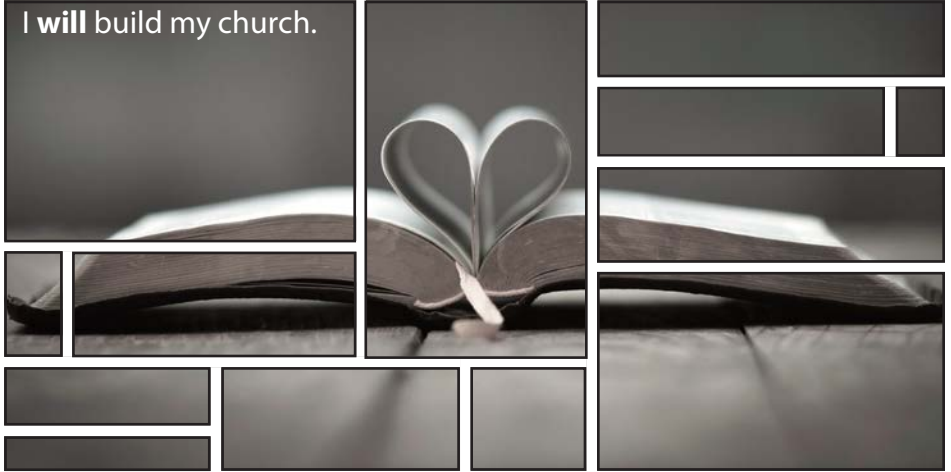


R.E.Harlow

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I **will** build my church.



the new testament

CHURCH

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RECAPTURING THE **HEART** OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN

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**The Church of the New Testament**

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R. E. Harlow

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**"SEEK THAT  
YE MAY EXCEL  
TO THE EDIFYING  
OF THE CHURCH."**

**Whether you are doing these lessons from a Course Book or directly from the website, you can send in your answers to us using the Exam Form on the website menu.**

## Part One:

# The Universal Church

---



**Definition:** The spiritual body of Christ that includes all true believers in all lands throughout the time spanning from the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until the day Christ returns to take His Church home (1 Thessalonians. 4:15-18).





## *chapter one*

---

# How can we learn about the Church?

What is our authority for learning about the Church of Jesus Christ? The answer is both simple and profound: The Holy Bible.

The Bible is inspired by God the Holy Spirit.

It is our only authority.

It is sufficient in itself to show us God's way.

### **God Speaks to Man**

In the beginning, God created all the animals, then He created the first man, Adam. Man is different from the animals: He has a spirit, and he can hear the voice of the Lord speaking to him. God is certainly able to tell us what He wants us to do.

### **God Speaks to Man Through the Bible**

God spoke many times to His faithful prophets in earlier days,

## 8 • The New Testament Church

and later He spoke through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Hebrews 1:1,2. Christ died and rose again and sent the Holy Spirit to take His place in our hearts. The Spirit spoke through the apostles and other writers of the New Testament, John 14:26; 16:13,14.

The apostles knew that they were writing what God commanded them.

**Example #1:** John faithfully wrote down what the Lord revealed to him, Revelation 1:2,19; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; 4:1; 6:1; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5.

**Example #2:** When Paul taught about Christ coming back for His Church, it was “by the word of the Lord”, 1 Thessalonians 4:15. Again, Paul said he received from the Lord the truth about the gospel, 1 Corinthians 15:3, and he preached it to the people. He also received a revelation about the Lord’s Supper and the Breaking of Bread, 1 Corinthians 11:23. Again, he received a revelation about the unity of the Church, Ephesians 3:3,6. We will learn more about these subjects later in this book, but here you should note that Paul knew he was speaking and teaching what God told him.

Paul knew that he wrote the commandments of the Lord and that the Spirit spoke to him, 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Timothy 4:1. In fact, he used the very words that the Holy Spirit gave him, 1 Corinthians 2:10,12,13.

### **Both the Old and New Testaments Are God-breathed.**

All the apostles firmly believed that the Old Testament is the Word of God, yet Peter put the writings of Paul on the same level by calling both “Scripture”, 2 Peter 1:21; 3:16. Peter put the words of the apostles on the same level as those of the holy prophets, 2 Peter 3:2, including his own writings. Peter said that we are born again by the Word of God, and we grow as Christians by the same



Word, 1 Peter 1:23; 2:2.

Paul said that all Scripture is given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (“God-breathed”) and is profitable, 2 Timothy 3:16, and he put the Old Testament and the New Testament on the same level, 1 Timothy 5:18. We can be sure that the New Testament is the Word of God. This is very important, and, by the Spirit, Paul added that God’s curse would be on anyone who teaches some other “gospel”, Galatians 1:8,9,12,16.

There are many translations today. None is perfect, but all are able to help us understand what God wants us to do in the edifying — or, building up — of His church. So read on.





