, they will cause all who wear these names to be lost. For these reasons, they are wrong. They are sinful.

Christ promised to build His church ([Matthew 16:18](#)). He purchased it with His own blood ([Acts 20:28](#)). He is the Savior of it ([Ephesians 5:23](#)). He is the head of it ([Colossians 1:18](#)). It is only natural that the church should wear His name to honor its founder, builder, Savior, and head. So when Paul wrote to the church at Rome, and sent along the

greetings of the congregations in his area, he said, "All the churches of Christ salute you" ([Romans 16:16](#)). Then in speaking to the church at Corinth, he said, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" ([1 Corinthians 12:27](#)). Since the body is the church ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#)), then he was simply talking about the church of Christ. It is also called the church of God ([1 Corinthians 1:2](#); [Acts 20:28](#)), the kingdom of God ([1 Corinthians 6:9](#)), the kingdom of Christ ([Ephesians 5:5](#)), the kingdom of His dear Son ([Colossians 1:13](#)), the kingdom of our Lord ([2 Peter 1:11](#)), the church ([Acts 13:1](#)), the church of the living God ([1 Timothy 3:15](#)), the church of the Firstborn ([Hebrews 12:23](#)), etc. So the church is not called by only one name. Remember, that which belongs to God belongs to Christ and that which belongs to Christ belongs to God. Also, those names all refer to the church that Christ built. If it is not the church of Christ, then whose church would it be? It would seem that one would not really want to get away from the Scriptures to choose another name for the Lord's church. Let us stay with the Bible. Let us call the church what the Bible calls it. Then we will be right.

As to the names of the members of the church, the Bible makes that clear also. First, the prophet Isaiah said God would give His people a new name ([Isaiah 62:2](#)). The name was carried by Paul many years later ([Acts 9:15](#)), but it was not to be given until the Gentiles had received an opportunity to obey God. All of this was fulfilled in Antioch of Syria. The disciples were first called Christians there ([Acts 11:26](#)). Later, Paul was preaching to King Agrippa, and he responded by saying, "...Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" ([Acts 26:28](#)). Finally, we read where Peter said, "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" ([1 Peter 4:16](#)). It is plain that the followers of Christ in New Testament times were Christians and Christians only. The Lord wants us to be the same today. If we wear names and titles added to the name "Christian" then that means that we are not true Christians. The name "Christian" shows one is different from the rest of the world. That is all the Lord requires. In both the name of the church and its members, the name of Christ is to be exalted. Why? Because it is the family name ([Ephesians 3:13-](#)

[15](#)). It is a name that is above every name ([Philippians 2:9-11](#)). It is the name in which salvation is to be found ([Acts 4:12](#)). Therefore, we are to believe in the name of Christ ([1 John 5:13](#)). We are to confess that name ([2 Timothy 2:19](#)). We are to repent and be baptized in that name ([Acts 2:38](#)). We are to meet for worship in that name ([Matthew 18:20](#)). We are to do all in His name ([Colossians 3:17](#)). We then will have eternal life through His name ([John 20:30-31](#)).

With all this in mind, surely no one could say there is nothing in a name. There is certainly no salvation in the name and titles of men. However, those who wear them will be lost because of them. There is salvation only in the name of Christ!

# The Organization of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 6 of 13

Christ built the church ([Matthew 16:18](#)). That church is made up of the called out, the world over ([Colossians 1:13-14](#)). It is made up of the saved ([Acts 2:47](#)). It is His spiritual body ([Ephesians 4:4](#)). The church is all over the world. It is made up of hundreds and thousands of individual congregations. Each congregation is made up of many individual members. This means that the government of the church is local. It is not national or international. In other words, the Lord's church does not have an earthly head or an earthly headquarters.

The Bible teaches that Christ is the head of the church. Let us observe the following verses: *"and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."* ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#)). *"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body"* ([Ephesians 5:23](#)). *"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"* ([Colossians 1:18](#)). Now what do these verses teach? They teach that Christ is the head of the body, which is the church. How many heads are there? Just one! Christ is that one. He does not share that position with anyone else. Since Christ is that head of the church, that means He is the head of each local congregation or local church. It also means He is the head of each member of the church. Paul said, *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God"* ([1 Corinthians 11:3](#)).

Next, each local congregation is to have its own organization. Remember Christ is the head of the church. From among the members, elders and deacons are to be appointed. They are to see after the spiritual and physical sides of things (Acts 6). Notice too that the Bible always speaks of more than one elder over a congregation. Never is there only one elder ruling over them. Neither do you ever

have the elders and deacons of one congregation taking control of another congregation. Congregations are to fellowship one another. However, they do not exercise control over each other.

