

FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH



JESUS

*Who Took Away The
Sin Of The World*

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CHAPTER 1

FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Introduction: A good place to start learning about the church of the New Testament is to first learn the meaning of the word church and where it comes from. So many people become members of a certain church without really understanding what they are doing or what they are joining. This leads to confusion about how they should live and a lack of commitment to the real church of the NT. In this chapter as well as in the others, you will begin to learn what the Bible has to say about the church that began in the NT and continues even today.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD CHURCH

The word church comes from the Greek word Ekklesia. It is a combination of two words Ek meaning - "out of" and Klesis meaning - "a calling". Thus the word church means - "a calling out of", or "a called out group of people". Called out of what? These are people who have been called out of sin and darkness and the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of light and life (Acts 26:18). The word church does not mean a building but rather people.

In the Old Testament when the word church was used, it referred to the gathering of the Israelite people for a definite purpose, or a gathering as representative of the whole nation. For example, in Acts 7:38 the word Ekklesia is used to refer to Israel as a called out group from Egypt.

In the New Testament, church has two meanings for Christians. First, it means "the whole group of redeemed people throughout the Christian age" (Mat 16:18; Eph 1:22; 5:23). Secondly, it means "a small singular group of confessed believers" (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:13; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1; 1 Tim 3:5). When the word church appears in the plural form it has reference to several small groups of confessed believers within an area.

It is interesting to note that Ekklesia is used 115 times in the NT and is translated "assembly" 3 times and "church" 112 times.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CHURCH

Can you say that a church is the building you meet in? No, Ephesians 5:25 says that Jesus died for the church, but He did not die for buildings. He died for people. God loved the people in the world not the buildings of the world when He sent His son to die on the cross (Jn 3:16). And when Jesus returns He will come for His people not buildings. The church is God's people. The building is simply a place for God's people to meet. The building itself is not important in the eyes of God.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH

It would be good to look into the NT and see some of the characteristics that the Bible gives to the church. In this way, you can come to a better understanding of the word "church" and how it may differ from the institutions that man has started. Again, let us emphasize that the church is a group of people. When Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church in Acts 8:1-3, he was persecuting men and women not buildings.

Some of the characteristics of the NT church given in the Bible are:

1. The church is a group of people called out of darkness and sin into the kingdom of Christ - Col 1:13.
2. These people have been called out of worldly things and have made themselves a separate people - 2 Cor 6:17.
3. The church is the spiritual body of Christ, and He is its head "authority" - Col 1:18,24.
4. Jesus purchased this group of people with His blood - Ac 20:28; Eph 5:25.
5. It is the Lord who adds each saved person to this called out group of people - Ac 2:47.
6. The teachings of Jesus and the apostles are the foundation of the NT church - Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 3:11.
7. The church has elders and deacons and evangelists but does not have hierarchy - 1 Tim 3:1-14; Tit 1:5-9.
8. The NT church customarily met on the first day of the week (Sunday) - Ac 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1,2.
9. The church does not show partiality among its members - Ac 10:34,35; Gal 3:28; Jam 2:1-13.
10. The work of the NT church is to bring others to salvation in the name of Jesus - 2 Tim 2:2; Mat 5:13-16; Jn 15:8.
11. Unity through the perfect bond of unity is the NT church's goal - Col 3:14.

Many other characteristics such as the NT church's worship service, beginning place, names, entrance requirements, leaders, etc will be discussed later on. Only by a close study of the word of God will you be able to identify the true NT church and understand its meaning.

Today, many people do not see the church as a called out group of people. They think that the "church" is much like a club or social society. They go simply to participate in activities with friends or to earn some kind of rank among their neighbors. They see the church as being a building or place to meet, and so often they may act like Christians while there but upon leaving they return to worldly desires. Acting good is something to be done "at church". The result is that a great number of people have no understanding about what the church really is. If they get angry with someone or do not get what they want, they leave and go to another club. Christianity is something they practice while they are together "at church" but not at home. This makes the true church to be weak, misunderstood, and ridiculed by those who are not saved because they can see the falseness of these type of people.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH

Are people really Christians if they claim to be yet still follow the actions of those in sin and darkness? No, Jesus warns us in Matthew 7:21 that not every one who says to Him Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said it is he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

A person can call himself a Christian, but words alone will not get him into heaven. Jesus said we will know his people by their actions (fruit) in Matthew 7:20.

THE NAMES OF THE CHURCH

Is a name very important? There must be something in a name. God named Adam and even changed the names of Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, and Jacob to Israel (Gen 17:5,17; 32:27,28). Even in the NT, Saul changed his name to Paul and then later condemned names that caused division (Acts 13:9; 1 Cor 1:13-15).

The church has no special names but is spoken of in descriptive phrases in the NT. Some of these names are:

1. The church - Acts 8:1
2. The kingdom of Heaven - Mat 16:19
3. The church of God - 1 Cor 1:2
4. The churches of Christ - Rom 16:16
5. The body of Christ - Eph 4:12
6. The church of the living God - 1 Tim 3:15
7. The church of the firstborn - Heb 12:23
8. The bride of Christ - Rom 7:4; Rev 21:9
9. A holy nation, chosen race - 1 Pet 2:9

The members or people who make up the church also have no special names except for descriptive phrases that describe them. Some of these names are:

1. Disciples - Acts 20:7
2. Saints - 1 Cor 1:2
3. Beloved of God - Rom 1:7
4. Brethren - 1 Cor 15:6
5. Sons of God - Rom 8:14
6. Children of God - 1 John 3:1
7. Heirs of God - Rom 8:17
8. Royal priesthood or priests - 1 Pet 2:9
9. Christians - Acts 11:26; 26:28

Man has caused great division among God's people by giving names to the church which were not included in the Bible. He has also done the same with the members of those churches. The names have not brought unity but only served to identify a person with a particular group. It would be better for everyone if all extra names were taken away and each Christian would use only Biblical names for the church and themselves.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NAMES OF THE CHURCH

Is it all right for a person to be given a spiritual title of Father, teacher, or reverend? No. Jesus tells us in Matthew 23:8,9, "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." It is better to be a servant of one another than to seek titles and rank over your brothers.

THE FOUNDER OF THE NT CHURCH

Now that we have learned what the church is, some may ask who it was that founded the church. Christ founded the church of the New Testament. He told Peter in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it." This was only possible by Jesus dying on the cross to pay the penalty of man's sins. When that debt was paid by him, then He could start calling people to the redemption that He offered. This is what He meant when He said in John 12:32,33, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth (death on a cross), will draw all men unto Myself." Therefore, Jesus became the chief cornerstone of the church (1 Pet 2:5,6). That is why the church is called the bride of Christ (Rom 7:4; Rev 21:9).

Some may think that John the Baptizer started the church but his work was to prepare the people for Jesus' ministry (Is 40:3; Mal 3:1; Lk 1:17). In fact, John died before the church was established. John's death is recorded in Matthew 14:10 even before Jesus promised to build the church in Matthew 16:18.

Others may think that the NT church was established by Peter because of Jesus' words in Matthew 16:17-20. Here Jesus says that Peter is a rock and then immediately says "and upon this rock I will build my church". Yet many do not realize that two different words for rock were used. Jesus called Peter - Petros and then said He would build His church upon the Petra. The Petra is the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, the confession that Peter had just made. Thus the church is built upon Jesus and not the weakness of human flesh. We can not forget that even Peter himself testifies that Jesus was the builder of the NT church. In Acts 4:10-12, Peter says of Jesus, "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

The point is this - if any church or group is built upon anything other than the true foundation Jesus Christ, then it will not stand and it is not the true NT church. Jesus is the founder. No other person can build the true church. This spiritual truth is taught by Jesus in Matthew 15:13 where He said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up."