## *chapter two*

---

### How did the Church start?

There were two ingredients necessary for the starting of the Church:

#### **1. “I WILL BUILD” — THE PROMISE OF THE LORD JESUS**

The Lord Jesus did many miracles in Israel to prove that God had sent Him to be their King. Some of the people did believe in Him, but not all. One day the Lord asked His disciples what the people said about Him. Then He asked the disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The Lord accepted this statement and told Peter that no man had given him this knowledge; it had come from His Father in heaven. Then He gave a wonderful promise about His Church: “*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,*” Matthew 16:18.

Notice three truths declared in this statement of the Lord Jesus:

**(a) The Church is *His Church*, and He Himself was going to build it.** First He had to die for our sins, then rise again and go up to heaven. So the Lord started to build His church about a year after He made this promise.

**(b) He would build it on *Himself*, God the Son, not on any man.** The word Rock is often used for God in the Old Testament. See Psalm 18:2,31,46; 28:1; 31:2; 42:9; 62:2,7; 71:3; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22. Some people teach that the Lord Jesus would build His church on Peter, but the word Peter means “a stone”, not the bedrock, the solid rock which goes deep into the ground. The wise man built his house on the bedrock, and Christ is building His Church on Himself as God the Son. Peter was a great man, but just a man. Almost at once he made a great mistake when he said that the Lord had not spoken what was true, Matthew 16:21-23. The Holy Spirit says Christ is the foundation of the Church and calls Him the Rock, 1 Corinthians 3:11; 10:4.

**(c) Nothing could stop the Lord from building His church, not even death itself.** We know that the Lord rose from death, and He will raise all His people from death to eternal life. Satan has the power of death, Hebrews 2:14, and he has tried everything to overthrow the Church. But in the end he cannot succeed.

The Lord told Peter that he was only a stone, but He gave him a great promise. Peter would have the honor of opening the door of the kingdom to both Jews and Gentiles. Peter used one key when he told the Jews they could repent and believe, Acts 2:38; 3:19; 4:12; 5:31. He used the other key when he preached the gospel to the

Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, Acts 10:43; 15:7. At first Peter was not happy about offering eternal life in Christ's name to the Gentiles. The Lord warned him in Matthew 16:19 that he would be responsible to open these two doors. God would recognize all that Peter did according to the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## 2. "I WILL SEND" — THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Just before Jesus died, He revealed many things that would happen after He left. The formation of the Church was one of those things. But it would be through the power of the Holy Spirit who could only come after Jesus went back to heaven: "*... I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you,*" John 16:7.

Sure enough, that is exactly what happened. Christ died, rose the third day, met often with His disciples during another forty days, then ascended into heaven, Acts 1:3,9. On the fiftieth day, the apostles and about 110 disciples, both men and women, were together in one place. Suddenly the Holy Spirit came down upon them in a new and special way. Before this time, the Spirit lived with believers, but now He lives *in* them and *empowers* them, John 14:16,17.

On the 49th day, there were about 120 individual believers who loved the Lord Jesus. The next day the Spirit of God came to live in each of them. There is only one Spirit of God, and He made these people into one Body, Ephesians 4:4. A human body without a spirit is dead, James 2:26. The One Spirit made these different people into one Body.

They knew that they were all one. They had fellowship together and were of the same mind, Acts 2:42,46. They prayed together,

## 14 ● The New Testament Church

Acts 2:42; 4:24. They shared together all that they possessed, 2:44,45; 4:32,34,35. They all had the One Spirit, they were One in the Lord, but they had many things to learn. The Holy Spirit gradually gave them more truth through the apostles, through what they preached and what they wrote. God has given us the Bible, and we can learn the same way.

With the Lord's promise and the Holy Spirit's power, the Church was formed and has continued to grow for nearly two thousand years. This raises the question: What role does Christ serve in the Church *today*? And what should the Christian's response be towards Him?

## **The New Testament Church**

### **Chapters 1 & 2 EXAM 1**

#### **How Can We Learn about the Church? How did the Church Start?**

**Enter the letter of the correct answer:**

1. Man
  - a. was created before the animals
  - b. is the same as the animals
  - c. has a spirit and can hear the voice of the Lord speaking to him.
2. Paul
  - a. used the very words that God gave him
  - b. was a learned man who wrote down his own ideas
  - c. did not receive any revelations from God
3. The two ingredients necessary for the starting of the Church are
  - a. the promise of the Lord Jesus and the support of the disciples
  - b. the power of the Holy Spirit and the support of the disciples
  - c. the promise of the Lord Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit
4. The Church was formed
  - a. with only a few believers
  - b. when the Holy Spirit came to live in each of the gathered believers making them into One Body
  - c. on the 49th day after Jesus died
5. The believers
  - a. had fellowship together
  - b. had fellowship and prayed together
  - c. had fellowship, prayed together and shared all that they possessed

**Enter TRUE or FALSE for each:**

6. The universal Church includes Old Testament believers .
7. Our Authority for learning about the Church of Jesus Christ is the Holy Bible.
8. Both the Old and New Testaments are God-breathed.
9. Peter had the honour of opening the door of the kingdom to both Jews and Gentiles.
10. The Church is now complete.