The words elder, pastor, bishop, shepherd, and presbyter all have reference to the same office. So, an elder is a pastor, a bishop, etc. In [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#) Paul listed a number of qualifications: *"Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."* These qualifications are also stated in [Titus 1:5-9](#). Not everyone in the church can be an elder. Only those qualified can be appointed. Even then, there must always be more than one of such men. In some congregations, no male members are qualified to be elders. The men of the church then must take care of the business matters until they grow and develop enough for elders to be appointed. Deacons are also to be appointed to serve under the elders. They are known as servants. They are to work under the direction of the local elders. Paul lists their qualifications: *"Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless. Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 3:8-13).* Now this is the divine organization of the church. Christ is the head. Each congregation is to have its own elders and deacons. Under their authority are the preacher and teachers and members. This is the Lord's way. If one congregation goes into error, the others may

continue faithful. Or, if all of the congregations depart from the truth but one, then it is possible for that one to be faithful. In the Lord's plan of organization, each congregation is autonomous or independent from the other congregations. They are not tied together by man-made laws, but by love. They therefore have fellowship with one another. They work together. They are one in Christ. His way cannot be improved on.

Nowhere in the Bible do you read of Peter or any other man being the head of the church. Nowhere do you read of a bishop ruling over a number of congregations. Nowhere do you read of only one pastor, or of a preacher, being head over a congregation. Nowhere do you read of a clergy or laity. The majority of the religious world has departed from God's organization of the church. That is one reason there is so much division in the world. Let us therefore determine to return to the Bible for the true pattern for church organization.



# Entering the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 7 of 13

In our studies so far, we have seen the importance of the church. The Bible teaches that Christ died for the church ([Ephesians 5:25](#)). He purchased it with His own blood ([Acts 20:28](#)). He is the Savior of it ([Ephesians 5:23](#)). These questions are raised: Would Christ die for something that is not important? Would He shed His blood to buy a church that is worthless? Would He be the Savior of it if one can be saved outside of it? Surely, you would say "no" to each of one of these questions. Then why is it said the church is not important? Why is it said one can be saved without ever being a member of it? Simply because such people do not understand the church. They have been deceived into thinking this way.

Certainly the Bible does not teach that the church is the Savior. However, it does teach that one must be in the church to be saved. The ark was not the savior for Noah and his family. They had to be in the ark though to be saved from the flood. It is the same with the church. When one is saved, the Lord adds him to the church. When the people heard the gospel and obeyed it on the day of Pentecost, and the days following, the Bible says, "...And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved" ([Acts 2:47](#)). So if one is saved, he is a member of the Lord's church. If he is not a member, he is not saved. It is just that simple. There is no such thing as being saved outside the church. One can be saved without being a member of a denomination or the sects of men. But he cannot be saved without being a member of the church of Christ!

Continuing our study, one CANNOT join the Lord's church. Instead, the Lord adds the saved to His church. Since He adds only the saved to the church, then the church is made up of the saved. The Lord looks on the heart, motives, etc., that produce the person's actions to see if he is sincerely obeying. If he is sincere, then God adds him to the church. If he is not, then he is not added by God, even though we may accept him. He has gone through the outward acts of obedience,

but we are unable to look into his heart. If one could join the church, then all would be accepted regardless of their motives. This is why the Lord is responsible for each addition. He makes no mistake as to who should be among the saved. He knows who is only going through the actions and who is sincere.

Christ is the Savior of the church. He adds only the saved to it. One would then like to know what the Lord requires so that he might enter it. This is clearly set forth in God's Word. This is especially made clear in the different cases of conversion in the book of Acts. Note the steps or things needed to be done in order to be added to the Lord's church:

1. One must **hear** the truth. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" ([Romans 10:17](#)).*
2. He must **believe** in God and Christ. *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).* Christ said, *"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me" ([John 14:1](#)).*
3. He must **repent** of his sins. *"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish" ([Luke 13:3](#)).*
4. He must **confess** Christ to be the Son of God. Christ said himself, *"Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven" ([Matthew 10:32](#)).*
5. And he must be **baptized** for the remission of his sins. This baptism is a burial in water ([Romans 6:3,4](#); [Acts 8:26-39](#)). *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" ([Mark 16:16](#)).* *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" ([Acts 2:38](#)).*

Now what did we learn earlier in this lesson? We found that the Lord adds the saved to the church. This means that when one obeys the Lord and is saved, he is added to the church. Well, we have just seen that by hearing the truth, believing it, repenting of sins, confessing Christ, and being baptized, one is saved. Thus, when an individual does this, he is added to the church. That obedience to God is the plan

by which we may be saved. The Lord then adds the saved to the church. Isn't that simple?