THE STARTING PLACE OF THE CHURCH

The Bible teaches us that the NT church began in the city of Jerusalem. First, there were many prophecies that point to the church beginning in Jerusalem. Some of these are:

1. For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem - Is 2:2,3; Mic 4:1,2.
2. Therefore, thus says the Lord, I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it," declares the Lord of Hosts - Zech 1:16 (the Lord's house is the NT church - 1 Tim 3:15).
3. Jesus taught that Jerusalem was the starting place of the church in Luke 24:46-49. He said, "...and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

All of these prophecies were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost as recorded in the book of Acts the second chapter.

There it is recorded how:

1. The apostles were clothed with power from on high as Jesus promised in Luke 24:49 - Acts 2:1-4.
2. The word of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem in the latter days - Acts 2:14-42.
3. Repentance and forgiveness of sins was preached in the Lord's name beginning in Jerusalem - Acts 2:38.
4. The Lord's house (church) was established in Jerusalem in the last days - Acts 2:41,47.

Another important point to notice is that all scripture before Acts 2 talks of the church as not yet existing. But after Acts 2, the church is spoken of as already being established.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE STARTING PLACE OF THE NT CHURCH

How can you start the true church of the NT in your area? This question can best be answered by an illustration. If all of the maize in the world was destroyed, it would still exist as long as its seed existed. You could plant the seed and have maize again. The seed of the Kingdom is the word of God - Matthew 13:19. As long as you use the word of God, the NT church can be planted at any time and in any place. This example has been proven by Paul's travels and his establishing the church in many countries. However, some men have twisted or ignored God's word and then claimed to have established the NT church in their area. By measuring each group by God's word, you can determine which are true NT congregations.

HOW TO ENTER THE CHURCH

You have seen that the church is a group of people called out of sin and darkness by God. The church is different from people who remain in sin. The Bible teaches that man has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23; 1 Jn 1:8) and that man has gone astray (Is 53:6) and become filthy in the eyes of God (Ps 53:3; Is 64:6). Man has an unclean heart before God (Pr 20:9). And because man is found in this condition then his final destination is death (Rom 6:23; 5:12), separation from God (Is 59:2; Mat 13:49), and the lake of fire (Rev 21:8; Mat 3:12).

But God did not want all men to die and be lost. Instead He sent Jesus to pay the penalty of our sins by dying on the cross. Now God calls all men to receive this salvation through Jesus Christ.

To those who have heard God's call and obeyed and come out of sin, God has given eternal life. These have been saved from eternal punishment and separation from God. And it is the work of the church to help others hear God's call and be saved. But how? How does one obey and enter the church? The following steps are given in the Bible as the way to enter the church.

1. To hear the "good news" about Jesus and his sacrifice for your sins - Rom 10:17; Mat 13:23; Acts 2:41. In this, it becomes the work of those in the church to preach this "good news" to those who have not yet obeyed.
2. To believe that Jesus is the Son of God and have faith in Him - Heb 11:6; Jn 3:16; 5:24; 11:25; 20:31.
3. To repent and turn away from sin - Acts 17:30; 3:9; Lk 13:2,3. Repentance does not mean to stop sinning only. It also means that we begin to fill our lives with good deeds by obeying the will of God.
4. To confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Son of God - Rom 10:9,10; Mat 10:32; Lk 12:8. Confession also comes by your actions. You should confess Jesus with your

mouth and your actions so that others may see your good works and glorify God who

is in heaven (Mat 5:16).

5. To be immersed (baptized) in water for the forgiveness of your sins - Mat 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Mk 16:15,16.

By following these five steps, you have accepted God's "calling out" and you have become a separate people, added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47), and freed from the wages of sin.

5 REASONS TO BE BAPTIZED

1. Baptism is a condition of salvation - Mk 16:15,16
2. Baptism leads to the forgiveness of sins - Acts 2:38
3. Baptism puts one into Christ - Rom 6:1-4
4. In Baptism, you put on Christ - Gal 3:27
5. Baptism saves - 1 Pet 3:20,21

DISCUSSION ABOUT ENTERING THE CHURCH

1. Can a person be saved if he only follows 4 of the 5 steps listed above? No, each step is important in becoming a member of God's called out group of people. An example of making tea will help illustrate this point. To make tea you need water, tea leaves, milk, and sugar. If you make tea using all of the ingredients but do not use the leaves you will not have tea. You can not have salvation by following all of the steps and not repenting and turning away from sin, or by not believing, or by refusing to be baptized. You must follow all 5 steps.

2. Can a person be baptized in a way other than by immersion? No, you should be baptized according to the NT pattern which was by immersion. Any way other than this is an alteration that man has made. We must be careful to do Bible things in Bible ways and not man's ways. In this sense, any other form of baptism would not really be baptism at all.

THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH

It becomes clear as we study the Bible that Jesus built only one church. He did not say that he would build churches, but rather he said, "I will build my church" (Mat 16:18). Even though we can count many different churches around us today, the Bible clearly teaches the existence of only one church. We see that by some of the following examples:

1. The church is described as one body or group - Eph 4:4; Rom 12:4,5; 1 Cor 12:20,27; Eph 1:22,23; Col 1:18.
2. The example of the vine and branches - Jn 15:1-6. This shows that Christ is the vine and we are the branches (15:5). The branches are not different churches but people who have been saved (15:6).
3. The house or family of God - 1 Tim 3:15. There is only one house and we are joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:16,17).
4. There is only one fold of sheep and only one Shepherd - Jn 10:16.
5. The example of the human body as being like the church in that there is only one body with many members with different functions - 1 Cor 12:20-27.
6. Christ prayed for unity among His followers not for division - Jn 17:20,21.

The only conclusion that you can draw from this is that Jesus built only one church and prayed for unity within it. He did not want divisions to come or denominations to be made. He simply wanted many congregations of one church, one fold of sheep, one house, one body all with only one head for authority. And yet, you can have all the right teaching and know all the right doctrines, but if you have not love, unity can not be achieved. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:14, "And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." Be sure that as you study these teachings that you do not forget that love is the most important ingredient in preserving unity among God's called out group of people.

CHAPTER 2 FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS ABOUT ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

OUR AUTHORITY FOR CHURCH ORGANIZATION

Now that you have learned a lot about the characteristics of the church, its entrance requirements, etc., another question arises as to the organization of the church. How is it organized? Its organization is probably the least understood part of the church. Though there is some, there is not a great amount of teaching on its organization. However, there is enough to show you a clear picture of Biblical organization of the church and the ways in which man has tried to change it. The fundamental problem of organization lies in understanding what our authority is in church organization. The following paragraphs will help you to determine the church's authority for organization.

First, you must realize that the church is God's plan for saving people from sin. Jesus built the church with His sacrifice on the cross. But it is not man's place to decide how the church should be organized. He can not arrange the church or guide its work according to "what seems best in his own eyes". You are told in Jeremiah 10:23, "A man's way is not in himself, nor is it possible for a man who walks to direct his own steps". It seems man is not capable of directing his own life much less directing and organizing the church. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Pr 14:12). Even Jesus says that man begins to worship in vain once he leaves God's pattern and teachings and develops his own (Mat 15:9).

If man is not to look for guidance in organizing the church from what seems best in his own eyes, neither is he to look for it in what others do. 1 Samuel chapter 8 relates the story of how the people of Israel looked to their neighbors for an example of having a king. When they brought this before Samuel, he tried to warn them of the dangers but they persisted until they were appointed a king. The people had refused God's way of guiding them through judges and had looked to others for an answer. God says in 1 Samuel 8:7, "They have rejected Me from being king over them". By looking to others for guidance, the people of Israel rejected God. It is not wise to look to others for guidance simply because not all who practice good deeds are following God. Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 7:21). He then goes on to relate how these same people do many good deeds and even perform miracles but never follow the will of God. "The gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it" (Mat 7:14). Looking to see what others are doing does not guarantee that you will do the right thing. You must remember that the church is a called out group of people (2 Cor 6:17), and therefore will do things differently than the way the world does them. Christians are to be different (1 Pet 2:9), and that also goes for their guidance in organization.

