

# What is the New Testament Church?



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# Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction.....	4
I. The Definition of a Church .....	5
II. The Inception of the Church.....	9
III. The Identification of a Church .....	12
A. Its Continuation .....	12
B. Its Validation .....	13
IV. The Infrastructure of a Church .....	17
Part 1 - Distinctives.....	17
A. Bible - the Only Rule for Faith and Practice.....	18
Majority Text (Textus Receptus).....	20
The Alexandrian Texts.....	20
B. Autonomy of the Local Church .....	21
C. Priesthood of the Believer .....	23
D. Two Ordinances.....	25
Baptism .....	25
The Lord's Supper.....	26
E. Individual Soul Liberty and Responsibility .....	29
F. Separation.....	30
Ethical Separation .....	30
Ecclesiastical Separation.....	31
Political Separation .....	32
G. Two Officers of the Local Church.....	32
The Pastor .....	32
Deacon .....	36
Part 2 - Discipline .....	37
Confrontation.....	38
Restoration.....	39
Expulsion.....	40
V. The Intent of a Church.....	41
Endnotes .....	43

# What is the New Testament Church?

## Introduction

If someone were to come up to you and ask you this question, “What is a New Testament church?” would you be able to give a solid scriptural answer? Would you be able to speak with authority? Would you be able to cite Scripture to support your thoughts? Unfortunately, I have found that a majority of Christians cannot give solid answers as to what a true New Testament church is. They are quick to parrot Bible footnotes, their pastors, or commentators without having searched the Scriptures for themselves.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said to Peter, *and I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* What type of church was Jesus talking about? Is this church active today? Was He talking about a local church or a universal, invisible church? Those are some of the questions that we will discuss in this book. I trust that you will read this book with an open mind and a sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit. As you read, ask God to confirm his Truth to you. Lay aside biblical footnotes and the theories of men, and let the Word of God speak to your heart. As we study the Scripture together, let us emulate the Bereans of old *...in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so, (Acts 17:11).*

Jesus said that he would build a church, (Matthew 16:18). The word “build” in verse 18 is also translated throughout the New Testament as “edify” (Acts 9:31; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 10:23). He also promised its perpetuity. Therefore, it must be in existence today! It is my prayer that after reading this book you will then be able to give a solid scriptural answer as to what a true New Testament church is. It could be that you will find that the church to which you attend does not qualify as a New Testament church. If that is the case, let me challenge you to search for one, join it, and support it with your whole heart!

I have outlined this book in the following manner:

- I. The Definition of a Church  
This chapter answers the local or universal church debate.
- II. The Inception of the Church  
This chapter talks about the beginning of the local church.
- III. The Identification of a Church  
This chapter tells how to identify a New Testament church.
- IV. The Infrastructure of a Church  
This chapter looks at church polity.
- V. The Intent of a Church  
This chapter will summarize the purpose of a local New Testament church.

D. Curtis Martin

## I. The Definition of a Church

**A**s we begin this study on the church that Jesus built, it would be wise to set down a scriptural definition. Therefore let me state the New Testament's view of a church. It is an organized, autonomous, local band of immersed believers who have New Testament officers, perform New Testament ordinances, preach and teach the whole counsel of God, and are actively engaged in carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Philippians 1:1).

The word "church" is used in the King James Version Bible to translate the original Greek word "ecclesia." The Greek word comes from a combination of two root words; "ek," meaning "from" and "kaleo," meaning "to call out." There can be no question as to the basic meaning of the original language. The church is an assembly of people called out to attend an organized meeting.

The word "ecclesia," rendered "church," occurs 117 times in the Greek New Testament. Five times the word is referring to any assembly, not the institution Christ founded. The five references are Acts 7:38; 19:32, 39, 41; Hebrews 2:12. The word is used 112 times in reference to God's assembly, the New Testament church. This is based upon The Textus Receptus or The Received Text which is considered by true Fundamentalists to be the authoritative original language source.<sup>1</sup>

When the Authorized Version of our Bible was to be translated, King James commanded not to undermine any of the beliefs of the Church of England. "*Ecclesia*" was not to be "congregation" or "assembly," because they held to the invisible, universal theory.

"*Ecclesia*" is from *ek*, out of, and *kaleo*, to call; thus it is a called-out assembly. In Acts 19:32, 39, 41 it is used for Israel assembled before Moses. Scofield's note on this verse says it should be "congregation" for its original meaning was a gathering out of citizens in a public place for deliberation. And yet Scofield makes the astounding statement that it could mean the church "universal!" When has a universal church ever gathered together in an assembly?<sup>2</sup>

Let me take this time to dispel any notion about Scofield's "Universal Church Theory." As we mentioned, the Bible uses the word "ecclesia" as an "assembly" or a "congregation." This universal church theory has been used to de-emphasize the local church. "Universal churchites" use this theory as an excuse to neglect the local church. They feel that if they believe in this man-made theory, then baptism, church attendance, giving to the local church, etc., is not important.

This so-called universal church theory has caused many to err from the scriptural teaching of the local New Testament church. Much of the confusion that is propagated by the universal churchites comes from a failure to differentiate between "The Family of God," "The Kingdom of God," and "The Church of God." Here is a brief synopsis of the three.

"The Family of God" refers to all the saved of all the ages, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:15). The only way into the "Family of God" is to be born again. All who are born again are in "The Family of God."

"The Kingdom of God" refers to the sphere of Christian profession and includes all the professing saved on earth at any given time. Christ told Nicodemus, "... except a

man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). The Kingdom is composed of those who receive the king, as the Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:15). This was the kingdom of which John the Baptist spoke as the forerunner, "in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, repent ye: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2). John was the herald of the kingdom. This was the kingdom which Christ came to establish in the hearts of men. His keynote message was the same as that of his forerunner, "from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

"The Church of God" refers to the local, visible assembly of saved, baptized believers.<sup>3</sup>

In rightly dividing the Word of God, the ardent student will find only one true church in the Scripture, and that church will be a local, visible congregation of baptized, born-again believers.

The church of God is never used of any institution, except of an assembly or congregation of baptized believers in some locality, e.g., the church of God at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2).

The local individual church is the only kind of church God has on this earth today.

There is only one family of God, composed of all the redeemed of all ages in heaven and on earth.

There are thousands of churches (Baptist) of God on earth. Every individual Baptist church is a church of God. No others are.

When a man is born again he is born into God's family. He is in the family of God forever. The relationship does not change. Whether in heaven or on earth, he is in God's family. When he is born again he also enters God's Kingdom. This relationship is for life. When he dies he passes out of the kingdom of God on earth and enters "His Heavenly Kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18).

After he has been born again he is not yet in a church of God, but is now a scriptural subject for admission into a church of God. "The Lord added to the church daily the saved" (Acts 2:47). [ ... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:47, KJV) DCM] Church membership was NOT something a man got with salvation but a subsequent blessing he got after salvation by being added to the church.

Baptism is NOT essential to admission into either the family of God or the kingdom of God, but baptism is essential to admission into a church of God.

Men are born anew into the family of God and into the kingdom of God but they are baptized into a church of God (1 Corinthians 12:13.) The one body referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:13 was the church of God at Corinth. Note in 1 Corinthians 12:27 he says, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The Holy Spirit did not baptize the church at Corinth neither was the Spirit the element in which they were baptized. In one Spirit they were baptized (in water) into the church at Corinth.<sup>4</sup>

Let me take a few moments to talk about baptism in the Holy Spirit. There are those who teach that the Holy Spirit baptizes a person into the body of Christ. There is only one problem with that. Nowhere in Scripture will you find where the Holy Spirit does any baptizing. Unless, of course, you adhere to the man-made universal church theory.

Those that hold to a universal church precariously prop up this Holy Spirit baptism theory with one verse - 1 Corinthians 12:13. *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into*

*one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

To rightly divide the Word of Truth, we must be consistent with all hermeneutical principles. One of the first principles of Biblical interpretation that all true students of the Word learn is found in 2 Peter 1:20-21. *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* We must use the Scripture to interpret Scripture. A text without a context is only a pretext. It is not “my interpretation,” or “your interpretation,” but “God's interpretation.” To build a doctrine on one verse of Scripture is improper use of biblical hermeneutics. Let Scripture interpret Scripture.

To say that 1 Corinthians 12:13 teaches that the Holy Spirit baptizes a person into the body of Christ is to take that verse out of context. Paul was speaking to the local church at Corinth, *...when ye come together in the church... (1 Corinthians 11:18)*. How could they come together in an invisible church? Obviously they couldn't. All through chapter 11 Paul was speaking about and to a local church. Why would he then begin to talk about some universal invisible church in chapter 12? He doesn't. Chapter 12 is continued instruction to a local, visible church.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in chapter 12 could only be used in a local visible church.

The teachings of the entire chapter are applicable to a local church and that church alone. WHY THEN SHOULD VERSE 13 SIGNIFY SOME KIND OF A CHURCH THAT PAUL HAS NOT BEEN WRITING ABOUT, AND TO WHOM HIS ILLUSTRATION HERE COULD NOT APPLY?<sup>5</sup>

Concerning 1 Corinthians 12:13 S. E. Anderson writes,

Note: 1. This verse and chapter was written to the church at Corinth, referred to 18 times as one *body*.

2. This writing took place about 26 years after Pentecost at which few, if any, Corinthians were present (none, cf. 1 Corinthians 4:15). We do know that Paul was NOT a believer at the time of Pentecost.

3. The Corinthians' conversion and baptism is told in Acts 18:1-11 at which time the Holy Spirit came to them (Romans 8:9).

4. They were baptized IN one Spirit. Since *Christ* was the baptizer in the six other verses\*, He must be here also. But how many Christians now have ever noticed this important fact?

5. The word “spirit” in the Greek original of verse 13 is not capitalized, though perhaps it should be. Paul told the Philippians to “stand fast in one spirit” (1:27). Then, 1 Corinthians 12:13 could be baptized in one spirit of unity. However, let “Spirit” stand.