The Lord said the only way one can enter the kingdom of God is through being born of the water and of the Spirit ([John 3:3-5](#)). But what is the kingdom? It is the church ([Matthew 16:18-19](#)). Well, does the Lord have two ways for one to enter the church? NO! When one believes and is baptized (having been begotten by the Spirit through the Word and thereby obeying its teaching) then one is born into the kingdom of God. He is born into the family of God. He is added to the Lord's church.

Again, Paul says we are baptized into the body ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#)). But what is the body? It is the church ([Colossians 1:18](#)). How many are there? Just one ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#); [4:4](#)). How does one enter it? Through being baptized. But Christ says that one must believe and be baptized to be saved ([Mark 16:16](#)). Well, that is what the Corinthians did ([Acts 18:8](#)). Therefore, when one is baptized into the church, he becomes a part of it. He is added to it.

There is just one way to be saved, as we have seen. The Lord adds the saved to the church. Are you a member of the church you can read about in the Bible? If not, you are not saved. Investigate, study, and obey the Lord. He will then personally add you to His church.

# The Worship of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 8 of 13

The church is made up of the saved. Its purpose is to worship and serve God through Jesus Christ. Paul said, *"And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"* ([Colossians 3:17](#)).

There are three kinds of worship in the New Testament. **First**, we read of ignorant worship. When Paul was in the midst of Mar's hill in Athens, he saw many idols around him. He then said, *"For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you"* ([Acts 17:23](#)). Those people worshiped ignorantly then. Many do the same today. Millions bow down to idols and images. Many millions more are following various religious practices out of ignorance of the Bible.

**Second**, the Bible speaks of those whose worship is vain. Christ said, *"But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men"* ([Matthew 15:9](#)). The majority of people worship in this way today. They worship the Lord, it is true, but their worship is vain or void. Why? Because it is according to the teachings and traditions of men. It is not according to the will of God.

**Third**, the word of God speaks of true worship that is, worship which is in spirit and truth. We read the words of Christ, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth"* ([John 4:24](#)). This is the only kind of worship that God will accept. This was true in the days of Christ and it is true in our present day. To worship God in spirit means to do it in humility and understanding. To worship in truth means to worship as it is written in the New Testament. God does not force anyone to worship Him. Those who worship Him must do so on His terms.

What kind of worship is the Lord's church to engage in? Not ignorant worship. Neither can it be according to the doctrines and commandments of men. It must be in spirit and in truth to be

acceptable to God. The New Testament shows us from direct commands and examples that the early church engaged in these five ways of worship:

1. They assembled to **study**. Timothy had been taught the Bible from childhood ([2 Timothy 3:15](#)). Paul exhorted him as a young preacher, "*Give diligence (study) to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth*" ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)). This would apply to all Christians and especially as they gather for worship. This is a time in which God speaks to His children through His Word. In [Acts 20:7](#) we read of Paul preaching to the brethren as a way of studying the Word of God.
2. They **prayed**. After the people had obeyed the Lord on the day of Pentecost, we read, "*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers*" ([Acts 2:42](#)). Through prayer, the Lord's people have the opportunity to speak to their Father in heaven. What Christian would think of assembling with other Christians for worship and not engaging in prayer?
3. They **sang** praises. Paul wrote to his brethren, "*speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*" ([Ephesians 5:19](#)). Also read [Colossians 3:16](#) and [Hebrews 13:15](#). There are two kinds of music. One is vocal and the other is instrumental. What kind of music does God want? He asks for vocal music. Paul says that we are to make "*melody with your heart to the Lord.*" This does away with instrumental music. The early Christians sang praises to God. Centuries later man added instrumental music. God has not ordained it. God **will not accept it**. Christians cannot praise God with instrumental music any more than they can praise him with mechanical prayers.
4. They assembled to partake of the **Lord's Supper**. We have an example of this in [Acts 20:7](#). In [Matthew 26:26-28](#) and 1 Corinthians 11, we are taught to partake of the bread in remembrance of the body of Christ. We then are to partake of the cup, or fruit of the vine, in remembrance of the blood of Christ. Even now we are to do this every Sunday.
5. They **gave** of their money. Paul commanded the brethren in Galatia and in Corinth, "*Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come*" ([1 Corinthians 16:2](#)). Also read [2 Corinthians 9:7](#). These early Christians met on the first day of each week ([Acts 20:7](#); [1 Corinthians 16:2](#)) to worship God. They were warned, "*not forsaking*