#### **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

Are you part of the Body of Christ? How do you know?



## *chapterthree*

---

### Christ and His Church

We have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ promised to build HIS Church. Let's learn more about the relationship between Christ and the Church, or all true believers. In Ephesians, we discover three beautiful descriptions:

- 1. Christ is the Head, the Church is the Body.**
- 2. Christ is the Cornerstone, the Church is the Building.**
- 3. Christ is the Bridegroom, the Church is the Bride.**

#### **1. CHRIST IS THE HEAD, THE CHURCH IS THE BODY**

The Holy Spirit came to dwell in those early believers and made them into a Body. Later, the Spirit revealed in the letters of Paul that the Body is on earth but the Head is the Lord Jesus Christ who is in heaven. Just as our physical bodies cannot function without our heads, so the spiritual body of Christ is vitally linked to the Head. What we find amazing is that the Head needs His Body! It's hard to



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understand that Christ needs His Church! After all, Christ is the Creator of heaven and earth. He fills the universe. He is Supreme above all. He has been seated at God's right hand in heaven, far above all angels and any being who has a name, not only in the present time, but also forever. All things are under His feet and must obey Him. Yet, in some ways, He needs the Church. It is His Body and described as "His fullness", or, that which completes Him.

### Who Is in His Body?

In the Old Testament there was a great difference between Israel and all other nations, called Gentiles. Israel had God's blessing. Gentiles, however, had to be circumcised if they wanted to have His blessing. But the two peoples would always be distinct.

In the New Testament, though, God revealed to the apostle Paul a great truth: There is no difference between the believing Jew and the believing Gentile. They are both placed in the same body, the body of Christ, the Church, I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 3:6. And these members were to function together. When Christ rose from death, He gave gifts to the Church in order that each member would help the others, and so the Body would grow strong, Ephesians 4:11, 12. We will study these gifts in Chapter 10.

Again, there is only one Body, and no one should try to divide it up into smaller groups, Ephesians 4:3,4. We should pray for all members of Christ's Body, Ephesians 6:18. So we see that there is only one Spirit, one Body, one Head, Colossians 1:18.

## 2. CHRIST IS THE CORNERSTONE, THE CHURCH IS THE BUILDING

In the Old Testament, God commanded Moses to build a tent, or tabernacle, where God's glory could rest. Later, King Solomon

built a wonderful building, the Temple, on which God put His name. God lives in heaven, but, in a special way, it can be said that He lived in the Temple of Mount Zion, Psalm 74:2, 135:21. It would be a house of prayer for all nations, Isaiah 56:7

In the New Testament, God never told His people to put up an earthly building for Him to live in. Rather, God would dwell in a spiritual temple made up of Christians, or “living stones” as Peter calls them. Altogether, these believers make the Church .

And what is the most important part of this spiritual dwelling place? In earthly structures, the **cornerstone** is the first stone to be set, and upon this stone the rest of the structure is built. In the Church, it is Christ who is the **Chief Cornerstone**. He is the One who keeps the whole thing together, and He is the only One qualified to do so, for He is the very Son of God. The following apostles affirmed this in their writings as instructed by the Holy Spirit:

### Illustrating the Point

A Sunday School teacher once wrote the letters on the chalkboard: CHCH. She asked the children, “What does this spell?” Puzzled, the children sat in silence. The teacher spoke up, “It spells CHURCH.” One child helpfully pointed out the teacher’s spelling mistake: “It is not CHURCH unless U-R (YOUARE) in it!” The teacher had made her point. The Church is not a physical building made of bricks and mortar; it is a spiritual house made of Christians.

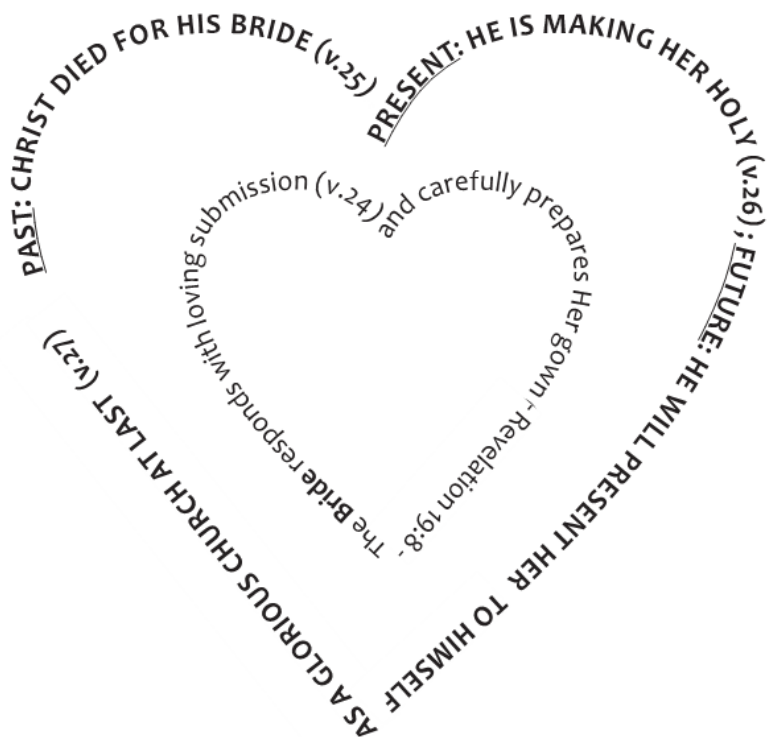
<b>Matthew</b>	1:23
<b>John</b>	1:1,18; 1 John 1:3,7
<b>Paul</b>	Acts 9:20; Romans 1:4; 9:5
<b>Peter</b>	2 Peter 1:17