6. Each church is a *body* with its members functioning as their head directs. Now a functioning body must be assembled, not scattered over thousands of square miles! The church at Ephesus was a body (4:16) “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

7. Dr. Taylor C. Smith on 1 Corinthians 12:13: “Here baptism is viewed as the rite which the Spirit uses for binding men into the unity of the Christian fellowship. Baptism becomes the bond of union of believers.” Since unity was the great theme in 1 Corinthians this word from Dr. Smith seems right. He quoted Dr. W. F. Flemington: “It [baptism] is the effective symbol whereby all Christians are made one in Christ ...” (From

a paper read 9-7- 54 at Baptist World Alliance committee on baptism, meeting in Louisville, KY).

8. Dr. A. W. Pink on 1 Corinthians 12:13: "The 'baptism' here is not Holy Spirit baptism at all, but water baptism ... God hath tempered the body together (24), apparently by the unifying ordinance of baptism."

9. Water baptism was evidently the *rite of initiation* into each real New Testament church (Acts 2:41; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit is never said to baptize anyone. But He does unify believing Jews and Greeks, bond and free, into one spirit, one body, one accord, one purpose and one responsibility.

Nowhere in Scripture is a command, "Be baptized in, by or with the Spirit." It is as dangerous to build a universal church theory on 1 Corinthians 12:13 as for Mormons to baptize dead bodies on 1 Corinthians 15:29...<sup>6</sup>

\*Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5 and Acts 11:16. These are the only verses in the New Testament where we read that **Jesus** was to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

New Testament doctrine knows nothing of a mythical, universal, invisible church. As I stated above, those that hold to this invisible church theory do so to excuse themselves from being faithful to any local church. What is the purpose of such an invisible church? What can it accomplish? Christ issued many commands to be carried out by his church. But this invisible, universal something-or-other is powerless to do it.

1. It has no address, locale, or building anywhere on earth.
2. It has no body, tangibility, or definably framework.
3. It has no meetings, assemblies, or meeting places on earth.
4. It has no discipline or parliamentary procedure.
5. It has no baptism, thus disobeying Christ's command.
6. It has no Lord's Supper, thus ignoring Christ's command.
7. It has no deacons or deaconesses  
[deaconesses--unscriptural office, DCM]
8. It has no pastors, assistant pastors or other ministers.
9. It has no choir, organist, pianist or music director.
10. It has no treasurer, collection or budget.
11. It has no missionary collection or fellowship fund.
12. It has no moderator, chairman or presiding officer.
13. It has no clerk, records or membership roll.
14. It has no prayer meetings.
15. It has no business meetings.
16. It has no evangelistic meetings.
17. It has no ordination of pastors or election of trustees.
18. It has no messengers, delegates, conferences, or conventions.
19. It has no identity, likeness or personality.
20. It has no Great Commission, or right to baptize anyone.
21. It has no responsibility or accountability.
22. It has no organism, organization, arrangement or constitution.
23. It has no association with sister churches of any kind.
24. It has no missionaries or teachers.
25. It has no by-laws, jurisprudence or rules of order.

26. It has no name; it is obscure, dim, shadowy, misty, hazy, it is too invisible.

More, the invisible church has no Sunday Schools; it has no youth groups, camps or rallies; no men's brotherhoods or classes; no women's auxiliaries or societies; no church suppers or socials, no weddings or funerals; no interchurch gatherings for inspiration, instruction and evangelism. What DOES it have?

Did Christ build such a "church?" No; such a minus-church needs no one to build it. What is there to build?<sup>7</sup>

This ambiguous teaching that there is some mystical invisible church clouds the fact that the word church as used in the New Testament is sometimes referred to in an institutional sense.

Paul writes in the letter to the Ephesians, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). Paul is speaking here of the church as an institution. This is **not** referring to an "invisible, universal church." The idea being conveyed is that of an institutional principle, such as: the institution of the home, of government, or of education. Each of these institutions must take on a physical, visible form to exist. There must be a visible family, an assembled school, a governing body. When Paul speaks of the home in this passage, no one imagines a "universal," "invisible" husband, wife, or home. He is speaking of an institutional principle that only exists in a tangible, visible form. Therefore the church, the body of Christ, God's assembly is always local, visible, specific. You cannot have an invisible, unassembled, ethereal, universal body.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, the church as taught in the New Testament is a local, independent body of baptized believers, with scriptural officers, actively engaged in the Great Commission, for which they are answerable only to their head, Jesus Christ.

The New Testament church is a local, visible, independent assembly of saved people joined together in the body by scriptural baptism and given a divine commission for which they are answerable only to their head, Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup>

A church is a congregation of Christ's baptized disciples, acknowledging him as their Head, relying on His atoning sacrifice for justification before God, and depending on the Holy Spirit for sanctification, united in the belief of the gospel, agreeing to maintain its ordinances and obey its precepts, meeting together for worship, and cooperating for the extension of Christ's kingdom in the world.<sup>10</sup>

## II. The Inception of the Church

In this section we will deal with the inception of the church. Who started it? When did it begin? The answer to the question as to who started the church will determine the answer as to when the church began.

Many believe that the church started at Pentecost. This teaching is propagated by those that hold to the "Universal Church theory."

The Universal church theory is so hard pressed that it does an almost unbelievable thing, IT FALSIFIES CONCERNING WHEN THE CHURCH WAS STARTED. In doing this, it ignores the plainest Bible evidence, as well as the demands of common sense, in

order to seek to have its way. Moreover, it DISPLACES CHRIST FROM THE POSITION OF FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH, and MAKES THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE THE FOUNDER!<sup>11</sup>

Let's turn to the Absolute Source and see what the Bible says. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, ... *I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

There are two words that I wish to define before we explain this verse. The first word is "Peter." It comes from the Greek word **Petros** {pet'-ros}. It is translated "Peter" 161 times, and "stone" 1 time. Strong's concordance (Online Bible 6.3) gives the following definition, "a rock or a stone; one of the twelve disciples of Jesus." The second word is "rock." It comes from the Greek word **petra** {pet'-ra}. Strong's defines it as;

- 1) a rock, cliff or ledge
  - 1a) a projecting rock, crag, rocky ground
  - 1b) a rock, a large stone
  - 1c) metaph. a man like a rock, by reason of his firmness and strength of soul.

This verse is used by the Catholic Church to show that Peter was the first pope. To give such a translation is to abandon all rules of biblical interpretation. Christ was using the comparison of Peter's name as a small stone (petros) with the rock (petra) with which He would build his church. This "large rock" or "bed rock" (petra) that Jesus was talking about was the confession that Peter made in verse 16, *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Jesus would build his church by the fact that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

So we see that Jesus Christ is the founder of the local New Testament church. Next we will see when He began to build his church.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul says through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles,...* The first office that God set in the local church (ecclesia) was that of the apostles. Luke 6:12-13 gives us the time when this took place. *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles* (emphasis added). Jesus, in obedience to his Father, spent the night in prayer, after which he called his disciples around him. It was from that group of disciples that he chose his twelve apostles. These twelve became the nucleus with which Christ started his church. Therefore, according to Scripture, the local New Testament church began in Luke 6.

These twelve apostles were "in the church" long before Pentecost. When Christ called them to follow Him, they became a distinct entity, a closely knit group, a called-out body of believers, with Christ as their sole Head. They forsook their former associations and became followers of Christ. He was their pastor, their Good shepherd (Greek, *poimen*, John 10:14).<sup>12</sup>

There are numerous verses that we could call to the forefront to prove that the church was started before Pentecost, but because of space we will look at only a few.

(1) In Acts 2:41 we read, *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls* (emphasis added). This took place on the day of Pentecost. How can you add someone to something that has not been in existence? Therefore, they must have been added to the local New

Testament church. Let me illustrate. If I add \$50.00 to my bank account, you would automatically assume that I have an account already established at the bank. You would be right. Therefore the church was already in existence at the time of Pentecost.

(2) In Matthew 18:17 Jesus said, *And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican* (emphasis added). In this passage Jesus is speaking about local church discipline. Why would Jesus make such a statement if the local church was not yet in existence?

(3) To say that the church was not in existence until Pentecost would undermine the Lord's Supper.

...let us note that, unless the church existed previous to Pentecost, the Lord's Supper is not a church ordinance. If He gave it only to individuals as such, when they died the ordinance died with them. We cannot believe this in the light of Paul's account of the institution of the Supper as given in 1 Corinthians 11. Here, according to the account given, Jesus clearly implied that this memorial ordinance will be observed till He come again. The individuals who were present at the Supper have been dead for centuries, and still He has not come. Evidently it was not to individuals as such that He gave the ordinance, but to individuals as constituting the church. Only this church, the church to which continuous existence has been promised, could observe the Memorial Meal continuously from the time of its institution until He comes again.<sup>13</sup>

Needless to say, there are many instances with which to prove that the church was started before Pentecost.

1. Christian believers before Pentecost had the gospel (Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:1; Matt. 9:35; 11:5; 24:14; 26:13; Mark 1:14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 16:9, 15; Luke 4:18; 9:6; 20:1, etc.)
2. They were converted (Matt. 3:5-8; 18:3; Luke 19:1-10).
3. They were baptized after conversion (Matt. 3:6; Acts 1:22).
4. They had Christ as Head (Matt. 23:8; Mark 1:1; John 1:29).
5. They were instructed in church truths (Matt. 18:15-20).
6. They were called to obey Christ (Matt. 4:18-20).
7. They were ordained (Matt. 10:1-5; John 15:16).
8. They were commissioned (Matt. 28:18-20).
9. There were organized enough for their needs (John 13:29).
10. There had a missionary program (Matt. 10:1-11:1).
11. They had a teaching program (Matt. 4:23; 10:1-42).
12. They had a healing program (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1; 10:9).
13. They were promised a permanent church (Matt. 16:18).
14. They had church discipline (Matt. 18:15-17).
15. They had divine authority (Matt. 18:18; 28:18-20).
16. They had essentials of church life (Matt. 4:19; 18:20).
17. They had true church democracy (Matt. 23:8-12).
18. They had qualified Pastors (John 15:16; 21:15-17).
19. They had the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-28).
20. They had the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; John 20:22).
21. They had divine power to do Christ's work (Luke 9:1).
22. They sang in the midst of the church (Matt. 26:30; Heb. 2:12).
23. They had prayer meetings (Acts 1:14).