*our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" ([Hebrews 10:25](#)). Christians today are to do the same acts of worship on the same day.*

The worship of the church is simple and to the point. Yet many stumble at its simplicity. They think it should be long and drawn out. They think there should be much tradition and formality. They believe in going through monotonous actions, and the repetition of prayers. But this is not so. God has revealed His will concerning worship. It is not given to man to change it at all. It cannot be added to or subtracted from. The Lord pronounced a curse upon those who do so ([Revelation 22:18-19](#)). God has spoken. His people must obey. Then, and only then, can God be worshiped, praised, and honored.

# The Work of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 9 of 13

Why does the church exist? What is the purpose of it? What is its work? To find out, we will go to God's Word.

First of all, let us observe that the church is not to be in secular business. It is not to run hospitals or to publish books for the purpose of making money. These things may be good. Individual Christians certainly have the right to do them. However it is simply not the work of the church. More and more the religious world has come to such activities.

They are just taking another step away from God's purpose for His people.

Through God's Word, we will find that the work of the church is threefold: (1) Preaching the Gospel, (2) Helping those in need, and (3) Edifying the church. Let's notice them one by one:

### **PREACHING THE GOSPEL:**

Christ taught the apostles, just after His resurrection and just before His ascension to heaven, *"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."* ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)). *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."* ([Mark 16:15-16](#)). Later, Paul told young Timothy, *"preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* ([2 Timothy 4:2](#)). Other verses could be given. These show clearly the Lord's desire for the Gospel to be taught.

Now what did the church do in the days of the apostles? The members did what the Lord asked them to do. They preached the Word. The

book of Acts is full of examples of this. In all of the cases of conversion, a preacher was on hand to teach the Will of the Lord. Read Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, and 16. But who did the preaching and teaching? After a great persecution came upon the Lord's people in Jerusalem, the record says, *"They therefore that were scattered abroad, went about preaching the word"* ([Acts 8:4](#)). Next, what did they preach? All you have to do is to read the cases of conversion in the book of Acts. You will see for yourself. But briefly, they taught: (1) Christ was the Son of God, (2) what one should do to be saved, (3) the importance of the church, (4) the items of worship, (5) the importance of the Christian's life, etc. Paul summed it up by saying, *"For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God"* ([1 Corinthians 1:18](#)).

Beside the fact that the Lord commanded that His Word be preached, Paul says that faith comes by hearing the Word of God ([Romans 10:17](#)). Again Christ said, *"and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* ([John 8:32](#)). Again, *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher"* ([Romans 10:14](#))? All of this is to say that a man is lost ([Romans 3:23](#); [6:23](#)). The love of God must be preached ([Romans 5:8](#)). It shows that man has a Savior ([John 3:16](#)). Through obedience to God, man can be saved from his sins ([Romans 1:16-17](#); [Mark 16:15-16](#)). Those who are ignorant of God's will or who do not obey it, **will be lost** ([2 Thessalonians 1:7-9](#)). Thus, God's Word must be preached.

#### **HELPING THE POOR:**

The Bible shows us that the church was concerned about those who were in need of help. They were helped as there were means to do so. In [Acts 2:45](#), we read, *"and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need."* This was on a free will basis, of course. But, again, in Acts 6, we read of an argument that came about between the Grecians and Hebrews. The Grecian widows were neglected in their daily care. The apostles called the disciples together. They had them to choose seven men from among them. They were appointed to handle this part of the work of the church.



We read of Paul going to Jerusalem to help the poor saints there. He goes on to say, *"But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."* ([Romans 15:25-26](#)). So Paul writes to the brethren at Corinth, *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come."* ([1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#)).

Who is to be helped? The needy in the church, first of all - that is the poor, old people, widows, cases of emergency, orphans of Christians, and so on. We read, *"So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith"* ([Galatians 6:10](#)). But not just everyone is to be helped. In 1 Timothy 5, we see that an individual is to be helped only when (1) that person cannot help himself or herself, (2) that person has no relative that can help, and (3) when that person has been proven to be a faithful Christian. So the Lord's money must be used wisely. It is not just to be handed out to anyone who asks.

Not only are members of the church to be helped. All people who are deserving of assistance can be helped. Read [James 1:27](#) and also James 2. This is a way of reaching people with the gospel.

But from where do the funds come for this type of work? They come from the members, as they are willing to give ([1 Corinthians 16:1,2](#); [2 Corinthians 9:6-7](#)). If Christians fail to give, the church is not able to help those who are in need.