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### 3. CHRIST IS THE BRIDEGROOM, THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE

A bridegroom wants and needs the bride very much. We may say that Christ will never be fully satisfied until He has His Bride, the Church, with Him where He is, John 17:24.

In Ephesians 5, the Spirit is teaching how a woman should treat her husband and how he should treat his wife. We learn also something of our relation to Christ:



The Lord Jesus Christ taught a parable about a king who made a big marriage supper for his son, Matthew 22:1-10, which is a picture of the marriage between Himself and His Bride. The Spirit even gave John a vision of the marriage supper of the Lord, Revelation 19:7-9. What a glorious Day! Then Ephesians 5:27 will be fulfilled as Christ presents us to Himself as His Bride. Until then, we should submit to Him in all things and learn to love Him and serve Him. If we don't, we resist the Lord in His work in us, Ephesians 5:26. If we serve Him, we will have beautiful clothing to wear at the wedding, Revelation 19:8.





## *chapterfour*

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# How does someone get into the Church of Christ?

As we discover God's grand purpose for the Church, it should make a person ask, "How can I become a part of it?" Some religions teach that you must pay money or perform certain works to gain entrance into God's Church. But that is not what God teaches in His Bible. Instead, He tells us that someone must:

### **BECOME A CHILD OF GOD**

The apostle John wrote these wonderful words: "*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God...*," 1 John 3:1. The key to becoming a child of God is to **believe**. We have seen that the Church was formed when the Holy Spirit came on 120 people who **believed in the Lord Jesus Christ**. They told others what had happened, and many more received the Word, **believed in the Lord**, and were saved. About 3,000 were added to the Church that same day, Acts 2:41,47. They re-

## 22 • The New Testament Church

ceived the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38, and became part of the Body of Christ. These believers were all of the same mind and showed their love to one another by sharing what they possessed.

Later, Paul wrote a letter to the “*church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” They received the Word of God and **believed**, 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2:13. The church in Corinth consisted of those who **believed**, 1 Corinthians 3:5, 15:11.

From these verses, we can say that the Church of Jesus Christ includes *all true believers* and *only true believers*. But what exactly must someone believe in order to become a child of God? Paul writes, “*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe** in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved,*” Romans. 10:9. The word “confess” comes from a Greek compound word (two smaller words), “to speak” and “same.” So to confess the Lord Jesus is to “speak the same thing” as, or agree with, God about who you are (a sinner) and who His Son is (the only Savior because He, alone, paid for your sins on the cross and then rose the third day to prove that His payment was fully accepted by His Father). This will lead to repentance — saying sorry to God for your sins and then asking Him to forgive you. The moment that happens, you are “born from above.” John 3. You are born into God’s family and then placed into the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only requirement for becoming part of God’s church. But wait! It gets even better! Not only do you become a child of God, you also...

### BECOME A PRIEST UNTO GOD

The Holy Spirit taught that all true believers are priests. We read about this in Peter’s first letter. Chapter 1 describes Christians as those:

How does someone get into the Church? ● 23

- whom the Spirit had set apart for God, v.2
- who obeyed God’s Word, v.2
- who were covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, v.2
- who were born again, v.3
- who have a living hope, v.3,
  - and an inheritance in heaven, v.4
- who are kept by God’s power, v.5
- who love the Lord, v.8
- who believe and rejoice, v.8.

These things are true of believers and no one else. In chapter 2, the Spirit describes these very same Christians as **holy priests** and **royal priests**.

OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTS	NEW TESTAMENT PRIESTS
Aaron was the high priest.	Christ is our Great High Priest (He is called this 10 times in Hebrews)
Only those born into Aaron’s family could be priests (a king was once judged for serving as a priest, 2 Chron. 26:16,19; see also Neh. 7:64).	All those born into God’s family are made priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). This is not a title acquired by going to college or seminary.
The priests offered the animal sacrifices which God’s Law required.	As <b>holy priests</b> , we offer God our <i>worship</i> (“spiritual sacrifices,” 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15). As <b>royal priests</b> , we offer God our <i>work</i> , or service.