24. They had business meetings (Acts 1:15-26).
25. They had a membership roll (Matt. 10:2-4; Acts 1:13-15).
26. They were united and added unto (Acts 2:1,41).
27. Christ was their corner stone (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20).<sup>14</sup>

Jesus Christ is the founder of the local New Testament church. He took three years to train his disciples on how he wanted his church to function. From that time, to our present day, the gates of hell have not yet prevailed on the church that Jesus built!

### III. The Identification of a Church

In the first two sections of this study, we have given the definition of the church. We saw that it is a local, visible congregation of baptized believers and not an invisible, universal, unorganized, mystical something-or-other. We have also seen that the church was started by Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry and not at Pentecost. This, no doubt, may foster a number of questions.

The first question that we need to answer is, “Since Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that he would start his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it, does that mean that he promised the churches perpetuity?” Yes—indeed!

#### A. Its Continuation

Concerning Matthew 16:18, listen to what these men have to say;

None will deny that these words [found in Matthew 16:18, DCM] constitute a promise of the church's perpetuity. Dr. J. W. Porter says (*World's Debt to Baptists*), “If these words teach anything, they teach that the churches instituted by Christ and the apostles would never die, but would reproduce and multiply and perpetuate themselves to the end of all time.” Of the passage, “The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,” Dr. Nowlin says (*Fundamentals of the Faith*), “Referring no doubt to its indestructibility.”<sup>15</sup>

Again, Jesus promised the church's perpetuity in Matthew 28:19-20, when He said, *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 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.*

This passage is commonly referred to as the Great Commission to the church. These marching orders can be broken down into three steps; (1) “*teach all nations,*” soul-winning, or make disciples. (2) Baptize these newly saved disciples, “*baptizing them.*” (3) Train or disciple them in the Word of God, “*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*” Where is the best place to baptize and train these disciples than in the local New Testament church!

...When Christ gave the Great Commission to His disciples, ...*He addressed them not simply as individuals, but as individuals constituting His church.* To the commission He added the promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.” Manifestly, *if the church at any time ceased to exist, Christ's promise would become of none effect.* To be with the church always, or more properly, all the days, necessarily means that there must always, every day, until the end of the age, be in existence the church to which the promise was given!<sup>16</sup>

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (which most of the great denominations agree is a church ordinance), he gave it for local churches to observe His death, TILL HE COME, 1 Corinthians 11:26.

Most certainly if the doing of a thing is to be perpetuated, the doers of that thing must be perpetuated also. If the observance of the Lord's Super is to be perpetuated until Christ comes again, then obviously the church to which He gave the ordinance must, in the very nature of the case, be perpetuated too. There is no escape from this conclusion!<sup>17</sup>

When we talk about the perpetuity of the New Testament church (that is, the institution which Jesus started), we are talking about churches that carry on the principles and precept, as set down in the New Testament. In order for a church to be called a true New Testament church, it must be obedient to New Testament faith and practice (the subject of church polity will be discussed in detail in the next chapter).

### **B. Its Validation**

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus started the institution of the local New Testament church, and that church is extant today. Therefore, that brings us to our next question, "Since Christ's church is in existence today, where is it?" Or more distinctly, "How can we identify it?" And, identify it we must! Why? Because Christ gave his life for the church, Ephesians 5:25, ...even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. Secondly, the church which Jesus started is the guardian of the Word of God, 1 Timothy 3:15, But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Let me appeal to you, dear reader, "Is the church where you attend, a New Testament church?" Remember, Jesus said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Therefore, you are either a member of a local church which **characterizes** the one that Jesus started, or you are a member of a man-made institution.

It would be foolish, and dare I say ignorant, to assume that all churches fall under the category of being New Testament churches. In the New Ninth Edition of Frank S. Mead's book, Handbook of Denominations in the United States, he lists no less than 222 different kinds of churches! Which church is Christ's church? Someone may say, "Does it really matter which church is right?" **IT MATTERS IF WE WANT TO BE OBEDIENT TO GOD!**

It is important that we be able to identify Christ's New Testament church for the purpose of heartily supporting it with: (1) our membership, (2) our regular attendance, (3) our tithe, (4) our prayers, (5) our participation in it's programs, and (6) our being obedient to God's Word, Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25). We all should want to be associated with an institution that has the sanction of Jesus Christ upon it. Therefore that brings us back to our second question, "Since Christ's church is in existence today, how can we identify it?" How can we know for certain if a church is considered a New Testament church?

The first and most vital test in recognizing the kind of church which Christ began is to identify its founder.

The following is a list of the larger Protestant Denominations, giving their founder, and date of origin. This list is compiled from the Bureau of Census of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Religious Bodies Vol. II, Title: Separate Denominations, 1926.

Roman Catholic (Present Universal Church) .....	610
Greek Orthodox.....	1054
Lutheran - Martin Luther.....	1530
Episcopal - Henry VIII .....	1530
Presbyterian - John Calvin .....	1541
Congregation - Robert Browne .....	1581
Friends .....	1624
Church of the Brethren (Dunkards) Alexander Mack .....	1708
Free Will Baptists - Paul Palmer .....	1727
Seventh Day Baptists - John C. Beissel.....	1728
Methodist - John and Charles Wesley .....	1729
United Brethren in Christ - P.W. Otterbein & M. Boehm .....	1800
Evangelical - Jacob Albright.....	1800
Unitarians - W.E. Channing.....	1825
Churches of God in North America - John Winebrenner .....	1825
Plymouth Brethren - J.N. Darby .....	1829
Latter Day Saints - Joseph Smith.....	1830
Primitive Baptists - Daniel Parker.....	1831
Christian - Alexander Campbell .....	1837
Church of Christ - Alexander Campbell.....	1837
Christadelphians - John Thomas .....	1844
Seventh Day Adventists - James White .....	1845
Spiritualism - Andrew Jackson Davis .....	1845
Church of God (New Dunkards) - George Patton .....	1848
Advent Christian Church - Jonathan Cummings .....	1852
Salvation Army - William Booth.....	1865
Church of Christ Scientist - Mary Eddy Baker.....	1879
Church of God - Daniel S. Warner .....	1880
Christian and Missionary Alliance - A.B. Simpson ....	1881
Brethren Church.....	1882
Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant.....	1885
Swedish Evangelical (Free Church).....	1888
United Evangelical .....	1894
Church of Christ (Holiness U.S.A.) - C.P. Jones.....	1894
Church of the Nazarine - W.H. Hoople & P.F. Bresse .....	1907
Churches of God, Holiness - K.H. Burruss.....	1914
*Assemblies of God.....	1914
National Council of Churches of Christ .....	1907 <sup>18</sup>
Four Square Gospel - Aimee Semple McPherson.....	1923
*Pentecostal Churches (under different names) ....	1914 to present

How can a church which began after Jesus started his church be considered a New Testament church? The most obvious answer is that it cannot be a New Testament church! These churches were started by someone other than the Savior.

Any church whose origin was in Medieval or modern times is not the church that Christ set up, for the simple reason that it was not in existence when Christ set up His church, and did not come in to come into existence for a long time after.  
-W.M. Nevins, in "Why a Baptist and not a Roman Catholic."<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, this ardent test of identifying a church's founder drastically narrows down our search for a true New Testament church. (For the sake of brevity, we will now condense the above list into the following categories: Cults, Catholic, Protestants, and Baptists.) Lest someone question why Baptists are not under the category of Protestants; let us explain these four major categories.

**1. Cults.** Cults would be considered any group that blatantly departs from the written Word of God, (e.g. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) If Cults can be traced back to a human founder, then they can be ruled out as a New Testament church.

**2. The Roman Catholic Church with the Pope of Rome as its head.** The Catholic Church historically began with Gregory the Great, whose pontificate extended from AD 590 to 604. "It did not originate in a day or year, but gradually subverted the apostles' teaching, and in centuries inaugurated full-grown popery."<sup>20</sup>

As is well known, the Roman Catholic predicates its claim to Scriptural origin on the supposition that Peter was the first Pope of Rome. Unless they can prove that Peter was at Rome, and that he was also a Pope, their claim to apostolic origin is utterly false... . But even were it granted that Peter was at Rome and that he was a pope, the Roman Catholic hierarchy has by faith and practice forfeited its right to be called a Scriptural church.<sup>21</sup>

It is very evident that the Catholic Church, built by Gregory the Great from the existing paganized, apostate material, five hundred and ninety years after Christ, cannot meet the historical test of Christ as to origin and perpetuity, and therefore is not the true church--the church which HE founded and promised should never cease to exist.<sup>22</sup>

**3. Protestant churches.** Protestant churches would be considered any group that broke away from the Catholic Church of Rome after 1530. (e.g. Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Methodist, Christian Church, etc.)

**4. Baptist churches.** Baptist cannot be classified as Protestant, because there were Baptist churches long before the Reformation. As a matter of fact, Baptist are the only group that cannot trace its beginnings to a human founder.