#### **EDIFYING THE CHURCH:**

To edify means to build up, to strengthen, to encourage. It is to help the members of the church grow spiritually. What are some of the things that edify? God's Word, fellowship, engaging in worship, helping one another, good works, love, etc. Read these passages: [Acts 9:31](#); [Romans 14:19](#); [1 Corinthians 8:1](#); [14:26](#); [2 Corinthians 12:19](#) and [Ephesians 4:12](#) and [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#).

Many people wonder how the church can do these things without a world-wide organization, without a man as the head of the church, and without special fund-raising. The Lord's way is the best way. It is the

one and only way to do His work. God can be praised. He can be honored. He can be glorified only as we do His will and thus fulfill our purpose for being here. Christ is the head of the church. Each congregation, as well as each member, is to do his part. The church therefore can do its work only as the members give of their means to make it possible.

The preaching of the Gospel, the helping of those in need, and the edifying of its members are for the purpose of saving the souls of men, and that God might be praised are the work of the church. The church has no other work but this. Politics, business, and turning the church into nothing but a social organization, are not according to God's Word. The Lord's church is a spiritual body. It is in the world, but not of the world. It is to obey God and to serve man. It must remain pure and holy, to the salvation of all its members. It is to bring glory to its Creator. This is the Lord's church, and its work, and its mission.

# The Unity of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 10 of 13

The religious world today seems to be more concerned than ever with the unity of the church. The reason for this is because there is so much religious division in the world. All are tired of it. And yet, unity can never come about with the religious bodies of men agreeing to disagree. The division will still be there. There may be some degree of union or harmony, but that is all. What is the answer? The answer lies in the Bible itself. In order for true unity to exist, men must lay down their teachings, doctrines, names, churches, creeds, books, etc. They must pick up the Bible. They must read and study it. They must believe it. They must obey it. Then there can be genuine unity, the kind the Lord prayed for in John 17. When men do this, they will all believe the same thing. All will obey the same teachings. All will wear the same name. All will work together. All will teach the same thing. All will go to heaven together. It will be easy for unity to exist when men quit following men and begin to follow Christ.

The Bible condemns division. The Bible says God hates those who sow division or discord among the brethren ([Proverbs 6:19](#)). In 1 Corinthians 1, we are told of the church at Corinth becoming divided. The apostle Paul took immediate steps to destroy the cause of it. He began by saying, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* ([1 Corinthians 1:10](#)). Then he asked three questions. The questions were: "Is Christ divided?" "Was Paul crucified for you?" "Were you baptized in the name of Paul?" In all three questions they would have to answer "NO." He showed how terrible their division was.

The apostle Paul wrote the brethren at Rome, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile*

*the hearts of the innocent." ([Romans 16:17-18](#)). In [Colossians 2:20-22](#), he says, "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?"*

All of this is to say that (1) the teachings of men, (2) the doctrines and commands of men, (3) exalting men, (4) accepting and following books other than the Bible, are all things which cause division. On the other hand, unity can be had and enjoyed only as one follows Christ. It was Christ who prayed, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" ([John 17:20-21](#)). Did Christ pray for the impossible? No! Surely then there can be unity. When? When we simply follow Christ. Man-made teaching will divide us. Bible teaching will unite us.

In [Ephesians 4:1-6](#), we are told how to have unity. Listen to it: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." Notice that this is a plea for unity. Notice, too, there is but one of each of the things listed. Who ever got the idea there was more than one?

The unity of the church is seen in that Christ said He would build HIS church ([Matthew 16:18](#)), meaning ONE. It is His spiritual body ([1 Corinthians 12:27](#)). He is the head of it ([Colossians 1:18](#)). Surely, one would not accuse Christ of having two bodies or two heads. The church is also pictured as the house of God, or the family of God ([1 Timothy 3:15](#)). But how many houses or families? One, of course. We read of the kingdom of Christ, or the kingdom of God, with Christ as king ([John 3:3-5](#); [Colossians 4:11](#); [1 Timothy 6:15](#)). How many kingdoms does the Lord have? How many kings are there? Just one in both cases.

On and on we could go. Surely the Bible is opposed to the very thought of denominationalism, that which is division. On the other

hand, it pictures unity, oneness, completeness, and wholeness. The Bible does not picture the church as being a body made up of all religious people regardless of their beliefs and practices. It does picture the church as belonging to Christ. It is made up of those called out, the saved, who have followed Christ and have obeyed His teaching. Christ is not divided. His church is not divided. To be divided, or to uphold division in any way, is to oppose Christ and that for which He prayed.