If the church was God's plan and built by Jesus, then the only place you can look for its organization is in God's word. It is sufficient to guide you in all things (1 Tim 3:16,17) including the organization of the church. Anyone who respects God will respect His word as the only authority for church organization. No one will do what seems best in his own eyes or look to see what others are doing. There are too many scriptures that warn of those who bring a new doctrine or teaching or change in some way God's already revealed will for man and His church (2 Jn 9-11; Gal 1:7-9). The Bible is the only authority for church organization.

HOW IS THE CHURCH ORGANIZED?

You have seen that the Bible is the only authority for church organization. Now you need to see how the church is organized. The following are some facts from the Bible about church organization:

1. The church is illustrated as one body or group under one head or authority. Jesus Christ is the only head and authority for the church - Eph 1:21-23; 5:23,24. No one man has been appointed to be the head over the entire church.
2. Each member in the church who is under Christ's authority seeks to work in unity with others of the body (1 Cor 12:12-27; Rom 12:5) not looking for an exalted position but regarding others as better than himself (Phil 2:1-4). In this way, each person seeks to serve rather than to be served.
3. Since all authority over the church has been given to Jesus (Mat 28:18), and since He has ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father (Eph 1:20), this means that the church has no earthly government other than God's written word or any "head" "quarters" since the church's head is in heaven. Any such government or headquarters other than this is not of Biblical example.
4. All Biblical teaching on church government concerns the local church only. There is no mention of any body or organization that has power over the local congregation. Local congregations are independent by being:
 - A. Self-governing - 1 Cor 5:1-13; 2 Cor 2:4-11; Acts 6:1-5.
 - B. Self-supporting - Phil 4:15,16; Acts 4:32-37.
 - C. Self-evangelizing - Acts 8:4; 1 Thes 1:8-10.
5. Only the local church is organized having its own leaders such as:
 - A. Elders - 1 Pet 5:1,2; Acts 20:7; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
 - B. Deacons - Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13; Phil 1:1.
 - C. Evangelists - 2 Tim 4:5; Acts 21:8.

There are no church leaders on earth outside the local church. There are no local church leaders that have authority over neighboring churches.

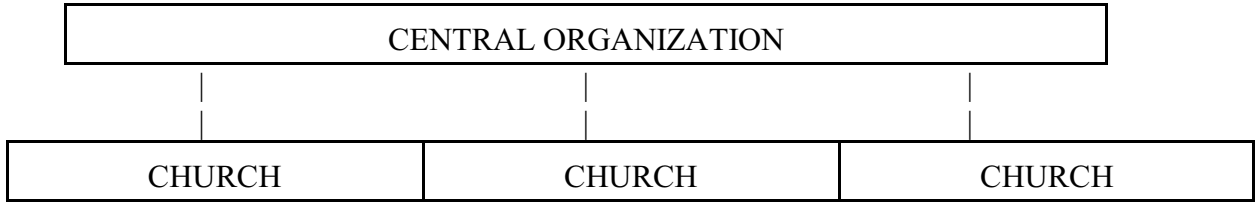
HOW CHURCH GOVERNMENT CAN BE CORRUPTED

Below are some ways which are commonly used by man to corrupt the local church government. Some of these are:

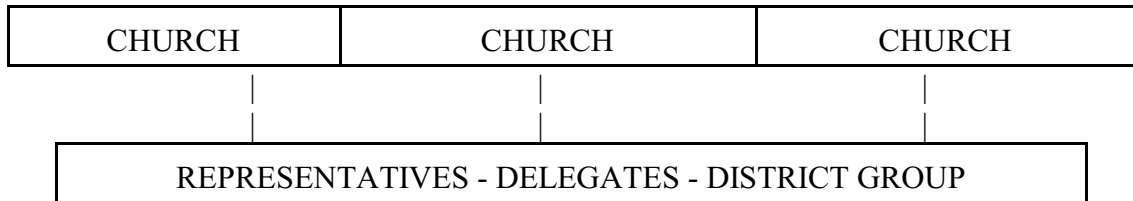
1. Following human authority instead of Biblical authority. Some groups look to others for guidance and authority rather than God's word.
2. "Going beyond" the independent local church by creating boards or organizations that have power over the local congregations.
3. Using unscriptural leaders or offices. Some church groups have created positions of authority for a person over an area or district. Such offices are not found in the Bible.
4. Changing scriptural offices. Others have taken a scriptural office and divided it or given it duties not mentioned in the Bible.
5. Appointing unqualified leaders. The Bible lists the qualifications of the local church leaders. Church government can be corrupted when unworthy leaders are chosen.
6. Changing functions into positions. In some churches, particular jobs like keeping minutes, or money, or chairing meetings are made into church offices and given authority.

DANGER SIGNS IN CHURCH ORGANIZATION

A.



B.



C.



LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

Many people seek some office in the church because they are looking for a place of honor or for some kind of rank over their fellow brothers.

CHURCH LEADERS AND THEIR NAMES

A person's office or title tells us many things. It tells us many things about his authority, his position, and something of the work that he is to perform. This is also true of the titles given to the NT church leaders. Their titles not only tell us what they are, but also what they are not. Now let us consider the NT terms given to the elders and deacons.

Elders

1. Presbuterion - "an assembly of the elders" Presbuteros - "an old one" - elder
 - A. Note that the word chosen by the NT writers indicates that an elder is to be an older man, just as his qualifications would also indicate.
 - B. This word appears 64 times in the NT. Obviously not all of these refer to the elders of the church, so let us look at a few examples.

Mat 16:21; 26:3; Acts 4:8 - the context allows us to know that these were elders of the people not of the church. They were the leaders of the people.

Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 5:17; Jam 5:14 - these are obviously elders of the church for it is in that

context that we find the word.

Certainly not every older man is an elder just because he is an older man and a member of the church. But if he fulfills the qualifications and has been appointed to that work, then he becomes an elder. Also elders are to be "old ones" in the Lord, not just in age only - "not a new convert" 1 Tim 3:6.

2. Episcopos - "an overseer" "bishop"
 - A. This word comes from the verb episcopeo which means "to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after, care for". This helps us to know the elders work.
 - B. An overseer is one who is over, in authority and is a seer, one who looks upon or inspects the church.
 - C. The term bishop comes from an Anglo-Saxon translation of episcopos and refers to the same office of elders.
 - D. This term is found 5 times in the NT - Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25.

3. Poimen - "a shepherd" or "pastor"
 - A. Poimano means "to keep sheep" or "to feed or tend". This expresses authority in supervision.
 - B. "Shepherd" is a very good name to give those who lead the local church. It expresses feelings of care and concern for the flock of God's people.
 - C. Poimen is used several times in the NT and three of these are Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 2:25; Heb 13:20.

How can we be sure that all three terms refer to the same office? Acts 20:17,28 will show you by using all three terms for the same people within the same context. Here it is recorded of Paul's actions saying, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the presbuterous of the church among which the Holy Spirit has made you episcopous, poimainein the church of God".

Deacons

1. Diakonos or Diakonia - "minister, servant, ministry, deacon".
 - A. Diakonos is found 30 times, Diakonia is found 35 times in the NT.
 - B. The following are passages where the word refers in a general sense to a servant, minister, or a ministry - Rom 13:4; Col 1:7; Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 4:5.
 - C. The following are passages where the deacon or his office is discussed - Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13.