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When a lost sinner becomes a child of God and is made a priest unto God, it is important to remember that we have...

### **BECOME A SAINT, SET APART FOR GOD**

Paul wrote to the church of God at Corinth and said that God had set apart the believers there for Himself, calling them “saints”, 1 Corinthians 1:2. He wrote to the churches at Rome, Ephesus, Philippi and Colossae in the same way. To be in the Church of Jesus Christ, you have to be a “saint”.

What is a saint? In the world today, a person may be called a “saint” a hundred years after he or she has died, but people must be able to tell many wonderful stories about them. What does the New Testament say about this?

This term “saint” actually means “separated one” and is from the word “sanctification” in the Greek. So the biblical use of the term refers to the fact that Christians have been set apart for God. And because God is holy, Isaiah 6:3, His people should also seek to live holy lives, 1 Peter 1:16. This truth is so important to God that Christians are called “saints” sixty times in the New Testament!

So we see that the Church of Jesus Christ is made up of believers, priests, and saints. Only believers are members of the true Church, and all believers are priests and saints. When you believe in the Lord, He makes you a saint and a priest, and He at once puts you into His Body, which is the Church.

## That's a good question!

### What do we call ourselves?

In the New Testament, people called the believers "Christians", Acts 11:26, and this is the only name that we need. Some churches use the name of their country, or of some great human leader, or of some great doctrine, to show that they are different from other Christians. But this is just what we should not do. We should try to maintain the unity of the Body, Ephesians 4:3, not divide it up into different churches all with different names. In Corinth, the church was divided because some tried to follow human leaders like Paul, Apollos, Peter, and some even said that they were Christ's, as if the others were not, 1 Corinthians 1:12!

### Will baptism help me become a Christian?

Today, many teach that baptism is a necessary part of becoming a Christian. This is not what the Bible teaches. If you read through the book of Acts, you will discover that before someone was baptized, they **believed**. What did they believe? That they were sinners and that only Christ could forgive their sins. See Acts 2:41; 8:12, 37, 38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:14, 15, 31-33; 18:8. This, alone, made them Christians. It was after that point they were baptized. It was a sign to the world that they belonged to Christ. When baptism happens in that order, it pleases the Lord Jesus (see Matthew 28:19). So always remember that baptism is not the means of salvation, just one proof that we have accepted the Savior. We are saved by faith alone, not by good works, nor by faith plus good Works. Never say that a person is not

saved until he has been baptized, or that baptism is necessary for salvation, or that baptism must be added to faith, or that a believer will be lost if he is not baptized. One only needs to consider the example of the dying thief to see this truth, Luke 23

## **The New Testament Church**

### **Chapters 3 & 4      EXAM 2**

#### **Christ and His Church - How Does Someone enter the Church of Christ?**

**Enter the letter of the correct answer:**

1. When the Church is described as a Body
  - a. Christ is the Cornerstone
  - b. Christ is the Head
  - c. Christ is the Bridegroom
2. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
  - a. has already taken place
  - b. was shown to Paul in a vision
  - c. will be a glorious day for believers -
3. The Bible teaches that to get into the Church of Christ one must
  - a. pay money
  - b. perform certain works
  - c. become a child of G0d -
4. The New Testament teaches that
  - a. all true believers are priests
  - b. only Jews can be priests
  - c. the title 'priest' is only for those graduating from a seminary -
5. Baptism
  - a. is a means of salvation
  - b. is one proof that we have accepted Jesus as Saviour
  - c. is a necessary part of becoming a Christian

**Enter TRUE or FALSE for each:**

6. In the Body of Christ Jews and Gentiles are different. -
7. Peter calls believers 'living stones'. -
8. As the Chief Cornerstone of the Church, Jesus is the One who keeps the whole thing together. -
9. Christians are called 'saints' sixty times in the New Testament. -
10. Only believers are members of the true Church, and all believers are priests and saints.

**WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

Are you a priest and a saint? Explain your answer.



## Part Two:

# The Local Church

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**Definition:** A group of Christians who gather in the Lord's Name; a miniature expression of the Universal Church.





## *chapter five*

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### Christ and the local church



#### • THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

Up to this point in the book, we have learned about the Lord's Church that includes all true believers in all lands throughout all the time spanning from the Day of Pentecost until the day Christ returns to take His Church home.

We sometimes use the term "**Universal Church**" to describe the broad scope of this massive spiritual body.

#### • THE LOCAL CHURCH

Yet this massive spiritual body is lived out through **local churches**. Often, these local churches start out small, but it is the Lord's desire to see them grow. Let us consider the small church and, briefly, its growth.

THE SMALL CHURCH

The Lord Jesus Christ on earth spoke about the Church only twice: Matthew 16:13-20 and Matthew 18:15-20. In verse 20 of chapter 18, the Lord promised to be present if only two or three believers meet together in His Name.