## The Creed of the Church

### The Church of the Bible, Lesson 11 of 13

The word "creed" comes from a Latin word, "Credi." It means, "a belief, authoritative formula of religious belief; any formula or confession of religious faith; a summary of principles or opinions professed or adhered to." When one thinks of a creed, he usually thinks of "the Apostles' Creed" and "the Nicene Creed." However, neither one is found in the Bible. Every man-made church has its own man-made creed in the form of manuals, disciplines, confessions of faith, etc. All are additions to God's Word.

Any creed book that contains more than the Bible, contains too much!  
Any creed book that contains less than the Bible, contains too little!  
And any creed book that contains nothing but the Bible is useless! We already have the Bible! [Revelation 22:18-19](#) and [Galatians 1:6-9](#) say that we are not to add to God's Word, nor can we subtract from it. Also, we are not to substitute for it. In other words, the Bible is complete ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)). It is perfect ([James 1:25](#)). We are to speak only as the oracles of God ([1 Peter 4:11](#)). There is no need for an additional book or books.

The religious world is divided today because it has accepted the creeds of men. It is argued that every church must have its own set of rules, etc. This is an admission that the Bible has been forsaken. How tragic! Our idea is for one and all to lay down their man-made books and return to the Bible, which is the Word of God. It will not divide us. It will unite us in Christ Jesus.

What is the creed of the Lord's church? We have no savior but Christ! We have no creed but the Bible! Our opinions and ideas in religion are worthless. We have no private interpretation of the Bible. All we have is the Bible. We have obeyed its teachings. We point others to it. Our plea is for one and all to read and study it ([John 5:39](#); [2 Timothy 2:15](#)). We ask people everywhere to do what it teaches.

We have no additional book or books that we follow. There is not a man living that can write a book of rules and regulations that would equal the Bible. The Lord has not given anyone the right to write such a book. The Holy Spirit has not inspired anyone to write such a book. The Bible is the Word of God and the Word of God only. It has come from God. It has been inspired of God. It can show us how to be saved. It is the Word of God that will judge us in the last day ([John 12:48](#)). For this reason, and many others, we accept it as our only guide in religious matters. We encourage others to do the same. We go to the Bible to learn the truth, since it is the truth ([John 8:32](#); [17:17](#)). You can't find the truth unless you go to the source of the truth. To believe the truth, you must hear the truth ([Romans 10:17](#)). It is no wonder that the majority of the people are deceived in religious matters. It is no wonder there is so much division and confusion in the religious world. Man has gone to man for help instead of to the Lord. Man has turned to the teachings of men instead of the writings of the Bible. Surely then, man must return to the Bible if he is to be saved.

We must encourage man to go to the Bible to learn the truth about what one must do to be saved. There are many ways to be saved, according to the teachings of men. When one goes to God's Book, he finds that it is simply stated: one must hear the truth, believe it, repent of his sins, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins ([Mark 16:15-16](#); [Acts 2:38](#)). What difference does it make what man says? The Lord is the one that saves. We must hear and obey Him to be saved.

We should encourage man to go to the Bible to learn how to worship God. Contrary to what man says, there are not many ways to worship. The Bible teaches there is just one way. The Lord said so in His Word ([John 4:24](#)).

We would urge one and all to go to the Bible for the truth about all things. Man leaves the impression that the Bible cannot be understood, nor can all understand it alike. This is not true. The Devil would have man to stay away from the Bible in order that he might be lost. But to be saved, man must come to it, believe it, and let it be his

one and only guide in religious matters. Only then can he be saved and only then will he be right.

What is our creed? Jesus Christ and His Word! Beside Him there is no other! We believe that Christ is the Son of God. His Word is final. We accept it. We follow it alone. We urge all others to do the same. The creeds of man can lead you to but one place - HELL! Jesus said, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me*" ([John 14:6](#)). What is your creed?



# The History of the Church

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 12 of 13

In Acts 2, we find the establishment, or beginning of the Lord's church, or kingdom. The apostles are in Jerusalem. The Spirit is poured out upon them. Many nations are represented. They are gathered for Pentecost. Peter and the apostles proclaim that this is the fulfillment of that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. Christ has died. The last days have begun. Repentance and remission of sins are preached. About 3000 souls believe the preaching of the Gospel and are baptized. The Lord adds them to His church. Then from Jerusalem, the Gospel goes throughout Judea, then to Samaria, and finally, unto all parts of the earth until every person under heaven had heard it ([Matthew 28:19-20](#); [Mark 16:15-16](#); [Acts 1:8](#); [Colossians 1:23](#)).