Deacon is simply a transliteration of diakonos. It is true that all of us are servants of Christ, but there are some that the Lord has appointed to be set aside to officially do the work of deacons. We may all be involved in doing some of the work set aside for deacons, but still there is a special sense in which this is their particular work.

THE QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF CHURCH LEADERS

The qualifications of elders is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and also Titus 1:5-9. These qualifications of elders can be briefly stated as:

1. The husband of one wife - This forbids the unmarried state and polygamy.
2. One who manages his own household well - having children who believe and are not

- accused of rebellion - By managing his own house well, he proves his ability to guide the church.
3. Above reproach - He stands unaccused and has not had a charge brought against him.
 4. Temperate, self-controlled - He is able to exercise control over his life and do everything by plan.
 5. Prudent, Sensible - He is capable of exercising sound judgment.
 6. Respectable, good reputation outside the church - He is worthy of honor from everyone.
 7. Hospitable - He receives and entertains strangers in a friendly manner.
 8. Loving what is good - He must be motivated by love.
 9. Just, devout - He is conformed to what is right and holy.
 10. Gentle - He is patient and kind.
 11. Able to teach - He is able to exhort in sound doctrine or refute those who contradict.
 12. Not self-willed - He is not one who is unyielding to others.
 13. Not quick-tempered - He can not become angry in a hurry.
 14. Not addicted to wine - He can not be a drunkard either in secret or openly.
 15. Free from the love of money - He is not ruled by the desire to acquire wealth.
 16. Not a new convert - He must have grown in spiritual maturity so that he is able to help others.

The qualifications of deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. These qualifications can briefly stated as:

1. Men of dignity - He is to be serious minded, not irresponsible.
2. Not double tongued - He can not be two-faced, speaking one thing and doing another.
3. Not addicted to wine - He can not be a drunkard either in secret or openly.
4. Not fond of sordid gain - He can not seek to gain by dishonest means.
5. Holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience - He is one who is steadfast in his faith and conviction.
6. Beyond reproach - One that has not had a charge brought against him.
7. Husbands of one wife - This forbids the unmarried state and polygamy.
8. Good managers of their children and their households - If he can manage his own house well he can help manage the church.
9. Of good reputation - He has a favorable opinion in the minds of others.
10. Full of the Spirit - He bears the fruits of the Spirit.
11. Full of wisdom - His wisdom comes from God through prayer (Jam 1:5), and through Bible study (2 Pet 1:3,4).

These qualifications will not be discussed in length since many of them will be covered in the duties of the elders and deacons.

Duties of the Elders

1. Acts 20:28
 - A. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock"
 1. The elders are required to keep themselves under observation so that they are not:
 - a) led astray
 - b) overtaken by temptation
 2. The elders are required to keep the flock under observation so that:
 - a) Satan can not come and devour the flock

- b) the lambs do not injure themselves
 - c) the lambs do not become lost
 - B. They are to act as "overseers"
 - 1. To be over in authority
 - 2. To see, look upon, inspect
 - C. To "shepherd the church of God"
 - 1. To tend and feed the flock like a shepherd
 - 2. 1 Thessalonians 5:12
 - A. Give instruction To instruct as to one's conduct and as to its correction, not as to teaching doctrine.
- 2. 1 Timothy 3:2,5
 - A. "Able to teach"
 - 1. Elders should be able to teach in every situation both publicly and privately.
 - 2. Elders are not only to have the ability to teach but to do it also.
 - B. "Take care of the church" We should understand this in the context of "managing" the affairs of the church.
- 3. 1 Timothy 5:17
 - A. They are to rule They are to exercise control over the local church, not lording over it, though.
 - B. They are to work at preaching and teaching
 - 1) Proclaiming the Word
 - 2) Instructing others, using the Word. Those elders that rule well and work hard at preaching and teaching are worthy of double honor.
- 4. Titus 1:9-11
 - A. They are to have depth in the Scriptures
 - 1) Able to exhort in sound doctrine
 - 2) Able to refute those who contradict and silence false teachers
- 5. Hebrews 13:7,17
 - A. Elders are to be examples - men that the writer of Hebrews could say "imitate their faith".
 - B. They "keep watch over souls". Elders are to constantly be on the lookout for those things that would harm the souls of his flock.
- 6. 1 Peter 5:2,3
 - A. Shepherd the flock - tend and feed
 - B. Not as lording it over the members, but as examples. Elders, by their example of submission to the Great Shepherd, should show the flock how to be submissive. An elder should be a good example of a father, husband, neighbor, teacher, faithful church member, businessman, peacemaker, and worker in the kingdom.

Duties of the Deacons

First let us say that the work of the deacons is not to 1) preach, although some deacons may preach also. Philip was one of the seven deacons selected in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5) and yet later we find that he had become an evangelist (Acts 21:8). The deacon is not to 2) rule or oversee the

congregation. No where do we find this work being given into the hands of the deacons.

The word deacon is used in its official sense in 1 Tim 3:8 and Phil 1:1 concerning those who were to be selected and appointed for certain work in the church in its organization. The use of the word and the various ways it is translated will help you to understand more the nature of the work of deacons. Some of the ways it is translated are: "being a servant", "waiting on", "to wait at the table and offer food and drink", "to supply food and the necessities of life", "to attend to anything that may serve another's interest", and "to minister". Many times these definitions are used with application to the ministry of God's word. These help you to see that the work of deacons is largely of a nature of serving in material things. However, deacons are in close touch with other parts of God's work and share in it. For an example of deacons' work see Acts 6:1-5.

CONCLUSION

You have studied in this chapter the organization of the church and that it is not based upon what man thinks or upon what his neighbors do, but rather upon the word of God. Also you have seen that the church is organized into local congregations and that no other authority exists. You have even seen several ways in which the local church organization can be corrupted.

In the second half of this chapter, you have studied the leaders of the church, their names, their qualifications and duties as explained in the Bible.

In the next chapter you will study about the worship service and all of the different parts it contains as well as the purpose for worshiping. Then in the final chapter, you will study how you should work as a member of the New Testament church.

CHAPTER 3 THE WORSHIP SERVICE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

How did Christians in the church of the New Testament worship God? What was their worship service like? Let's begin with an introduction to the worship service.

TEACHINGS ABOUT WORSHIPPING GOD

What is worship? Worship is what man does when he sees God in some way. Worship is man's response when God reveals himself in some way. God has always wanted his people to worship him. He has always wanted his people to kneel before him and thank him for the blessings he gives. God's people in the Old Testament worshiped him. They worshiped him in their homes, and then they came together in a group and worshiped him with other people.

The Christians during the times of the apostles worshiped God in this same way also. They worshiped him in their homes, and they came together as a church and worshiped him. Acts 2:46,47 says that the Christians met together day by day, breaking bread in their homes, partaking of food with glad and generous hearts, and praising God. For these Christians, Sunday was the most important day of the week. Acts 20:7 says they came together on this day to break bread and receive teachings. Sunday was the day Jesus rose from the dead, and so it was the day his followers met together in order to honor their risen Lord and to hear his teachings. It was also the day the Christians met together in order to fellowship with each other and to encourage each other to be faithful. So, the first Christians met together on Sunday for two reasons: first, to worship God and remember his son Jesus, and second, to encourage and help each other.

The worship service of the church on Sunday was very important to the first Christians. At the worship service, they sang songs of praise to God; they prayed to him, thanking him for his blessings and telling him their needs; they preached his word and were strengthened by hearing it; they returned to God some of the blessings they had received by giving the first fruits of their crops, their herds, and their money to be used to help the needy; and they also united together with their fellow Christians to remember their Lord and Savior through the eating of the Lord's Supper.