... Baptist churches are unique and clearly distinguished from all others in that no one can truly point to anyone as the human founder. [emphasis add, DCM]. Neither can the date be fixed for their beginning this side of Christ. Some have tried it, and their disagreements and contradictions constitute prima facie evidence of their historical inaccuracy. Those who would deny that Baptists date back to Christ, and who would assign them a modern origin, ought to hold council together and agree on some certain date! Otherwise their contradictory statements are liable to prejudice people in favor of the very thing they deny!<sup>23</sup>

Concerning Baptist origin, in his book The New Testament Church Whence? Which? Whither?, G.W. Orrino quotes J.H. Melton;

No reliable Biblical or secular historian has ever traced Baptist to a human founder. Indeed, the testimony of eminent historians who are not Baptists is to the fact that Baptists cannot be traced back to a human founder. In 1545, at the Council of Trent,

Cardinal Hosius said, For over 1200 years the Baptists have more gladly suffered from their faith than any other group. Mosheim, the great Lutheran historian, says, Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in all the countries of Europe the people called Baptist. John Ridpath, the great Methodist historian, says, In 100 A. D. all Christians were Baptist. Alexander Campbell, who was a member of the Baptist church before he established the so-called Church of Christ, said in Kentucky in 1823, Monuments to the existence of Baptists and their insistence upon baptism of believers only, can be found in every century back to the days of the Apostles and to Christ Himself. This is an amazing testimony of non-Baptists to the fact that Baptists and only Baptists can trace their ancestry back to the Son of God Himself.<sup>24</sup>

Baptists are the only group that can be traced, by faith and practice, all the way back to Luke 6, when Jesus called out his apostles. Please note that we are **not**, by any means, suggesting apostolic succession. Concerning this subject of succession, Roy Mason writes;

It will not be amiss for me to quote two or three well-known Baptists who have given this subject more than ordinary attention. In the writings of S .H. Ford, LL.D., of honored memory, we find these words:

“Succession among Baptists is not a linked chain of churches or ministers, uninterrupted and traceable at this distant day ... The true and defensible doctrine is that baptized believers have existed in every age since John baptized in Jordan, and have met as a baptized congregation in covenant and fellowship where an opportunity permitted.”

Again from W. A. Jarrell, D.D., author of a most convincing book on church perpetuity, I quote the following:

“All that Baptists mean by 'church succession' or church perpetuity is: there has never been a day since the organization of the first New Testament church in which there was no genuine church of the New Testament existing on earth.”

As is indicated in the foregoing quotations, Baptist claim that the first New Testament church organized by Jesus was in doctrine and practice essentially the same as Baptist churches of today. They claim that there has never been a day since Jesus started the first one when such churches have not existed to bear true witness to Him. They claim that there is sufficient historical proof to demonstrate that Baptist churches of today have direct historical connection with the churches of apostolic times. They believe that as time goes on and further investigations are made in the field of church history the proof of their continuity will become so irresistible that no reputable church historian can reasonably deny it. They not only hold on the authority of the Word of God and reliable history that the churches of the New Testament were what would be called Baptist churches today; that Baptists are the historical descendants of these same New Testament churches, but they also believe and hold that Baptist churches will continue to exist until the Master comes again to this earth.<sup>25</sup> [Emphasis added, DCM].

Let me conclude this section by stating that, even though the first and most vital test in recognizing the kind of church which Christ began, is to identify its founder, we must also apply another important test. There are a few churches today that would claim Christ as their founder, but we will find that these groups will fail in this next examination.

For example, Bible churches, community churches, fellowship churches, etc., may say that their group was founded by Christ, but when the test of New Testament doctrine

is applied, we will see that they will indeed fail. This doctrinal test is conclusive in determining whether or not a church is truly a New Testament church. Just being Baptist in name, does not mean that that church is a New Testament church. To be a New Testament church, the congregation needs to be New Testament in doctrine.

I am not minimizing the Baptist name by any means. For a true New Testament Baptist has an unparalleled heritage which dates back to Jesus Christ, and I am thrilled to be a part of that heritage. As a Baptist, if I am called upon to be thrown in jail, and yes, even martyred, my only prayer is that I will be able to stand as firm as the countless thousands of others who, in centuries past were put to death for believing and holding fast to the precious doctrines as found in God's blessed Book! Someone may be saying, "I could never do that." Then your focus is in the wrong place. We can only stand firm when we place our faith in Jesus Christ and practice the principle and precepts in His Word.

Let us now look at these New Testament doctrines.

## **IV. The Infrastructure of a Church**

### **Part 1 - Distinctives**

If someone were to ask you to identify a New Testament church would you be able to do it? In the last chapter we saw that the principle test used in determining whether or not a church is a New Testament church is to identify its founder. The next important test that must be applied (which will be discussed in this chapter) is that of **doctrinal scrutiny**. That means, to be a true New Testament church, the local congregation (1) must have Jesus Christ as its founder, and (2) its doctrine must be based on New Testament principles.

As stated in the last chapter, we saw that Baptists were the only group that cannot be traced back to a human founder. But does that make every Baptist church a New Testament church? No, it does not! That is why we must apply the second test of doctrinal examination. Each church must base its polity on New Testament principles. In this chapter we will discuss seven major fundamental beliefs or distinctives as found in the New Testament. We have chosen seven distinctives for the sake of memorization. It will be much easier to remember these seven distinctives if we use the following acrostic:

**B**ible - the Only Rule for Faith and Practice  
**A**utonomy of the Local Church  
**P**riesthood of the Believer  
**T**wo Ordinances - Baptism and The Lord's Supper  
**I**ndividual Soul Liberty and Responsibility  
**S**eparation - Ethical, Ecclesiastical, and Political  
**T**wo Officers of the Local Church

These seven New Testament distinctives can be found in Baptist churches during the past two millennium. These New Testament distinctives are major fundamental beliefs and principles that have distinguished Baptists apart from any other religious body down through the years--hence the term: "*Baptist distinctives*." These distinctives are not a creed or confession of faith.

Baptists have no set written body of beliefs or principles, per se, that are accepted universally among all Baptists.

A true Baptist does not think of the name Baptist in any sectarian sense as having some merit in itself but rather equates it with New Testament truth, with a New Testament position.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, for all practical purposes, the term “*Baptist distinctives*” can be used interchangeably with “*New Testament distinctives*.”

In every age since Jesus and the apostles, there have been companies of believers, churches, who have substantially held to the principles of the New Testament as now proclaimed by the Baptist.<sup>27</sup>

It should be noted that the name Baptist came about in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the persecution of the “Anabaptists” or “Re-baptizers.” This was a name given to them by proponents of the Roman Church. Since the Roman Church was predominant throughout Europe, infant baptism was a common practice. Therefore when these New Testament believers immersed only those who had accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, the “religious world” protested. The Roman Church could not understand why these people were being baptized again. Therefore they were given the name, “Anabaptists,” (“ana,” meaning “re”).

Even though the name “*Baptist*” did not emerge until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, groups which practiced the same basic New Testament principles can be traced back to the time of Christ. Now let's look at each distinctive in detail.

#### **A. Bible - the Only Rule for Faith and Practice**

*2 Timothy 3:16-17, All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*

The Bible is a (the) Divine Revelation given of God to man, and is the complete and infallible guide and standard of authority in all matters of religion and morals; whatever it teaches is to be believed, and what ever it commands is to be obeyed; whatever it commands is to be accepted as both right and useful; whatever it condemns is to be avoided as both wrong and hurtful; but what it neither commands nor teaches is not to be imposed on the conscience as of religious obligation.<sup>28</sup>

This distinctive is placed first as the foundation because without it, all the other distinctives would fall. A New Testament church does not use any other book, teaching, or creed as its authority. A New Testament church believes that God's written Word is the only cornerstone upon which those that are saved can firmly stand. It is a spiritual book that can only be understood by those with spiritual eyes, and the only way to obtain these spiritual eyes is through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*1 Corinthians 2:9-16, But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost*

*teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

A New Testament church believes that every area of life needs to be subject to the written Word of God. The Bible is the only source for authority and that which is not authorized in God's Word is heresy. "Because the Bible has never been outgrown as the one standard, and cannot be creedified in brief; the Baptist holds the substitution of any authoritative creed as the first step in apostasy."<sup>29</sup>

**Mark 7:7-9**, *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.*

Once again let us be as the Bereans of old, *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so, Acts 17:11.*

### **Which Version**

From years past, up to this present day, there has been a great debate concerning the authenticity of all the Bible translations available today. To the average person, it may seem like a complicated debate since there are so many versions or translations. It can be honestly said that it is not that complicated. The truth of the matter is that we can easily capsule the premise of the debate with this two-sided statement: The King James Version (Authorized Version), verses all other versions. You see, there are only two sides to the debate; that which is right and that which is wrong. That which is God's Word and that which is not God's Word. So please bear with me as I try to condense thousands of pages of reading and myriad hours of study over the years onto these few pages.

Allow me to state my premise from the outset and then we will look at the two sides. I believe that the **King James Version** is God's preserved Word in the English language. Now there are a number of reasons why I say this.

1. It has proven the test of time.
2. It is widely used.
3. The Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts from which it was translated have proven to be the best. ("Oldest" is not always "best")
4. The vast number of similar extant manuscripts.
5. God has said he would preserve his Word, therefore we should ask the question, "where is it preserved?"

We are going to look at reason #3 (The Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts from which the KJV was translated have proven to be the best.) Today we have a growing variety of versions which are being used and presented as reliable, accurate, scholarly translations of the Bible. This, of course, only causes confusion. How can all of these different translation be God's Word, when they are all different one from another? *For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:33).*

I believe we can drastically narrow down the answer to that question by saying that there are two main sources of manuscripts from which the New Testament has been translated. First we will look at the two sources, and then we will see which source each translation uses. The two sources are the Majority text (Textus Receptus, Received Text) and the Alexandrian Text.

### **Majority Text, (Received Text or Textus Receptus)**

The first Greek text that we will look at is the Textus Receptus (Received Text) or Majority Text. It is called the Majority Text because out of 5200 extant Greek manuscripts, 90% are nearly identical and most of the variations are superficial. This Textus Receptus was put together and printed in AD 1516 by a European scholar named Erasmus.

The Textus Receptus (or Received Text) is believed by fundamentalist to be the text closest to the original. But since we don't have the original, how can we prove this? First of all, it stands to reason that everyone would want a copy of the original, and since they didn't have printing presses in the first century, you had to copy it by hand. This practice continued down through the centuries. The copying of manuscripts was a meticulous job. If a scribe made one little error, he would destroy that page and start again. As you can see, this would preserve the originality of the text. Secondly, God has promised that he would preserve His Word. Therefore, we must have his Word with us today.