The church grew fast in the days of the apostles. It spread rapidly. After the conversion of Paul, he made three missionary journeys. He preached the Gospel to the Jews and to the Gentiles as well. As a result, there were many converts. Many congregations of the Lord's church were established throughout Asia and Europe. But this was not easy. There was much persecution. First the church began to be persecuted in Jerusalem. Because of this, the disciples were scattered and went everywhere preaching the Word ([Acts 8:1-4](#)). As time went by, the Romans blamed the Christians for many of their problems. They punished them in their arenas in Rome and throughout the Roman world. Paul was finally imprisoned. He was taken to Rome for trial. History tells us that all the apostles except John were martyred for the cause of Christ. Hundreds, and thousands, and perhaps millions, of Christians also lost their lives for Christ.

In spite of the persecution, the church only grew and spread. It was not persecution that gave the most trouble to the church. It was what took place within the church itself. The apostle Paul told of the day in which there would be a falling away. In other words, he was saying that the day would come in which many of the members of the Lord's church would go into error. But let us notice what he says: "Now we

*beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile (deceive) you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." ([2 Thessalonians 2:1-12](#)). Notice Paul said that this evil was already beginning to work among them even at that time. He continues, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth." ([1 Timothy 4:1-3](#)). In speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears." ([Acts 20:28-31](#)).*

As Paul warned, there were those from within the church that rose up and began to lead away many of the followers of Christ. History tells us that the falling away began with an attack on the government of

the church. The Lord's plan was that each congregation should be independent of the others. It was to have its own elders and deacons. However, as time passed many of these congregations began to exalt one elder or bishop over the others. Finally, they permitted one of these bishops to rule over several congregations. Eventually, that one was then appointed the universal bishop over the entire church. Of course this didn't happen overnight. It took many years. By 606 A.D. the first Universal Bishop became the head, or the Pope, of the apostate sector of the church. The result was the Catholic Church as we know it today. What happened to the Lord's church? The faithful few continued. The Lord had promised that His kingdom or church would stand forever. It has done so.

As far as the religious world was concerned, the Catholic Church dominated. It so controlled the world that the next several hundred years came to be known as the "Dark Ages." This was because the Catholic Church refused to allow the Bible to be read by the common people. They said that only the priests were qualified to read and understand the Bible. They then would tell the people what the Bible taught. This meant that the priest, told the people only what they wanted them to know.

During this period of time, even the Catholic Church divided into the Roman and Greek branches. They divided over such teachings as sprinkling and instrumental music. As time went by, the Roman Catholic Church through her councils, etc., added many other doctrines and teachings to her system. Finally, by the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church had become very corrupt doctrinally and morally. A man by the name of Martin Luther sought to reform the Catholic Church . He himself was a priest . However, he was excommunicated. He left the church to teach and practice that which he thought was right. Out of this came what is known as the Reformation Movement, or Protestantism. Out of that came what we know to be modern day denominationalism. Luther caused an attempt

in many parts of the world to return to the Bible. In spite of this, they did not fully succeed.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were denominational people in Europe and America who grew tired of division and confusion. They began to leave the errors they were in and return fully to the Bible. Their desire was not to begin a new church. They wanted to return to the church they could read about in the Bible. This they did. Since that time, the plea for pure New Testament Christianity has been heard around the world. Millions have left the teachings of men to simply be Christians, and members of the Lord's church with the Bible as their only guide. Christians, going into all parts of the world to preach the truth, have discovered the church in its purity already existing in parts of Africa, India, Russia, Poland, and many other places. That church, therefore, exists today as it has always existed. It is not necessary to trace it all the way back to the beginning to prove that it is the one church of the Bible. When we follow the Bible, we are the Lord's church. The seed is the word of God ([Luke 8:11](#)). It produces the same thing today that it produced in the days of the apostles- Christians and members of Christ's church. We know the Lord's kingdom was to stand forever. It has therefore been in existence somewhere ever since the day it was established. It will continue to stand forever. No man or devil has the power to destroy it. This is the Lord's kingdom, His church. It is victorious from beginning to end. It will be with the Lord forever.

# The Church Today

## The Church of the Bible, Lesson 13 of 13

The Lord's church was established almost 2000 years ago (Acts 2). It exists today just as it did then. "But how would this be possible?" you might ask? By simply following the New Testament pattern of the church.