As you read about the worship of the New Testament church, ask God to give you the same spirit of joy in worshiping him that was found in these first Christians.

DISCUSSION ABOUT WORSHIPPING GOD

Did the first Christians meet in a special place to worship God? No. Acts 2:46 says they met in the temple courts and in their homes. The church of the New Testament does not have to build a special building in order to worship God.

Did the first Christians have special garments they wore when they met together? There is no place at all in the New Testament where God commanded the first Christians to wear certain clothes when they worshiped him.

TEACHINGS ABOUT SINGING

Singing has always been an important part of worshiping God. The Jewish people, through whom our Savior came, worshiped God through songs. (Read Psalms 96:1-6.) Many of the psalms written in the Bible were written to be sung. The early Christians sang many of these psalms during

the worship service. Jesus and the apostles sang to God (Matthew 26:30). By singing, Christians glorify God and Jesus, give thanks to God and Jesus, express their joy, teach people, and strengthen their faith. When Christians sing, they sing to God and to people.

Christians sing to God to praise him. They praise him by singing of his great value (Heb. 2:12). Christians also sing songs thanking God for all he has done for them. Ps. 13:6 says, "I will sing to the Lord because he has been good to me." (Read also Eph. 5:19-20). When Christians sing to God they also sing to people (Acts 16:25). Christians express and share their joy through singing (James 5:13).

When Christians sing, they share or tell the word of God. Christians are to sing in the spirit and with understanding (I Cor. 14:15). When Christians sing, they sing so that people will understand what they are saying. When unbelievers understand what the Christians are singing, they can in this way hear God's word. So singing teaches people who are not saved. Singing in the worship service is also done to help Christians grow in faith (I Cor. 14:26). When Christians sing together, they strengthen each other.

In conclusion, when you sing, think about the words. What does the song teach? How does the song strengthen other Christians? Would the song help an unbeliever? Does the song praise or thank God? Remember to sing to God and to each other.

TEACHINGS ABOUT PRAYING

God's people have always prayed. People in the Old Testament prayed to God. The first Christians also prayed to God. Christians talk to God through prayer. There are two purposes for prayer. First, Christians praise and thank God for his blessings by praying. Second, Christians tell God about their needs by praying. (Read Matthew 6:9-13). Christians talk to God through prayer, and God talks to Christians through the Bible. Also, Christians pray to God at all times (I Thes 5:17). They pray to God during the worship service, and when they are at their homes.

When you pray, you should not only ask God for things, rather you should also praise him and thank him for the blessings he has given you. Some examples of prayers of thanksgiving are found in I Thes 5:1 and Philippians 4:6. The first Christians used their prayers to return thanks to God. They expected God to answer their prayers (James 5:16). When God did answer their prayers, they were filled with joy and thanked him in prayer (Eph. 5:20).

You can also tell God of your needs and of the needs of others when you pray. The first Christians did this. Prayer has always been a powerful tool in the hands of God's people. The church of the New Testament believed Jesus' promise that he would answer their prayers (John 14:13,14). Whatever plans the church was making, whatever problems they were facing, whatever need they had, they asked God to let his power work for them. [For example, read Acts 12:5.]

How did the first Christians pray? They prayed to God the Father (Matt 6:9). They prayed in the name of Jesus (John 16:23-26). You are fighting a battle against Satan, and prayer is one of the weapons you should use to defeat Satan (Eph 6:18). So, like the first Christians, you should pray to God, and make your requests in the name of Jesus. That is, you ask God to help you and others in the name of Jesus in the battle against Satan because Jesus has already defeated Satan. When you pray in the name of Jesus, you are praying because of his power and authority over Satan.

Also, you are to pray in faith (Matt 21:22). Do not doubt when you pray (James 1:6,7). Do not pray just to be seen by others (Matt 6:5,6). Pray for God's will to be done (Matt 6:10). Pray for

others. Do not pray just asking for your own needs. Do not pray with bad motives (James 4:3). When you pray, know that the Holy Spirit helps you in your prayer by interceding for you (Rom 8:26,27). Lastly, when you pray, confess your sins to God and ask him to forgive you (Matthew 6:12; I John 1:9).

DISCUSSION ABOUT PRAYING

Matthew 21:22 says that whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. Does this mean you can ask for whatever you want and you will get it? No. The New Testament teaches that sometimes you can ask for something and have bad motives in your heart. James 4:3 says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." You must ask for things that are according to God's will for your life (Matt 6:10).

When you ask God for something, should you expect him to answer your prayer at once? No. In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus told the story of the widow who kept asking the judge for justice. Jesus was teaching you to pray without growing tired.

TEACHING GOD'S WORD

Jesus said, "I am the bread that gives life. The person who comes to me will never be hungry. The person who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35). Living a Christian life is not always easy. Often it is hard work, like digging the farm is hard work. When a person digs all day in the farm he becomes very tired and very hungry. He needs food and drink to be strong again so he will be able to dig the next day.

The spiritual body of a Christian also needs food and drink. When the New Testament Christians met together, they came to receive a spiritual feast. Life was often not easy for them. They faced persecution and many times death because of their faith in Jesus. When they met together they wanted to hear the word of God. They wanted to be encouraged and strengthened by hearing again God's word. Paul told Timothy, "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching." (I Tim 4:13).

The word of God is your spiritual food and drink. Peter says, "like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." The time of teaching in the church is very important for you as a Christian.

First, being taught from the word of God encourages you to live well as a Christian. It refreshes your spirit so you can go back again into the world to show people the way to Jesus.

Second, the time of teaching strengthens you by increasing your knowledge of the word of God. Paul's constant prayer for the Colossian Christians was that they grow in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:9,10). The only way you can be fruitful for God is if you know God's word.

Third, the time of teaching in the worship service enables you to use the word of God to resist Satan. Paul teaches in Eph. 6:17 that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit. You are to use this sword in your daily battles against Satan. Being present at the worship service and hearing the word taught will enable you to use the word to defeat Satan just as Jesus used it to defeat him in the desert (read Matthew 4:1-11).

To review, the teaching of God's word is your spiritual food and drink. It encourages you to live well as a Christian. It strengthens you by increasing your knowledge of the word of God. And

it enables you to resist Satan.

DISCUSSION ABOUT TEACHING GOD'S WORD

When a person preaches, should you believe everything he says just because he is a preacher? No. Luke says in Acts 17:11 that the Jews in Berea received Paul and Silas's teachings with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether their teachings were true or not. You should measure every man's teachings by the word of God.

TEACHINGS ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Jesus was sitting in the place of worship for the Jewish people. He was there with his disciples watching the people giving their offerings at the temple [church] of the Jewish people. Jesus was watching what the people were giving because he knew that people give according to their faith in God. Jesus saw the rich come and put in their large sums of money. Then he saw a poor widow come and give two small coins. He told his disciples that the poor widow gave more than all those rich people. How is it possible that the poor widow could give more with two small coins than the rich people could with their large sums of money? The rich gave to God what was left over of their money while the poor widow gave from money she needed to live on. Jesus pointed to this woman as an example of how people should give to God. [Read Mark 12:41-44.]

The collection is an important part of the worship service. The collection is important for many reasons: 1. The Bible teaches the church to have an offering (I Cor. 16:1-4). 2. The collection helps other Christians who have needs (Acts 11:27-30). 3. Giving shows your love (2 Cor. 8:8,24). 4. God loves people who give cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7). 5. When you give, you are ministering to God and to His people. This ministry proves you are obeying the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 9:13). 6. You can give more than just money. You can give food to the collection (Leviticus 27:30). This food can then be used to feed members of the church who are hungry, like widows and orphans. 7. God will give to you just as you give to him (2 Cor. 9:6-11). If you give generously to God, he will greatly bless you. If you give little, he will be able to bless you only a little. It's your choice. 8. Don't give just to be seen by men (Matthew 6:1-3). 9. You should give because you love your brother and sister and want to help them (I Cor 13:3). 10. A good example to follow in giving to God is that of the Old Testament. The people then gave at least a tenth of their possessions to God. For example, if you have \$100.00 a tenth of that is \$10.00. When you honor God by giving freely, he will honor you. 11. You should give to the collection of the church every Sunday (I Cor. 16:1,2).