### **The Alexandrian Texts**

The Alexandrian Text goes back to the days of Clement (AD 200), who founded a school at Alexandria. He brought the wisdom of the world into the teachings of the Christian faith and began to collect a group of corrupt manuscripts. (Corrupt manuscripts are manuscripts that have had words or verses added to or taken away from the text.) The best known graduate of this Alexandrian School was Origin, who followed Clement as the head of the school. Origin became the most influential leader of his generation. Origin edited a six-column Bible called the hexapla. In it, each column had a different version of the Bible. He continually changed Bible verses that did not agree with his liberal ideas. Two of his departures from Scripture were spiritualizing God's Word and propagating his belief that Christ was a created being (similar to what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach today). It is clear that Origin is not a safe guide in textual criticism any more than in theology.

The next historical step in the corrupting of the Scripture was taken in the 4th century during the time of Constantine. He accepted the Christian faith for political purposes and ordered a Bible to be made for the common people. Eusebius, a follower of Origin, was chosen to translate this new Bible.

Then it wasn't until the 16th century that we see the next significant step in the continued corruption of the Bible. The Pope called upon Jerome to prepare a Bible that would support the Roman Catholic teaching. This Bible was officially accepted by the Church at the Council of Trent in 1546. It was through Jerome that the seven Apocryphal books were added to the Bible. It wasn't long until the Roman Catholic Church accepted them as authoritative.

In 1881 there appeared in England a two volume edition of the New Testament in the original Greek. This was the product of thirty years of work by two Cambridge professors named Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort.

This Westcott and Hort Greek New Testament was primarily based on the Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (Aleph) manuscripts of the fourth century. Both of these manuscripts originated from the Alexandrian School. These men believed that textual criticism of the New Testament was to be conducted in exactly the same way as that of any other book. ANY OTHER BOOK? WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD!

These two liberal theologians used the Origin-Eusebius-Jerome corrupted texts as the basis of their New Testament. This Greek New Testament has rightly been called the minority text because there are so few manuscripts in existence. They used the weak argument that since it is the oldest manuscript, it must be the closest to the original.

Having just finished this crash course in textual criticism, let's review. (1) There are two sources of Greek manuscripts. One manuscript is closest to the original, the other source has been corrupted through the years. One has over 90% of all extant manuscripts to agree with it, the other has just a small number that agree with it.

Now let's see which modern translations were taken from which Greek text. There is only one Bible that was taken from the Textus Receptus and all the rest were taken from the Origin- Eusebius-Jerome corrupt Alexandrian Text. What is that one Bible that was translated from the Textus Receptus or Majority Text? The King James Version!

That means that every other version of the Bible was taken from the Alexandrian text (a corrupted text). Remember, corrupt manuscripts are manuscripts that have had words or verses added to or taken away from the text. Here are a few examples of omission from some different translation. These are numbers of words or phrases that appear in the KJV but are omitted in these other translations: American Standard Version-174; New American Standard-185; New International Version-180; Revised Standard Version-187

Whole verses omitted: American Standard Version-17; New American Standard-16; New International Version-17; Revised Standard Version-46

My question is, "Why fix something that isn't broke?" This is just Satan's way of corrupting the pure Word of God. Do we have the pure Word of God? Yes, we do! For the English-speaking people, it is the King James Version.

*Isaiah 40:8, The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

*Ps 119:89, For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*

*Luke 21:33, Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.*

*1 Peter 1:25, But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

In conclusion let me restate that a New Testament church does not use any other book, teaching, or creed as it's authority. A New Testament church believes that God's written Word is the **only** cornerstone upon which those that are saved can firmly stand. The Bible is the only rule of faith and practice for all New Testament churches.

## **B. Autonomy of the Local Church**

This distinctive means that every local New Testament church has the privilege to be in total control of itself. In the autonomous form of church government, the system of authority rests in an independent, indigenous, self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-

governing local church. This Baptist distinctive distinguishes itself from two other forms of church government, the Episcopalian and the Presbyterian.

**The Episcopalian** form of church government places its authority in a system of priests and bishops in an ascending scale. For example, in the Roman Church, the ultimate authority rests in the supreme pontiff, the pope.

**The Presbyterian** form of church government places its authority in a representative group called preaching and ruling elders.

In this way delegated authority finds its final authority in the highest group. For this process of delegated authority rises in an ascending order from the local church session to the presbytery to the state synod until it finally rests in the General Assembly which is natural.<sup>30</sup>

**The Autonomous** form of church government is the only one of the three forms mentioned which is based upon scriptural principles. The main Scriptural principle on which local church autonomy is based is the responsibility of each local church, as a whole, to carry out God's will based on the foundation that its members know God's will. A New Testament church does not answer to any type of board, fellowship, presbyter, or pope. Each New Testament church answers only to its head Jesus Christ.

Here are some examples. In Matthew 18:15-17 we read where instruction is given to the church as a whole, *15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

Also in these verses:

*Acts 13:1-3, Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

*Acts 15:22-28, Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things...*

Just as each New Testament church is not subject to other churches or religious groups, they also are not to be in subject to the state. In other words, the government

should not impose any laws upon the church that would cause the church to violate Scriptural principles. **Matthew 22:17-21**, *Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*

You will not find anywhere in the Bible where any group of churches is to be run by boards, fellowships, presbyters, or popes. In the autonomous form of church government, the system of authority rests in an independent, indigenous, self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing local church answerable only to God.

### C. Priesthood of the Believer

This distinctive is founded upon the scriptural principles that with God is no respect of persons. **Romans 2:11**, *For there is no respect of persons with God.*

**Ephesians 6:9**, *And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.*

**Colossians 3:25**, *But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.*

Unlike the Old Testament, where priestly functions were restricted to the tribe of Levi, the New Testament teaches that every believer is a priest before God. Therefore, each believer has the blessed privilege of going directly to God at any time, under any circumstance, to bring his petition through Jesus Christ to God.

Since the Bible teaches that each believer-priest is equal with one another, there is no need for divisional terms, titles, or garb. Nor does it appoint divine privileges. For example, the Scripture does not give a pastor (or father, to use a catholic term) the authority to forgive sin. Each believer can act upon the promise in **I John 1:9**, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* We make this confession to God.

In **1 Peter 2:5,9** we read, *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ... 9 But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

The term *holy priesthood* refers to New Testament believers. We are “holy” in the sense that our sins have been forgiven, **Hebrews 10:1-2**, *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

**I John 1:7**, *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

In the Old Testament only the high priest dared to enter the presence of God, and then, only once a year! As New Testament believers we have access to God's presence at any time.

The term *royal priesthood* also refers to New Testament believers. We are “royal” in the sense that we are called to be personal representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 5:20-21**, *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

**Romans 8:16-17**, *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

Therefore, as a believer-priest, we have a tremendous responsibility placed upon us. That is, each believer has the privilege to think as he will and that each believer is totally responsible to God. The Bible teaches that no person, institution, organization, or convention has the authority to tell a person what to believe.

Along with this complete total freedom comes the accountability of such a privilege. **Remember, our responsibility is to God alone and to no one else!** A believer may put himself under the authority of something else (such as a pastor of a New Testament church, a wife under her husband, etc.) but he is still responsible to God for the freedom given him by Christ.

**John 8:32**, *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

**Galatians 5:13**, *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

**2 Corinthians 5:10-21**, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. 12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. 16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. 17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

What a responsibility! Since we will all stand before God and give an account of our lives, should that not motivate us to be obedient to God in every area of our life? I trust that is the case in your life.

## **D. Two Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

The Scriptures teach that the Lord prescribed immersion and the Lord's Supper to be carried on as ordinances by each local New Testament church.

### **1. Baptism**

As Bible believing Baptists find themselves in disagreement with other churches on the topic of baptism, it would be helpful to summarize the New Testament position with the following five maxims:

1. Only believers are to be baptized. This excludes anyone who is an unbeliever (even babies, who neither believe nor disbelieve). Cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-16. *Acts 8:36-37, And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

Notice the order in Matthew 28:19, *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations* (disciple or win souls; that's salvation first, and then baptism), *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...*

2. Baptism is to be by immersion rather than by pouring or sprinkling. There are two main arguments for immersion. (1) The English word *baptize* is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizein*. In order to render a proper translation, we have to use the word *immerse*. (2) There are many passages that support the immersion translation. *Matthew 3:16, And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water:...* *Acts 8:37-38, And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.*

3. Baptism is not a step to salvation but it is a testimony that one has already received Christ Jesus as Savior. Baptism is a beautiful picture of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Romans 6:4-5 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

*Colossians 2:12, Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

Every believer who has been immersed pictures the death (dying to self-righteousness and giving in to Christ's righteousness), burial (going completely under the water), and the resurrection (coming up out of the water) of Jesus Christ.

Immersion also pictures:

#### **Our engrafting into Christ.**

*Galatians 3:27, For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

*Romans 6:5, For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

#### **Our remission of sins.**

*Mark 1:4, John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*

#### **Our giving up to God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.**

**Romans 6:3-4**, *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

4. Believer's baptism by immersion is a requisite to church membership. Throughout the book of Acts we find the order of salvation, baptism, and church membership. **Acts 2:41** *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* Cf. Matthew 16:25-33; Acts 8:37-38; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

5. When a believer is baptized, he is following Christ's example. This reason alone should compel any believer to be baptized. If someone does not want to follow Christ in baptism, then it could be that he was never truly born again.

**Matthew 3:13-16**, *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer [it to be so] now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:*

In practicing these five maxims, Baptists not only preserve purity in their local churches, they also honor the Lord Jesus Christ by respecting completely His Great Commission. **Matthew 28:19-20** *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:...*

## **2. The Lord's Supper**

The second ordinance given to the church is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Just as baptism symbolizes spiritual birth in being raised to walk in newness of life, the Lord's Supper symbolizes the nourishment and support of that new life by union with Christ in His death. **1 Corinthians 11:24**, *And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

### **The Participants**

The Lord's Supper is only to be taken by obedient Christians. An obedient Christian is any born-again believer who has been immersed, who is a member of a New Testament church, and who has searched his own heart to make sure all known sin is confessed. **1 Corinthians 11:28-31** *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*

It is clear to see that the Lord wants all that are saved to be obedient to his Word, *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love, John 15:10.* Baptists believe that the first steps toward being obedient after salvation includes being baptized by immersion, being an active member of a New Testament church and observing of the Lord's Supper.