What does it mean to meet “in His Name”? It means that we accept His authority as Lord, as Son of God:

THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES
We are to believe in His Name, John 1:12; Acts 4:12
Baptize in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; or in the Name of the Lord Jesus, Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:16
Pray in His Name, John 14:13; 15:16
Give thanks in His Name, Ephesians 5:20
Suffer for His Name, Acts 5:41
Speak boldly in His Name, Acts 9:27,29
Do all things in His name, Colossians 3:17
One Day, every knee will bow at His Name, Philippians 2:9-11

For what reasons did the early Christians meet together in His Name?

- to pray, Acts 4:31
- to hear the teaching of the apostles, Acts 11:26; 15:30



to hear how God had blessed the gospel, Acts 14:27  
to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread, Acts 20:7  
to put a sinner out of the church, 1 Corinthians 5:4,5 (see  
Chapter 7 of this book).

As a new local church begins, there might be only two or three persons. They might meet in a small room, in a cave or on a hill. Regardless of size, it is an encouragement to us to remember that HE IS THERE WITH US. He has promised this to us, Matthew 18:20!

### A GROWING CHURCH

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to tell others about Himself. If they believe the good news, they will become Christians also. Then we should invite them to meet with us and with other believers in Christ. A little church might start with only two or three believers, but, as we obey the Lord's command to spread the gospel to others, the local church will soon grow.

**Example #1:** Paul and Silas and Luke preached the gospel in the city of Philippi. A woman called Lydia was saved and her family also. The jailer was saved, along with his family. Perhaps there were others also, but the church in Philippi was certainly very small at the beginning, Acts 16:15,34.

But it soon grew. A few years later, Paul wrote to the church, "to the saints at Philippi, with the [elders] and deacons". We will learn about elders and deacons later, but it is noteworthy that the little group had grown enough to see these spiritual leaders rise up among them. What a blessing to see God's pattern at work!

**Example #2:** The church in Ephesus also started quite small, but

Apollos and Paul taught the word and preached the gospel. Priscilla and Aquila also were a great help, and the church grew rapidly. The gospel spread all over the province of Asia, which is like modern Turkey, Acts 18:24,26; 19:1,7,10.

**But there is a warning** for any church that experiences growth in these ways. We see in the letters that the Lord sent to seven of the churches in Asia, Revelation 2 and 3, that some of these had become large churches. But most of them did not follow the Lord's commands, and He was not pleased. The believers at Ephesus *left their first love*, and those in Laodicea were *cold and worldly*. Others allowed *false teaching*, such as Pergamos, Thyatira, and Sardis. So, while it is good to see a church growing larger as more people get saved, it is necessary to hold fast to the teaching of the apostles, and to continue functioning as saints and priests of God.



## *chapter six*

---

### What do saints and priests do?

In some churches, the title “priest” belongs to only one person whose job it is to perform sacred rituals. However, the Bible teaches that every true Christian is both a saint and a priest, Revelation 1:6!

What, then, are some of the responsibilities of the Christian who is going to fulfill these God-given roles?

#### **1. APPRECIATE IT**

In the Old Testament, the priest was able to enter the holy place, but only the high priest could go into the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. But in Hebrews 10:19-22, we discover that the New Testament priesthood is far better: The Christian can enter the Most Holy Place at any time and without fear. Christ is our High Priest. We can know that our sins are forgiven, and we have a good conscience. The Old Testament priests would be totally shocked with the freedom we enjoy in the Church today. Do we really appreciate it?

## 2. WORSHIP

We may say that worship is the most important thing any person can do, because the Lord taught that our Father is seeking those who will worship Him **in Spirit** and **in truth**, John 4:23,24.

In Spirit	<p>- We worship in the <b>power</b> of the Holy Spirit. Satan wants men to worship him, and his demons will try to keep us from worshipping the only true God. We need the Spirit to enable us to worship; we also need Him to reveal the glories of Christ to us, John 16:14.</p> <p>- As worship is a spiritual act, the outward forms and material things are not necessary, such as beautiful buildings, clothing or music; in fact, they can make it harder to worship God in a spiritual way.</p>
In Truth	<p>- The Father seeks real, true worship, not just acting or pretending. It is possible to bow down the head as if worshipping God, yet really be thinking of something else, perhaps some wicked thing. Some preached the gospel in truth; others only pretended to do so, Philipians 1:18. We should love, not in word only, but in truth, 1 John 3:18.</p> <p>- True worship is according to the truth of God, which is the Bible. God's Word is truth, and we should walk and live according to its teaching, John 17:17; 2 John v.3; 3 John v.4. The Lord told the Pharisees that their worship was useless because they placed their rules on par with God's commands. Today, we need to follow what the Bible teaches, not what any man or any church may teach.</p>

We worship God when we think about Him and give Him thanks for all His gifts to us. We may adore the Father when we love Him for all that He is and all that He has done. Worship is what we do in

our spirit, in our heart. God always knows.