Encouragement to give generously. Do you think a farmer who plants a few seeds will have a large harvest? No. He will reap only a little. He will reap what he sows. It is the same with you as a Christian. If you give much, God will bless you. He has made this promise to you, and he always fulfills his promise. God says in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap." He also promises in Malachi 3:10, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until there is no more need." (Read also Proverbs 11:24,25; 22:9; 3:9,10.)

Warnings about giving selfishly. 1. If you are selfish and give very little to God, then you are stealing from Him (Malachi 3:8). If you steal from God like this, then you will be cursed (Malachi 3:9). For example, if you have \$20.00 and give only one cent to God, then you are being selfish and stealing from him. Part of the problem is that you are afraid if you give God a tenth, then you will not have enough for your own needs and those of your family. But God has promised to bless you if you give freely [for example, a tenth of what you have] (Luke 6:38). 2. If you see a brother who

is poor and hungry, and you do not help him, then you have sinned (Deut. 15:7-9). If you see your brother in need and do not help him, then you do not love God (I John 3:17). 3. If you are selfish and keep what you should give to God, then poverty will come upon you (Prov 11:24). 4. If you do not help those who have needs, then you will not be helped when you have needs (Prov. 21:13). 5. You will be cursed if you do not give to God by helping those who have needs (Prov. 28:27).

Examples of people who gave freely. 1. Acts 4:36,37 tells of Barnabas who sold a piece of land and gave the money to the apostles so that they could help the needy Christians. 2. The example given above of the widow who gave freely to God shows how you will be blessed when you do the same. These are examples that you should follow when you give to God. Are you giving only what you can spare, like the rich people? That is, are you giving to God what money you have left over after you have taken care of all of your needs? Or are you giving like the poor widow who gave to God all that she had to live on? Do you give with faith knowing that God will take care of your needs if you honor him by giving generously?

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Does it anger and hurt God if you have \$50.00 and give him only fifty cents? Or does it sadden him if you harvested 5 bags of corn, and only give him 5 ears of corn? Yes, it angers, saddens and hurts God if you have something and do not give generously to Him [like a tenth]. If you are selfish like this, it also hurts you. It will bring upon you poverty and curses.

TEACHINGS ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER

Before Jesus died he left a special way in which Christians can remember how God has saved them through Jesus' death. Jesus said that his followers are to take the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19). Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again (I Cor. 11:26). Christians proclaim Christ's death until he comes because they look forward to his return. The early Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper on Sunday when they met with each other as a church (Acts 20:7). To the early Christians celebrating the Lord's Supper on Sunday was as important as teaching and praying (Acts 2:42). Not celebrating the Lord's Supper would be like telling God his son is not important. The Lord's Supper is a time of remembrance for Christians. They remember Christ's death and resurrection, the new covenant, the forgiveness of sins, the second coming of Christ, and the unity of the church.

The Lord's Supper is a reminder for Christians. Taking the Lord's Supper reminds Christians of Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins. His death allows them to have the forgiveness of sins after believing and obeying Him (Matt. 26:28 and Eph. 1:7). Taking the Lord's Supper also reminds Christians of Christ's new covenant. Christ's death brought the new covenant which Christians are to remember (Mark 14:24). People who have become Christians are in the new covenant. To be in the new covenant is to have the promise of the forgiveness of sins as you try to live obediently to Jesus' word (Heb. 10:14-17). Taking the Lord's Supper also reminds Christians of their unity in Christ. When a church celebrates the Lord's Supper, they celebrate the salvation they all share through Jesus. Christians are united in Christ's death (I Cor. 10:16-22).

Other teachings about the Lord's Supper. This remembrance which Jesus left for followers has several names. It is called the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:20), a sharing in the blood and body of Christ (I Cor. 10:16), and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42 and 20:7). The Lord's Supper consists of bread and the fruit of the vine (Matthew 26:26-29). A baptized believer who takes the Lord's Supper should examine himself before doing so (I Cor. 11:27-29). If there is sin in his life, he should reconcile it first. There are several reasons Christians should take the Lord's Supper during the

Sunday worship service. 1. Jesus himself established and commanded it (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20). 2. Paul passed on this command (I Cor. 10:16-17 and 11:23-34). 3. The church of the New Testament took the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42 and 20:7).

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER

Is it really important to take the Lord's Supper on Sunday when the church meets? Yes. Jesus told his followers to do this in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19). If you leave it out of the worship service on Sunday, then you are refusing to remember Jesus in one of the ways he has commanded us.

What if there is no bread or drink. Then it's OK not to have the Lord's Supper, right? No. If there is no bread or cup on Sunday, this means the leaders of the church have been lazy. They are failing to do a part of their work by making certain there is bread and juice for the Lord's Supper. If they give the duty to another member and he fails to do it, then he is the one at fault.

Isn't it OK to take the Lord's Supper just once a month or once a year? We know it was the habit of the first Christians to meet together every Sunday, and we know they took the Lord's Supper when they met (Acts 20:7). Acts 2:42 says the Christians were "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer". We should follow the example of the New Testament church, and thus we should take the Lord's Supper as often as they did.

HOW TO CONDUCT THE WORSHIP SERVICE

Five different parts of the worship service of the New Testament church have been discussed in this chapter. These parts are: singing, praying, teaching, giving, and the Lord's Supper. Now, how do you conduct a worship service on Sunday using these parts?

First, it is important to know that only the men are allowed to lead the worship service. The church of the New Testament gave us this example. Paul teaches in I Cor. 14:34,35 that a woman should not speak in the worship service of the church. Second, the worship service should be done in an orderly manner (I Cor. 14:40). Paul says that God is not a God of confusion, but of peace (I Cor. 14:33). This means that the leader or leaders should meet together before the start of the service and arrange the service. They should decide who will sing, pray, preach, and take care of the Lord's Supper and the collection. It is a dishonor to God if there is much confusion during the service, that is if men are trying to decide who will do what after the service has begun. Let only one person pray. It is not the New Testament pattern for several people to pray at once. The men who will help in the worship service should know what their part is before the start of the service. In this way they will be prepared when their opportunity comes.

When these things have been taken care of early, then the service should begin. Let someone who has the ability to sing lead the songs. There are probably several who can do this. After singing, someone can pray. Remember to give thanks to God in the prayer, as well as to tell him the needs of the church. Then the person who is to preach can do so. It is best for him to have studied and prepared a lesson at home. It is not good for him to just stand up and to begin to talk. His words need to edify and help the Christians, and he cannot do this if he has not studied. After the teaching, there can be more singing. Then someone should conduct the Lord's Supper, giving some teaching on it to the members. The collection can be done at this time also. Then the service can be closed with more songs and a prayer.

The members of the church should decide together on the best time for the service to start. It is good for the service to begin at the same time every week. In this way the members will always know what time to arrive. Most churches have their service at 10:00 or 10:30 Sunday morning. This seems to be a good time, but all churches are not bound to follow this example.