Some are under the impression that in order to prove that the church today is the same church as was originally established by the Lord, we would have to trace it from year to year all the way back to the day of Pentecost. However, this is not true. In the first place, we have the Lord saying that His kingdom or church would never be destroyed, but that it would stand forever ([Daniel 2:44](#); [Luke 1:33](#); [Hebrews 12:28](#)). This means that the church has existed somewhere in the world since its beginning, even up to this time. It did not have to exist everywhere, all the time, for this to be true. In the next place, we have the seed of the kingdom ([Luke 8:11](#)) preserved in the words of the New Testament. If it produced Christians in the days of the apostles, it will produce Christians today. If those who became Christians in apostolic times made up the church, then the same would be true today. The Lord's church exists wherever the New Testament exists, provided those that have it will do what it says.

God has always given His people a pattern to follow. He gave Noah a pattern to follow in building the ark (Genesis 6). He gave Moses a pattern for the tabernacle, with the warning, "...See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount" ([Hebrews 8:5](#)). In the New Testament we have unfolded the perfect pattern of the Lord's church. Noah and Moses were expected to follow the patterns that were given to them. We must follow the pattern for the church. Noah and Moses followed God's pattern for the ark and the tabernacle and God was pleased with the result. When we follow the pattern for the church, God will be pleased with the result. The church will exist

just as He intended, without addition or subtraction ([Revelation 22:18-19](#)).

All of the marks of identification of the church are clearly laid down in the New Testament. The Lord tells what the church is, who built it, and when and where it was built. He also tells us the name of the church and its members. He tells us how to become a member of His church, and what its worship and work are. The New Testament tells us that Christ is the head of the church and that He purchased the church with His blood. It leaves no doubt as to what the church is and what its purpose is. The pattern is as clear as God's Word.

All we need to do is to study the Bible that we might know the one true church of the Bible. When we learn the truth about it, and follow it, then we will become members of it, and will be the same church that Christ originally established. Seed produces after its kind. The Word of God will produce Christians and members of the Lord's church today just like it always has in the past.

The church of Christ may be found around the world. It is here and everywhere. It will be found anywhere and at any time that man will do what the Bible teaches. It will stop being the Lord's church when people stop doing God's will.

The church of Christ today is growing and spreading because it follows the Bible only. It condemns division. It exalts Christ. This is the one church you can read about in the Bible. It is not a denomination or a combination of denominations. It is not Protestant, Catholic, or sectarian. Then what is it? Simply the Lord's church. That is all!

The Lord's church has no head on earth. The Lord's church has no headquarters on earth. We exalt no man. We have no super organization styled by man's wisdom. Each congregation is independent. It has its own local organization of elders and deacons, preachers, teachers, and members. One member is not elevated about the others. We have no clergy or laity.

Christ's church has always had its enemies. It has enemies today. The religious organizations of men oppose it. They resent a church that will not follow their example. They resent us because we will not fellowship them and bid them Godspeed. They are aware that there is someone trying to follow the Bible only, while they are only following the teachings of men. They are conscious that we follow Christ and wear His name only. They follow men and wear the names of men. Their weapon against us is not truth. Their weapon against the church consists of prejudicing the hearts of the people, misrepresenting us. But their labors are in vain.

The Lord's church has been victorious through the ages. All of the enemies of this world, and all of the devils of Hell cannot stop it. It may be small in number in comparison to those around it. But remember, few will be saved ([Matthew 7:13-14](#)). Christ has but one church. He will return one day for that one church ([Ephesians 5:27](#); [John 14:1-6](#)). He is the king of His Kingdom. He will come for it to deliver it up to God ([1 Corinthians 15:24](#)). He has but one bride ([Revelation 21:9](#)). He is coming one day to receive that bride, the one that wears His name. What about the others? He will tell them that He never knew them. He will root them up ([Matthew 15:13](#)). They will be gathered up and cast into the fire.

Our plea today is for pure New Testament Christianity. Return to the Word of God. Let it be your guide. Know the Bible and then you will know the truth. Do what it says. You will be saved. You will be added to the Lord's church, the one that you will read about in the Bible.

If you are not a member of the church of Christ, then we encourage you to become a member. Believe in God. Repent of your sins. Confess Christ as the Son of God. Be baptized that you might be saved ([Mark 16:16](#); [Romans 10:10](#); [Acts 2:38](#)). The Lord will add you to His church. You will be a Christian ([Acts 2:47](#); [11:26](#)). Will you do that? No one is going to force you to do it. If you will study your Bible, then we believe that you will want to be just a Christian. Then spend the rest of your life in trying to live for the Lord, according to His will!