### **3. OFFER SACRIFICES**

As holy priests engaged in worship, we can offer up spiritual sacrifices, and God will accept them, 1 Peter 2:5. These are not animal sacrifices, as Israel offered in the days of Moses. The Spirit has commanded us to offer our bodies as a sacrifice to the Lord, not to kill them, but as living sacrifices. This means that everything we do is for the Lord. Our bodies belong to Him. We should also let the Spirit make our minds new every day, so that all our thoughts are under His control, Romans 12:1,2.

We should use our lips only to praise the Lord, and this is another kind of sacrifice, Hebrews 13:15. God is also pleased when we give money to help His servants or His children, Hebrews 13:16. The Lord Jesus was pleased when two women gave all they had, Luke 21:2-4; Mark 14:3-9.

Peter also said that we are priests of the king and that we should tell all people about the glories of the Lord, 1 Peter 2:9. Christ is our King. He has taken us out of the darkness of sin and brought us into His wonderful light. We were prisoners of Satan, and the Lord had to win the victory over our enemy before He could deliver us. He did this when He died and rose again.

### **4. PRAY**

God made many promises to answer prayer, in both the Old and New Testaments. (You would get some help on Prayer from the booklet available from EPI, *Ask in My Name*.) God has also commanded us to pray: Matthew 5:44; 6:9; 9:38; Luke 18:1; 21:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:16; Jude v.20.

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The Lord Jesus Christ said that the Father would answer prayer when two or three agreed to ask Him, Matthew 18:19. This is the smallest possible size of a church. The early believers prayed: Acts 1:14,24; 2:42; 6:6; 8:15; 14:23; 20:36; 21:5. We see that prayer is an important duty and a joy of saints and priests in the church.

### 5. WITNESS

The Lord commanded every believer to be a witness and promised that this would be our privilege, Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8. The early believers told all men what they had seen and heard about Christ rising from death, Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39; 13:30,31; 22:15.

The Church is the pillar of the truth, holding up the truth for all men to see, 1 Timothy 3:15. An unsaved person may come into the church and come to know God, 1 Corinthians 14:23-25.

The apostle Peter tells us that all believers are royal priests, whose privilege is to show forth the glories of their King. The Philip-pians held forth the word of life in a crooked world, Philippians 2:15,16. We also show forth the death of the Lord Jesus Christ when we break bread.

## **The New Testament Church**

### **Chapters 5 & 6 EXAM 3**

#### **Christ & the Local Church - What Do Saints & Priests do?**

**Enter the letter of the correct answer:**

1. The Local Church
  - a. is a group of Christians who gather in the Lord's Name
  - b. must meet in a 'church'
  - c. must consist of more than twenty people
  
2. The Church in Ephesus
  - a. included Lydia and her family
  - b. included a jailer and his family
  - c. was helped by Priscilla and Aquila
  
3. Believers today
  - a. must approach God through an earthly 'priest'
  - b. can enter God's Presence at any time and without fear
  - c. can never be sure that their sins are forgiven
  
4. Worship
  - a. is not very important
  - b. is easier if outward forms and material things are present
  - c. should be 'in Spirit and in truth'
  
5. Today as priests
  - a. God does not require any sacrifice from us
  - b. we can offer up spiritual sacrifices and God will accept them
  - c. we should offer animal sacrifices

**Enter TRUE or FALSE for each:**

6. The Lord Jesus promised to be present if only two or three believers met in His Name.
7. To 'meet in Jesus Name' means to accept His authority as Lord, Son of God.
8. God was pleased with most of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3.
9. God has commanded us to pray.
10. We can please ourselves as to whether we want to witness or not.

#### **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

What do you appreciate about the New Testament priesthood as compared with the Old Testament priesthood?



## *chapter seven*

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### What do elders do?

In many churches today, the bishop is the head man and wears special clothing. In the New Testament, the word “bishops” means “overseers”. The word “elders” is also used for these same men, as we see in Acts 20, where Paul met with the elders, v:17, and said that the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, v.28. See also Titus 1:5 (elders) and 1:7 (overseer).

#### **WHO ARE THE ELDERS OF A CHURCH?**

There were elders in Jerusalem, and most of them were enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, Matthew 16:21, and His apostles, Acts 4:23; 24:1. What about elders in the Church?

Peter and John were apostles of Christ, but they did not try to make themselves into top leaders who could control everyone in the Church. Both called themselves “elders”, 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John v:1; 3 John v.1. John warned Gaius about Diotrephes, who did try to make himself into a great man in the church, 3 John vs:9,10. The



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Holy Spirit said that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Bishop, 1 Peter 2:25, and the only Head of His Body.

In the New Testament, the apostles had the authority to appoint elders in every new little church which was formed, Acts 14:23, and Paul told Titus to do the same, Titus 1:5. Yet they understood that it was the Holy Spirit who gave them their authority, Acts 20:28.