Understand that these are only suggestions. There is no rule in the New Testament about how many songs to sing or how many prayers to pray. The service can be arranged in any order. The only guidelines in the New Testament are that the Christians worship God through songs, prayers, teaching his word, the Lord's Supper and taking a collection. And Paul teaches that these things should be done 1] in an orderly way (I Cor. 14:40) and 2] that these things be done to build up the members of the church (I Cor. 14:26). Christians should not do these five parts of the worship service just because they are commanded. No. Rather, Christians should sing and pray and give and teach and take the Lord's Supper because they can glorify God in this way. These things are ways that we can tell God we love him and they are ways to help build up the members of the church.

CHAPTER 4 YOUR WORK AS A MEMBER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

You have learned about the church of the New Testament in this book. You have seen what the New Testament teaches about how the church began, about how a person is to enter into this church, about its organization and leadership, and about how the church is to worship God. In this last chapter, you will learn about your work in this church. After entering the church of the New Testament, what does God expect you to do? There are two parts to this chapter. First, you will learn about the work you must do in your own life or heart. Second, you will learn about the work you must do for others as one member of the body.

THE WORK YOU MUST DO IN YOUR OWN LIFE

In order to be a member which God can use to his glory, you must always examine your own heart to see how you can better serve God. There are three parts of your life that we will study here: 1] your work of continuing to repent, 2] your work of growing in faith, and 3] your work of knowing God better.

Your work of continuing to repent. Repenting is the work of recognizing the sins in your life, confessing them to God and man, removing them, and replacing them with good deeds. Maybe you thought that you only repent the day you are baptized. This is not true. You must continue to repent because of bad habits [sin] in your life. When you do this, you are gradually purifying your life and becoming holy. To be holy means to be pure and without blemish (James 1:27). You must continue to purify your heart every day, that is you must continue to repent. Peter tells you that as a child who obeys God, do not continue to do the evil things you did before you were baptized into Christ. Instead of doing these evil things, you need to be clean and do good deeds because God who called you into the church is clean and holy himself (I Pt 2:14-16). If you continue to do the sinful things you have done in the past, then you are not acting like a child of God. You are forgetting that you were called to leave these things.

You must realize that through your baptism, you died to doing sinful things and were made a new person in Jesus so that you could start doing good deeds like Jesus (Rom 6:11). Paul says that after you have been baptized into Christ, you should no longer use your body to do the evil things you did in the past. Instead of using your body to do evil, you should use it to do good. For example:

- 1] If you have been using your heart and tongue to tell lies or to talk about shameful and filthy things, now as a Christian you will use your heart and tongue to tell the truth at all times and to say things that build up other people.
- 2] If you have been using your heart and hands to steal by not returning things or money which you have borrowed, now as a Christian, you will use your heart and hands to work so that you will be able to help the needy and to always pay back what you borrow.
- 3] If you have been using your heart and tongue to talk badly about others, now you will use your heart and tongue to speak well of them and encourage them.
- 4] If you have been using your body to get drunk with beer, now you will use body to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- 5] If you have been using your body to sleep around, now you will keep your body clean for the sake of your mate and for Jesus.

You can read Ephesians 4:25 - 5:21 to learn more about some of these examples. You must know that together with your own work, the Holy Spirit will help you to purify your life by showing you your sin. So ask him everyday to help you. Also, as you fellowship with other Christians on Sunday and every day in the week, you will be encouraged to purify your life. So, your duty of continuing to repent requires your work, the help of the Holy Spirit, and the help of other Christians. Now let's go onto the second work you must do in your life.

Your work of growing in faith. After being baptized into the body [church] of Christ, you are just a babe in faith because you have been born again (John 3:5). Now you must begin to grow up in Christ even as child grows to be an adult. You are growing in your faith as you do the work mentioned above, that is the work of purifying your heart. But there are other things you must do in order to grow in faith also. According to Peter in 2 Pt 1:5-8, there are spiritual things you need to add to your faith in Christ. You need to add 1] goodness (good deeds, pure heart); 2] knowledge (of the word of God); 3] self-control (to be able to say "no" to doing wrong); 4] perseverance (strength in doing good, not growing tired); 5] godliness (having the character and behavior of God); 6] brotherly kindness (treating other people like you want to be treated); and 7] love (the love of I Cor 13 which is the love Christ has for us; love which forgives others, helps them, and will even die for them). You are growing in faith as you add these things to your life. It takes work though -- you will not get them if you are lazy. You must work for them and ask God to help you add them to your faith. You are to seek these qualities for the purpose of becoming like Jesus himself (Eph 4:13).

Another thing you must do in order to grow in your faith is to feed yourself spiritually, even as you feed your physical body everyday. What is this food? It is the word of God. God tells you in I Pt 2:2 that you are to hunger and thirst for, to have a great appetite for the word of God. Why? So that you can grow up in Christ. You study his word so that you will not remain an infant in Jesus. Again in 2 Pt 3:18, you are told to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The only way you can know more about him is to read what the Bible says about him. So this is your second work in your own life – to grow up in Jesus. Now let's go on to the third work you must do in your life.

Your work of knowing God better. Before you were reconciled to God through Jesus, you were God's enemy. Why? Because of your sins. But after being baptized into Christ, your sins were wiped away and peace was brought between you and God (Eph 2:14,15). So now in the church you have a new relationship with God. Instead of being his enemy, you are now his son (Gal 3:26,27). And since God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, you need to understand your relationship to all three.

God the Father is your Father. As your Father, he loves you and will provide for your needs, just as a father here loves and provides for his children (Matthew 6:25-34). So trust your Father to take care of you. Honor him just as a child should honor his father. Also, as your Father, God will be forced to discipline you when you sin against him, for example when you treat your brother badly or think in an evil way. But remember that he disciplines you only because he loves you and wants to take out the impurities in your life (Heb 12:5-11). In order to grow to love your Father more, you need to read his word and hear what he teaches you. God speaks to you through his word. Also you need to talk to him in prayer. Thank him for the blessings he has given you. Thank him for his goodness. Tell him your needs. Pray for others who need his help. And confess your sins to him and ask him to help you to put them away.

God the Son is Jesus Christ. Jesus is your king, so you must obey the things he commands you to do (Matthew 21:15). Jesus is also your brother (Heb 2:17) and friend (John 15:14). As your brother and friend, Jesus can understand the problems and trials you have, and so he can help you in these times (Heb 2:17,18). Jesus is your mediator (I Tim 2:5) and your high priest (Heb 4:14-16).

The work of a mediator and high priest is to go between God and man. So be thankful that you have such a good mediator as Jesus, because he has lived on earth and he understands your problems, and he helps you when you pray to the Father. You must grow in your love for Jesus. Tell him your joys and your sorrows just as you talk to your friends here on earth. Thank him for dying in your place.

God the Spirit is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps you to purify your life from sin (Rom 8:13). He helps take your prayers to God the Father (Rom 8:26,27). He is part of what God has given you now of your inheritance (Eph 1:13,14), that is, the Holy Spirit is God's promise to you that you will be given more on the last day. The Holy Spirit is your Helper or Counselor (John 16:7), that is he helps you follow in Jesus' footsteps. The greatest work that the Spirit does is to glorify Jesus (John 16:14). That is, the Holy Spirit will reveal Jesus to you. He will help you to grow in your love for Jesus, and to grow to be more like Jesus. Everything the Holy Spirit does glorifies Jesus.

So as member of the church of the New Testament, you have this work of growing to love God more. You need to study more about the work that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit does in your life. You need to talk to God in prayer and let him talk to you through his word. Remember also your work of continuing to repent and purify your life, and to grow up in Jesus so you are mature. Just as fellowshiping with other Christians will help you to become more holy, even so fellowshiping with them will help you to grow up in Jesus and to love God more. You can't stand alone as a Christian. You need the help of the body. That brings us to the second part of this chapter, that is the work you have to do as a member of the body of Christ.