### **The Warning**

Since Jesus Christ was the initiator of the Supper, then he alone determines the guidelines for observance. The Bible states that there is a right and a wrong way to partake of His Supper. We see this in 1 Corinthians 11, when Paul warned the members at the church in Corinth that some of them were partaking of the Supper in a wrong manner. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of [that] bread, and drink of [that] cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body, 1 Corinthians 11:28-29.*

God wants each individual to examine himself so that he does not *eat and drink unworthily*. Each individual must examine his heart (1) to confess any sin and (2) to make right any disobedience to God's Word. This examination must be done **before** he partakes of the Lord's Supper. Otherwise, if he takes part in the Supper with unconfessed sin or disobedience to God's Word, he is guilty of unworthy participation and will then be judged by God. *For this cause [that is, since you are taking part unworthily] many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world, 1 Corinthians 11:30-32.*

Yes, it is important how we administer and take part in the Lord's Supper. Let us take a moment to look briefly at the three ways in which it is administered.

(1) Open Communion. Churches that practice open communion invite all who are saved to take part. This is dangerous, in that it invites God's judgement on those who partake unworthily.

(2) Close Communion. Churches that practice close communion invite all those who are saved, immersed, and are a member of a New Testament church to take part.

(3) Closed Communion. Churches that practice closed communion invite only members of that particular church to take part.

A closed supper is the Bible way. Remember, this ordinance was given in a church setting. Only Jesus and his apostles were present. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for turning the Lord's Supper into a meal. He used the phrase "...ye come together" four times in that chapter (vss. 17, 18, 20, 33), obviously referring to the members of that particular church. These ordinances are to help keep the church pure. How can this be done if anyone outside the church is invited to partake?

### **The Elements**

#### **Unleavened Bread**

The bread used in the Lord's Supper must be unleavened. Remember, Christ instituted the Supper on the eve of His crucifixion while celebrating the Passover: *And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? (Mark 14:12f).*

During the observance of Passover, no leaven was to be found in the bread, nor in the house. *And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. 15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. (Exodus 12:14-15).*

#### **Grape Juice**

Since there was to be no leaven found in the house during Passover, then we can safely say that the cup did not contain alcoholic wine. It would be inconsistent to use unleavened bread and fermented grape juice. In every account of the Lord's Supper, you will never see the word "wine" used. In fact, in Mark 14:25, Jesus mentions the type of drink that was used, *Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.* To make alcoholic wine you must add a source of fermentation-leaven.

### **The Administrator**

The Lord's Supper is a New Testament church ordinance, therefore it should be observed by members of the local church and administered by its officers when they meet for worship.

It is to be observed only under the authority of the local church. It is unscriptural to take the Lord's Supper to an individual. The Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, not a Christian ordinance. Nowhere in the New Testament is the Lord's Supper observed being administered outside church capacity.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Occasion**

The Bible does not give any specific period of time as to the frequency of observing the Lord's Supper. In reference to the Supper, Paul gave these instructions to the local church at Corinth; *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. (1 Corinthians 11:26).*

Notice that he speaks of how often it is done and not how seldom. Since the Scriptures are not specific on the frequency, its observance must therefore be left up to each autonomous New Testament church. In the first century, the early Christians partook of the Supper daily, *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts 2:46).* This eventually led to weekly observance, which is still held by some today. On the other extreme, there are some that observe the Supper only once a year. They base this on the fact that the Passover was kept only once a year.

The standard should be set by each individual church, keeping in mind that it should not take the Supper so often as to cause a matter-of-fact attitude. Nor observe it so seldom that the members forget its sanctity.

A neglect of the Supper by Church members is a grave evil. It betokens a decline of spirituality, and promotes it. And it is usually without excuse. If there be but one service in the month that a member can attend, that service should be the Communion; ... Pastors and deacons will do well to watch with jealous care this index to the churches' vital piety, and strive to inspire the absentees with a sense of its importance, and their own duty in respect to it. To disregard it is an indignity to Christ's ordinance, a breach of good order, and a violation of covenant obligations, which the church should endeavor promptly to correct. Some churches, by a rule of discipline, have each member visited, who is absent twice in succession, to learn the cause of such absence. To a devout Christian it is a sacred privilege, which he would not willingly forego.<sup>32</sup>

Whether your church observes the Lord's Supper weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly, the fact is, it must be observed *"until He comes!" (1 Corinthians 11:26.)*

### **The Purpose**

The main purpose for the Lord's Supper is stated in **1 Corinthians 11:26**, *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* G. W. Orrino gives seven reasons for observing the Lord's Supper.

One, it is an act of obedience. Christ commanded it be done and fidelity to Christ will respond.

Two, it is an act of remembrance. It draws our hearts and minds back to Calvary and to the price paid for our redemption.

Three, it is an act of testimony. The communicant identifies himself with the death of Christ.

Four, it is an act of confession. We declare salvation to be only through His finished work.

Five, it is an act of unity. The body comes together in a spirit of sacred fellowship.

Six, it is an act of praise. Hearts are lifted in adoration and thanksgiving for His matchless gift.

Seven, it is an act of proclamation. His coming for His saints is testified to.<sup>33</sup>

The New Testament does not teach the Roman Catholic view of “transubstantiation” which claims that the Catholic priests “transform” the bread and cup into the literal body and blood of Christ. Neither does it teach the Lutheran view of “consubstantiation” which claims the “real presence” of the Lord in a “special way.”

The New Testament church position concerning the Lord's Supper teaches that it is a memorial table that pictures the body and blood of Jesus and serves only as a reminder of his death, burial, and resurrection for us. *1 Corinthians 11:25-26, After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

### **Conclusion**

It is important to note that the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are not “options” that can be ignored. If we want to be obedient to the Lord then we must be baptized by immersion, become a member of a New Testament church, and examine ourselves by partaking of the Lord's Supper.

### **E. Individual Soul Liberty and Responsibility**

This distinctive is based upon the belief that every man is accountable to the teachings of God's Word in all religious matters, both in judgment and decision. The New Testament teaches that each person has the privilege to think as he will and that he is totally responsible to God.

This distinctive teaches that no person, institution, organization, or convention has the authority to tell a person what to believe. But keep in mind that along with complete and total freedom comes the **responsibility** of such a privilege. That responsibility is to God and to God alone. *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men Acts 5:29.*

Someday as believers, we will answer to God for our actions, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad 2 Corinthians 5:10.*

God also has commanded that we not be a stumbling block to others.

*1 Corinthians 8:9, But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

*1 Corinthians 10:29-33, Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? 30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I*

*evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the [profit] of many, that they may be saved.*

**Galatians 5:1**, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

**Galatians 5:13**, *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

**1 Peter 2:16**, *As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

Yes, each believer has freedom in Christ, but what an awesome responsibility he has knowing that someday he will give an account to God as to how he used his soul liberty in regards to salvation, to the scriptures, to his daily life and in every area of life. Many times Christians will flaunt their freedom in Christ to the detriment of a weaker Christian. This should not be! No one has said that the Christian life was easy. Just remember, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Philippians 4:13)*. Live for Christ and not yourself.

We must also keep in mind that we have the freedom to obey the Word of God in every area. It does not mean that we have the freedom to pick and choose which verses we wish to obey. Since you and I will answer to God concerning our obedience to His Word, let us strive to be 100% obedient.

## **F. Separation**

Under this distinctive we will look at three forms of New Testament separation. They are, ethical separation, ecclesiastical separation, and political separation. To be a true New Testament church, these three forms of separation must be manifest.

### **1. Ethical Separation**

The first realm of separation to which New Testament churches adhere to is, ethical or personal. A New Testament church teaches that each individual believer is to be separated from the world, unto Christ, **1 Thessalonians 1:9**, *For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...*

**Romans 12:1-2**, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

**Galatians 2:20**, *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

**Galatians 6:14**, *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

**2 Corinthians 6:14-17**, *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in*

*them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you...*

**2 Timothy 3:5**, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

The New Testament also teaches that believers should not fellowship with those who are disobedient to the Word of God.

**3 John 11**, *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*

**2 Thessalonians 3:6**, *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*

**2 Thessalonians 3:14-15**, *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

**Matthew 18:17**, *And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

**Romans 16:17**, *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

**1 Corinthians 5:11**, *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

**1 Timothy 6:5**, *Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:14**, *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.*

**Amos 3:3**, *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

Even though these verses are self explanatory, they are unfortunately conveniently overlooked in fundamental Baptist circles today. As New Testament believers, this type separation puts restrictions on marriage, close friends, places of attendance, etc.

God wants us to separate from that which is not in line with his Word (e.g. people, churches, etc.). For if we do not separate, then we will be brought down to a lower level of spirituality. This principle is found in 1 Corinthians 15:33 *...evil communications corrupt good manners.* Let me illustrate it this way. If a Christian with high Biblical standards fellowships with a Christian with little or no standards, the first Christian will always eventually drop his standards. Proper separation will not drive others away from God, on the contrary, it will pull them up to Him.

Please note that the key word in New Testament separation is “fellowship.” **Fellowship is establishing a close relationship.** As Christians, we must always be friendly, kind and loving to everyone that we meet. But when it comes to fellowship, we must be careful that those we are close to are of like faith and practice. If a Christian begins to fellowship with those who are disobedient to God's Word, it is inevitable that that Christian will compromise his position in order to keep the relationship. Therefore, it is best to obey the Bible and separate. Remember, *...evil communications corrupt good manners (1 Corinthians 15:33).*

## **2. Ecclesiastical Separation**

The second realm of Scriptural separation is ecclesiastical. We are to separate from apostasy. Just as our Lord has his churches, Satan, the imitator, has his false churches. A true New Testament church will only fellowship with other churches of like faith and practice. Therefore, a New Testament church should not fellowship with churches that do not practice New Testament doctrine.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-17**, *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*

**2 John 10-11**, *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*

**Amos 3:3**, *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

A New Testament church can and should only have close fellowship with those of like faith and practice. This does not mean that we are to be hateful exclusivists who look down on all who are disobedient to God's Word. On the contrary, we are to love and show mercy to all mankind.