THE WORK YOU MUST DO IN THE CHURCH

We have talked about the work you have to do in your own life, now we will talk about your work in the church. There are several things here to learn.

You are one member of a body. You have been baptized into the church of the New Testament (I Cor 12:13). This church is the body of Christ and he is the head of this body (Eph 1:22,23). You are a member of his body (I Cor 12:27). This means that you are a part of the body [church] which is in your area. What does it mean to be a member of a body. Use your body for example. How many parts are there in your body? One? No, many. You have legs, arms, eyes, ears and many other parts. Does any one member of your body do all of the work of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, walking and other things? No. All of the members of your body work together so that you can do the things you need to. Even so, you are just one part of the church [body] of Christ. Don't be proud and think that you are the most important member of the church. You are not more important than all of the other members.

Can your leg survive if it is cut off from the rest of your body. No. It will shrivel up and die. Even so you can not live if you cut yourself off from the rest of the members of the church. You need to go to all of the meetings of the church (Heb 10:25) so that you can be encouraged. Just as your leg needs to fellowship with the rest of your body in order to do it's work, even so you need to fellowship with the other members of the church in order to be healthy and do your work. You must meet with other Christians continually to encourage them and to be encouraged.

What happens if one part of your body is sick? For example what happens if you have a headache? Your whole body feels badly. Even so, if you become sick because of sin in your life, then you will hurt all of the other members of the church. A Christian told the story of some of the members of their church who were dancing and singing in a evil manner on Sunday at the market. Other people saw them and came and asked this Christian why their members lived like this. Those few members who forgot Jesus and returned to sin brought shame to that church in the community.

Don't you hurt the other members of the church by returning to sin. This is some of the meaning of being a member of the church of the New Testament. To understand more about the body, read I Cor 12:12-30.

Find your place of work in the body. As stated above, all of the parts of your body can not do the same work. Even so, all of the members in the church can not do the same work (I Cor 12:14-25; Eph 4:11-13). Some members of the body can preach well, some can teach others, some can sing, some can pray, some can evangelize in new areas, some can prepare food for visitors, some can bring the bread and cup for the Lord's Supper, some can visit the sick, some can go to the homes of other members and encourage them, some older women can teach the younger women, some men can help members build houses and some women can help mud the houses, and so on. You see, just as your legs and eyes do different work, even so members of the church do different work. You can not do all of the above works. You should not. Rather, you should find what work you do well, and then serve God and the church by doing that work with all of your strength. No work is more important than the other. All must do their jobs so that the body can grow and function.

After finding your gift, use it to help the other members. Your eyes help your legs by showing them the way, and your legs help your eyes by carrying them in that way. Even so, you must use your gift to help other members of the body. And other members will use their gifts to help you. You all must use your gifts in order to work properly. If the eyes don't see, they can't show your legs the way. If your legs don't walk, they can't carry your eyes anywhere. Even so, if you do not do your work in the church, other members will suffer, and if they do not do their work, you and others will suffer. So you all must continually encourage each other for everyone to do their work. Paul says that your church will be held together by the work that every member does (Eph 4:16). That is, it takes the work of every member to build up the body. As a member of the body, if another member is sick, you must hurt with him. Go and visit him and pray for him. Take him food if he needs it. Members of the body help each other. Pray for other members if they are being tried in some way. Work hard with your hands so that you will have things with which to help other members. If a member falls in sin, don't kick him and speak badly of him. Remember, you need him. Go to him and help him out of his sin (Gal 6:1). Don't fight with the other members of the body because this will bring shame to the church and thus to Christ (Rom 2:21-24). [To understand more about this, read I Cor 12:14-25.]

Work to maintain unity in your body [church]. It should be your greatest desire that there be unity in the church in your village, and unity between your church and churches in other areas. Division in your church will destroy it. What would happen if there were division in your physical body? What would happen if your arm was separated from your body? You would suffer greatly. What if your head were separated from your body? You would die. Even so, if there is division and fighting in the church, it will suffer greatly and maybe even die completely. Do not cause division in the body in your village. If you speak badly of another member, you are causing division and the whole church will suffer. If you are selfish and want to be the big man in the church and to have all authority, you will cause division in the body. James says where there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil thing (James 3:16). Instead of dividing the body, you work to keep the church united (Eph 4:1-3). God has given every member in your church special gifts, and everyone should use his gifts so that there be no division in the body (I Cor 12:24,25). Whatever work you do in the church, you should do it in order to build up and encourage other members (I Cor 14:12,26). If you sing, sing to encourage others. Don't sing so people will hear your good voice. If you visit the sick, do it to help them. Don't visit to make others think that you are a very special member. You are all the same in God's eyes.

Sometimes the unity of a church can be destroyed because a member is sinning. If this happens in your church, you must follow Jesus' teachings in Matthew 18:15-17, and those that Paul

gave in I Cor 5:9-13. After being told about his sin in a loving manner by the members, if the person refuses to repent and stop sinning, then he should be dis-fellowshipped. If the church leaders are lazy and refuse to cut him off, then his evil will enter into the church and ruin the unity of the church. Just as a little poison ruins the whole dish of porridge, even so one sinner will make the whole body sick.

Work with other members to bring the lost into your church. As a member of the New Testament church, you have been saved from the penalty of sin, that is death (Rom 6:23). You have been rescued from the kingdom of Satan and transferred into the kingdom of Jesus (Col 1:13). So what will you do about your family and friends who are still lost in the dark? Will you forget about them and let them suffer eternal punishment? You will not forget about them if you love them and if you obey Jesus. As a member of the body who is living in the light, you need to help turn others from darkness and bring them into the light also (Acts 26:18). Solomon tells you in Prov 24:11 that you need to do the work of rescuing those who are being led away to slaughter. That is you need to tell your family, friends and neighbors who are lost about the eternal life you've found in Jesus. You were saved from death for a purpose. You were saved so that you could tell those in darkness about the goodness of life in the church (I Pt 2:9,10).

How can you do this work of saving the lost? Can you do all of it by yourself? No. Remember that you are part of a body. You need to work together with other members to save these people. Remember that the members have different gifts. Some can save the lost by teaching them how to enter the body of Jesus, and some can not teach very well. Some can testify to their lost family and friends through their good deeds which they continually do. So the one who does not teach very well can work together with the one who can. But every member of the body can do three things. First, every member can invite his lost family, friends and neighbors to go to the meetings of the church with him. Second, every member can tell the lost he knows what good things God has done for him. Third, every member can pray for his lost family, friends and neighbors. Praying for the lost is very important. Satan blinds those in darkness so that they cannot see the light of Jesus (2 Cor 4:4). You need to pray for them that God would work on their behalf and open their eyes so that they can see the way to Jesus.

CONCLUSION

These are some of the works you must do as a part of the body or church in your village. You have studied about 5 different things in the second part of this chapter. 1] You must realize that as a member of the church of the New Testament, you are just one member of a body, and Jesus is your head. 2] You must find your place of work or your gift which God has given you in this body. 3] After seeing what your gift is, you must use it to help the other members of the body. You all must use your gifts so that your church will grow to be mature in Christ. 4] You must work with the other members to keep unity in your church. Don't let your sin or the sin of others destroy the unity of your church. 5] You must work with the members of your church to save the lost people in your families and in your community. This is the work you do together with the other members of your church.

Remember also the things you were taught in the first part of the chapter about the work you must do in your own life. You studied 3 different things. 1] You must continue to repent of your sins and be pure like God is pure. 2] You must continue to grow in your faith by adding the things in 2 Pt 5:1-8 to your life, and by studying the word of God. 3] You must grow in your love for God, understanding your relationship to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And you must grow by talking to God in prayer and letting him talk to you in his word. By working in your own life and working together with the other members of your church, you will help your church to grow to be mature in Christ.