### **3. Political Separation**

The third realm of separation to which Baptists adhere is political. As Baptists, we believe in a separation of church and state. Baptists believe what Christ taught in Mark 12:17, that there should be separation between the church and the state. *And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.*

A New Testament church believes that the state ought to stay out of the affairs of the church and vice versa. The New Testament says nothing about a state church, or state ordinances, when it comes to spiritual or religious matters. Even though we believe in the separation of the church and state, this should not be construed as the elimination of God from the state as the American Civil Liberty Union is proposing. They would have us believe that all government decisions should be void of anything that has to do with God. In order to avert the ruination of our nation, God must never leave the minds of the government. **Ps 33:12**, *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*

As New Testament believers, we are to stay as far away from the world's philosophy and standards as possible. **James 4:4**, *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* Likewise, we are to stay as close to Christ and His Word as possible. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: **Philippians 2:5.***

### **G. Two Officers of the Local Church**

This Baptist distinctive can be scripturally supported after careful reading of the New Testament. Philippians 1:1 says, *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all*

*the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:...* In order to properly understand these two offices, let's go to the Scripture.

### **The Pastor**

The pastor's qualifications are found in **1 Timothy 3:1-7**, *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

Also in **Titus 1:5-13**, *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; ...*

Throughout the New Testament there are various titles for the pastor. They are:

1. **Pastor** or **shepherd** of the Flock; *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **Ephesians 4:11**, (Greek word = poimein).*

2. **Bishop** or **overseer** of the working force; *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: **Philippians 1:1**, (Greek word = episcopus).*

3. **Elder** or leader in a business session; *And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. **Acts 20:17** (Greek word = presbuteros).*

4. **Preacher** - a self explanatory term; *Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. **1 Timothy 2:7**.*

5. **Teacher** - an instructor of the Word of God; *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **Ephesians 4:11**.*

6. **Angel** and **Star** - a messenger of the Lord; *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. **Revelation 1:20**.*

These various New Testament titles reflect the diverse responsibilities of the Pastor. The pastor is to LEAD, FEED, GUARD AND GUIDE the local church for one day he will give an account to God for his ministry, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and*

*submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17,*

Let us look at the qualification of a New Testament pastor as given in Titus 1:6-9.

### **The Home of the Pastor**

*6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*

#### **1. Unquestionable Character - blameless**

To be blameless does not mean that he should be sinless. It simply means that he should be without blame. There should not be anything in his life that is of a questionable nature. Example: Just before a certain pastor hired an assistant, he checked up on the man. He found out that the assistant had been dismissed from three other churches for molesting little children.

As sinners saved by grace, we all have sin in our past. If a man is truly repentant of his sin, then God will forgive him and use him again. But we are talking about the man with hidden sins. God says that a pastor should be without blame.

#### **2. Undying Faithfulness - the husband of one wife**

This phrase has caused much debate in our churches today. Some say that that phrase means that the pastor should be married to only one wife at a time. Those that hold to that view do so to excuse divorcees in the pulpit. I believe that this portion of scripture declares that if a man is divorced he cannot hold the office of pastor. This is not a popular view, but I believe it is scriptural. I will not take time now to discuss the “what ifs” of divorce, such as, “What if he was divorced before he was saved, etc.”

I do not believe it is just coincident that Paul talks about the wife and children in the same verse. If a man cannot manage his marriage or his children, he has no right to pastor a church.

#### **3. Unmistakable Discipline - having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly**

In 1 Timothy chapter 3 we have almost the same qualification for the pastor. In that passage Paul instructs Timothy in verse four that the Pastor should be one that, *ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.* Then in verse five the Bible says, *For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*

My heart is grieved when I see worldly teenagers in a church only to find out that they are the pastor's children. That should not be! That man is not scripturally fit to pastor. I'm sorry, but the Bible says, *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God, (James 4:4).*

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John 2:15).*

If pastors would obey the scriptures and, *train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).* We are to train and discipline children in the way of the Lord. *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).* Let us just do what God says and stop making excuses for failing to obey God's Word.

### **The Heart of the Pastor**

*7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*

Verse seven talks about the character of a pastor.

**1. Not Frivolous with Money** - *a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God*

The bishop or overseer of the church must be a good manager of God's money. *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:2).*

**2. Not Arrogant** - *not selfwilled*

A selfwilled person is one that is self-pleasing, arrogant, and self-centered. An arrogant man should not be placed in the position of a pastor.

**3. Cool Tempered** - *not soon angry*

A pastor should not be one who becomes angry at the least little thing which rubs him the wrong way. He should not “fly off he handle” so to speak or give people “a piece of his mind.”

**4. Filled with the Spirit** - *not given to wine*

*Wine [is] a mocker, strong drink [is] raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise (Proverbs 20:1).* A pastor should not be one that is controlled by alcohol. Rather, he should be controlled by the Holy Spirit. *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (Ephesians 5:18).*

**5. Does not Physically Retaliate** - *no striker*

A “striker” is described as a “bruiser, ready for a blow; a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person.” We would call this type of person a “bully.” He is always looking for a fight. He sees something negative in everything. A man that has this characteristic is not fit to be a pastor.

**6. Not a Swindler** - *not given to filthy lucre*

This phrase means that a pastor should not be desirous of ill gotten moneys, that is, money gotten in an undesirable or even illegal way. The Bible says that, *For the love of money is the root of all evil: ... (1 Timothy 6:10).*

Certainly a pastor has a right to a livelihood, and the church should support him, *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer [is] worthy of his reward (1 Timothy 5:18).* But a man who has a “love” of money is not fit for the pastorate.

**The Hospitality of the Pastor**

*8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;*

The man of God should be ready at all times to take God's men and God's servants into his home and care for them. After Lydia of Philippi was born again, she opened her house and all that she had to the servants of God (Acts 16:15- 40). This, of course, will come naturally to the pastor if he is not self-willed. Unfortunately I have met men who are very self-willed. We will love good and wholesome things if we follow the principle found in **Philippians 4:8**, *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

**The Holding of Faithful Words by the Pastor**

*9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

**1. He Must Study**

God pity the pastor that does not take a stand on Biblical issues. He is to hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught. That means that he must study. *Study to shew*

*thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15).*

## **2. He Must Stand**

Then he must hold his ground by preaching the whole counsel of God. **Ephesians 6:10-18**, *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

**Jude 1:3**, *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort [you] that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

This is the type of man that God wants in the pulpit. This is the type of man that people can and should follow. *Be ye followers of me, even as I also [am] of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1).* Then and only then will it be easy to obey **Hebrews 13:17**, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

### **The Deacon**

The qualifications for deacons are found in **1 Timothy 3:8-13**, *Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, 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 use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

And also in **Act 6:1-4**, *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

The function of a deacon is that of a servant or one who ministers. Deacons should not run the church nor should they dictate over the pastor. The Bible nowhere suggests that the deacon is to be a “watch-dog” over the Pastor to keep him in line. They are to serve the congregation under the leadership of the pastor.

As we conclude this chapter, it should be noted that, although many churches call themselves Baptist, if they do not believe these distinctives, they are **not** Baptist churches. These distinctives separate Baptists from the rest of religious affiliations. Baptists believe that these distinctives should be believed and practiced by all believers because these distinctives are contained in the Word of God which is our sole authority of faith and practice.

## **Part 2 - Discipline**

In this second part of the chapter on the infrastructure of the church, we will discuss the subject of church discipline. If a church is to be a New Testament church, it must practice local church discipline. Unfortunately, there are many churches that do not practice church discipline. (1) Either they will ignore all scriptural references on the subject, or, (2) They will blatantly say that church discipline is not found in the Bible.

First of all, why would a church ignore church discipline? I have heard a number of excuses, none of which hold any scriptural credence. There is one excuse that stands out among the others, and that is, "If we discipline that person, he/she, and others will get offended and leave our church." I have heard that excuse time and time again in different churches, and we will deal with it later in this chapter. Secondly, for someone to say that church discipline is not found in the Bible, is to demonstrate his gross ignorance of the Scripture. The New Testament abounds with references to discipline within the local church.

In order for a family to live in harmony, in order for the military to accomplish certain goals, in order for a business to be prosperous, each of these institutions must have definite regulations, guidelines, and rules. To set aside these standards would lead to inevitable chaos. Likewise, in order for the local church to live in harmony, to accomplish certain goals, and to be prosperous, it, too, must have definite regulations, guidelines and, rules. *For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints... Let all things be done decently and in order, 1 Corinthians 14:33,40.*

It should be noted that church discipline is the **last** step when dealing with a defiant member. The first step that we must take in restoring an erring member is to confront him with his sin.

If a church member is living in known sin, the church must go to that person and lovingly confront him with it. Why? (1) He is hurting his testimony as a Christian, and (2) he is harming the testimony of the local church of which he is a member. *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: (1 Corinthians 5:7).* As Christians we are to experience constant spiritual growth. *2 Peter 1:5-9, And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*

*1 Peter 2:2, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

**Ephesians 4:13-16**, *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

**1 Peter 1:15**, *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

**Romans 12:1-2**, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Multitudes of churches refuse to deal with persons living with **known** sin in their lives. Let me say from the outset that no one is perfect. We all sin, *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (Romans 3:10)*. When we sin, we must confess and forsake that sin, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)*. The problem occurs when we do not confess that sin, but continue on as though we are right with God. This should not be. Living in sin means to continue to do something that we know is wrong. Consequently, God has given his church explicit guidelines on how to deal with these rebellious members.

### **Confrontation**

**Matthew 18:15-18**, *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

In this passage of Scripture, Christ gives the command (not an option) on how to set things right between two Christians. To trespass against someone is to sin against him. For example; when a child disobeys a rule at home, he is sinning against his parents. If a person says a falsehood against you, then he is sinning or trespassing against you. If a fellow church member sins against you, you must go to them privately, **go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone**. If you do not go to that person first, in other words, if you go to the pastor, or a friend first, then you are in disobedience to God Holy Word. You must go to the person who has sinned against you and privately talk out the problem. Please notice that God wants **you** (the offended) to go to the person (the offender). That's the first step--**confrontation**. We are not to revel in false humility and wait for that person to come to us. The Bible is specific. We are to *go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone*. Sometimes, just a word of warning is enough

discipline. *1 Thessalonians 5:14*, Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

*Titus 1:9-11*, Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

The offended must go in a humble, loving Christian-like attitude. The passage in Matthew says that the offender will react in one of two ways, (1) he will make things right, if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. This reaction will cause both believers to praise and glorify God. *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalms 133:1).* Or, (2) he will not make things right, but if he will not hear thee then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican...

### **Restoration**

In Galatians 6:1 we find the ultimate purpose of church discipline. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

Restoration can only be accomplished **after** confrontation. It is of utmost importance that confrontation be done early. Do not wait, thinking that the problem will go away. I heard a pastor say that he waits until a problem “comes-to-a-head,” before he will deal with it. That is both foolish and negligent of his pastoral duties. The pastor is to be a shepherd, and a wise shepherd will always head off situations that may lead into problems. If you have a cavity in one of your molars, should you wait until it has become abscessed before you take care of it? Of course not! Better still, if we brush our teeth everyday and visit the dentist regularly, then we will be less apt to get a cavity. And if the dentist does find one, it will be less painful to correct.

If the offender does not make things right with the offended, then the offended must find two or three other witnesses to go with him back to the offender. He takes these witnesses so that the conversation between the offended and offender will be heard by someone else so that *every word may be established.*

Unfortunately, there are times when the offender still refuses to repent. If that be the case, then you must proceed to step three. Verse 17 plainly states that, *if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.* If the offender does not repent after the offended has talked with him, and if he remains unrepentant after the offended has taken others as witnesses, then and only then must the offended go to the pastor. After the pastor has been made aware of the situation, he must confront the offender. If the offender still refuses to repent, the last part of verse 17 must be enforced, *but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

### **REMEMBER, ALWAYS DISPLAY A LOVING SPIRIT.**

Always keep in mind that we must exercise discipline in the right spirit. *Galatians 6:1*, *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

**2 Timothy 2:25**, *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;*

**2 Timothy 4:2**, *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

**2 Thessalonians 3:14-15**, *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

This point can never be over emphasized--always discipline with a loving spirit. Discipline should never be done with an attitude of revenge, selfishness, or spite. When action is taken upon an erring member with one of these negative attitudes, the results will be far more damaging than helpful. Remember, the ultimate goal is restoration of the erring member. If that cannot be accomplished, then the member must be purged from the congregation, *but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Matthew 18:17b).*

*Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: (1 Corinthians 5:7).*

### **Expulsion**

Expulsion of an erring member should only take place after every attempt has been made to restore him/her. If the other church members have prayed for the offender and the pastor has counseled with him/her and the offender still refuses to repent, then the problem must be taken to the congregation, at which time they must expel the offender out of the membership.

At this point many backslidden and carnal Christians will cry, "If we discipline that person, he/she, and others will get offended and leave our church." When local church discipline is accomplished according to the scripture, and people get offended and leave the church, to God be the Glory! *Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them (Psalms 119:165).*

All forms of discipline are hard. If you don't think so, then ask any God-fearing parent. Ask the employer who has had to fire someone from his job. Yes, discipline is hard, but it must be done. To ignore it, is to disobey the Word of God. The pastor that ignores it, has shirked his duty. The church that neglects it will only cause confusion among the membership. We must let the Word guide us, and not our emotions be the guide. If church discipline is to be effective, each member must obey God's Word.

**2 Timothy 3:5**, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

**2 Thessalonians 3:6**, *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*

**2 Thessalonians 3:14-15**, *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

**Romans 16:17**, *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

**1 Timothy 6:5**, *Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*

*1 Corinthians 5:1-13, It is reported commonly [that there is] fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, [concerning] him that hath so done this deed, 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying [is] not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

If the unrepentant member continues to rebel against God's Word after the discipline, then each member must not fellowship with him/her. Each member should be kind to him/her, but the Bible commands separation. *Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)*. This will give time for the Holy Spirit to work in the erring member's heart. When the offender truly repents, then and only then can he be taken back into the membership. The offender should go before the church and admit that he has sinned, and then ask the church to forgive him. At this time, the church should lovingly forgive him and welcome him back into the membership.

Local church discipline is hard to do, never-the-less, it is a command of God. When we obey His Word, God is glorified! *Behold, how good and how pleasant [it is] for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalms 133:1)*.

## **V. The Intent of a Church**

In describing the intent of a local New Testament church, let us review its definition. The New Testament church is an organized, autonomous, local band of immersed believers, having New Testament officers, performing New Testament ordinances, preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God, and actively engaged in carrying out the Great Commission.

Jesus gave the church its main commission in the days prior to his ascension. Therefore the intent of the local New Testament church can be found in three verses. *Matthew 28:19-20, 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.*

*Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

These statements found in Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8 were given to an infant church by its founder. This called out group of immersed believers was given the specific goal of being a witness for Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:19-20 is the foundational bedrock that supports the existence and power of every true New Testament church. Every New Testament church finds its marching orders in this passage. If a church deters from it, it ceases to be a New Testament church and thereby becomes a “religious” social club.

Matthew 28:19-20 can be broken down into a threefold plan on the work of the ministry.

### **1. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations**

The word “go” gives the idea of continuously going. The word “teach” comes from the Greek word “*matheteuo*” which means “to make disciple.” Or, to put it in modern terms, we are to be continuously “soulwinning.” We are to be constantly telling other about Jesus. We are to be continuously making disciples.

**2. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.** After we win someone to the Lord, the Bible commands that he be baptized. This is done as a witness to the fact of his salvation and as identification with the church of Jesus Christ.

**3. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.** In this phrase the word “teach” comes from a different Greek word (*didasko*) which means “to instruct.” We are to instruct them in the whole counsel of God with the emphasis on soul winning. Now, what better place to instruct new believers in Christ than in a local New Testament church? Therefore, in this passage, we see (1) salvation, (2) baptism, and (3) church discipleship.

The local church is the only institution found in the New Testament that was given this great task of soul winning, baptizing, and disciplining. It is the only institution that has been given power from on high (Acts 1:8). Each local New Testament church is the guardian of the Word of God, **1 Timothy 3:15** *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

God is the **founder** of the local church, I will build my church; (Matthew 16:18). He is its **force**, *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: (Acts 1:8)*. He is the **foundation** of each local New Testament church, *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)*.

Dear reader, let me ask you an important question. Do you support a local New Testament church? A Christian that is right with God will support a local New Testament church with his time, talent, and tithes. If you are not a member of a good local New Testament church, let me challenge you to ask God to lead you to one without delay.

Give your time to it by regularly attending every service. Exercise your talents in it, pray for it, and be active in it. Give your tithes and offering to it, **Matthew 6:21** *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Don't let a churches imperfections hinder your support. We are all human and we all make mistakes. Just look to Jesus, *the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds (Hebrews 12:2-3).*

I trust that you will want to be a part of an institution which was begun and is being perpetuated by Jesus Christ Himself. Praise God for each local independent, separated, Bible-preaching, soul-winning, devil-hating, missionary-minded, Bible-practicing, Baptist church!

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Orrino, G.W., The New Testament Church, Whence? Which? Whither? (Denver: Baptist Temple Publications, 1983). p. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Anderson, S.E., Baptists Unshackled (Orlando, Florida: Daniels Publishers, 1971). pp. 98-99.
- <sup>3</sup> Orrino, pp. 8-9.
- <sup>4</sup> Boyce Taylor, Tract, "The Difference Between the Family of God, the Kingdom of God, and the Church of God" (Clarksville, Tennessee: Bible Baptist Church).
- <sup>5</sup> Mason, Roy, The Myth of the Universal Invisible Church Exploded (Clarksville, Tennessee: Bible Baptist Church 1977). p. 34.
- <sup>6</sup> Anderson, pp. 79-81.
- <sup>7</sup> Anderson, pp. 103-104.
- <sup>8</sup> Orrino, p. 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Orrino, p. 13.
- <sup>10</sup> Moser, M.L. Sr., Baptist Doctrine In One Year, (Little Rock, AR: The Challenge Press, 1960). p. 12.
- <sup>11</sup> Mason, p. 24.
- <sup>12</sup> Anderson, S.E., The First Church. (Little Rock, Arkansas: Challenge, 1973). p. 11.
- <sup>13</sup> Mason, Roy, The Church That Jesus Built (Clarksville, Tennessee: Bible Baptist Church, 1977). p. 19.
- <sup>14</sup> Anderson, pp. 8-9.
- <sup>15</sup> Mason, The Church That Jesus Built, p. 43.
- <sup>16</sup> Mason, p. 44.
- <sup>17</sup> Mason, p. 45.
- <sup>18</sup> Moser, pp. 219-220.
- <sup>19</sup> Mason, p. 46.
- <sup>20</sup> Mason, p. 49.
- <sup>21</sup> Porter, J.W., World's Debt to Baptists, pp. 165-166.
- <sup>22</sup> Mason, p. 51.
- <sup>23</sup> Mason, p.57.
- <sup>24</sup> Orrino, p. 24.

- <sup>25</sup> Mason, p. 10-11.
- <sup>26</sup> Dr. Richard C. Weeks, Baptist Polity Class Notes. Maranatha Baptist Bible College, Watertown, Wisconsin, 1977.
- <sup>27</sup> Christian, John T., A History of the Baptist. (Texarkana: Bogard Press, 1922), p. 21.
- <sup>28</sup> Hiscox, Edward T., The New Directory for Baptist Churches. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1970), p. 11.
- <sup>29</sup> Armitage, Thomas, A History of the Baptist. (Watertown: Maranatha Baptist Press, reprint, 1976), p. 151.
- <sup>30</sup> Kerr, William, Conservative Baptist Distinctives, (Portland, OR: Christianews Press, 1962), pp. 8-10.
- <sup>31</sup> Orrino, p. 74.
- <sup>32</sup> Hiscox, p. 141.
- <sup>33</sup> Orrino, p. 74.



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