The Scripture always speaks of several elders, or overseers, in a church, never of a singular elder, or bishop, as if there were only one, Acts 11:30; 15:2,22; 20:17; 21:18; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1. Today we often hear of one bishop over several churches, but in the New Testament there were always several overseers over each local church.

### WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS?

There are no true apostles today, and some people say that there cannot be any true elders, or overseers. But the Holy Spirit has given us the writings of the apostles, including the inspired teaching on what is necessary to qualify as an overseer. These qualifications are in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The Spirit taught Paul, and these two younger men, and us, just what an elder should be.

#### AN ELDER'S JOB DESCRIPTION

**HEED:** The spiritual leader is to *"take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them."* As an elder tends to his own spiritual health, he is then able to properly care for and protect the sheep, 1 Timothy 4:16.

**FEED:** The elder is to provide healthy food ("sound doctrine") for the Lord's sheep, 1 Peter 5:2.

**LEAD:** The elder is to lead by example, 1 Peter 5:3.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER

### 1 Timothy 3

**v.1** He must have a desire for this work

**v. 2** He is without fault (not sinless, but no serious charge brought against him that is found to be true)

- have only one wife
- self-controlled
- of good behavior
- welcomes strangers
- able to teach

**v.3** not a drunkard

- not violent
- not a lover of money
- not a fighter
- patient

**v.4** rules own house well

- his children behave well

**v.6** not a new Christian

**v.7** has a good reputation

### Titus 1

He is without fault, **v.6,7**

- have only one wife, **v.6**
- self-controlled, **v.8**
- righteous, holy, **v.8**
- welcomes strangers, **v.8**
- able to teach, encourage, convict, **v.9**

- not a drunkard, **v.7**

- not violent, **v.7**

- not greedy for money, **v.7**

- not quick-tempered, **v.7**

- his children are not wild or disobedient, **v.6**

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop ["elder"], he desires a good work" —1 Timothy 3:1

Are all these things necessary before a man can serve as an elder? Every believer should try to honor the Lord for His Name's sake. Certainly a man with two wives could not be an overseer in the assembly, or a drunkard or a new Christian or one with a bad reputation. We can all learn more about God's Word and so be better able to teach others; we should all welcome strangers into our homes. So in some of these things an elder will grow and become more like what God really wants him to be.



### WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF THE ELDERS?

There are several early writers of the New Testament who were, themselves, wonderful shepherds of God's people. Let us see what the Holy Spirit revealed to them about what God has in mind for those who take up this high and noble task:

#### **From the Pen of LUKE: Acts 20**

Keep watch over yourselves, vs.28,31  
and the flock of believers, v.28.

Be on guard for false teachers who come in  
like wolves, v.29.

Watch out for those inside the flock who  
will start teaching lies, v.30.

Feed the flock of believers, the church of  
God, as shepherds, v.28.

**From the Pen of JOHN:**

The Lord told Peter to feed and shepherd His sheep, John 21:15,16,17.

To feed sheep, shepherds must lead them to the good grass, and the sheep must obey them, John 10:3,4,27. So elders must develop a healthy relationship with the sheep to help the sheep:

- obey them (see Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24)
- know their leaders
- honor and love them, 1Thessalonians 5:12,13.

**From the Pen of PETER:**

The elders should not think of themselves as lords or masters, as if the sheep belonged to them. They should be willing to lead by showing a good example, 1 Peter 5:2,3. Peter also points the elder to his ultimate Example: Christ. Not only is He the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, and the Great Shepherd who sustains the life of His Sheep, but He is also the “Chief Shepherd” who will reward faithful elders with “the crown of glory that does not fade away,” 1 Peter 5:4.

**From the Pen of PAUL:**

Take care of the church of God, as his own family, 1 Timothy 3:4,5.

Rule well, 1 Timothy 3:5 (see also Romans 12:8).

Teach the Word of God, 1 Timothy 3:2.

Exhort and comfort the believers, Titus 1:9.

Convince by the Spirit's power those who try to argue, 2 Timothy 2:24,25.

Be always ready to welcome visitors, 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8.

You can see that the elders have many duties and responsibilities in the assembly. The Spirit said that being an overseer is a good WORK, 1 Timothy 3:1, and that is exactly what it is: Work. It requires a great deal of time and energy and, often, tears. Some people think it would be nice to be called an overseer, but they are not really willing to give themselves wholly to the work of the Lord. The good shepherd gives his life, his time, and his strength for the sheep.

**WHAT ARE THE REWARDS FOR SERVING AS ELDERS?**

In Acts 20, Paul reminded the elders that he had worked very hard at Ephesus, preaching the gospel and teaching the Word, the whole counsel of God, all that was profitable, warning every one day and night with tears, vs.20,21,24,27,31. He was not there to earn money, and he did not want silver or gold, v.33. In fact, he worked

as a tentmaker to support himself and his helpers. This was to give the elders of Ephesus an example of what the Lord taught, that there is more joy in giving than receiving, vs.33-35.

Peter warned the elders that they should not serve for money, 1 Peter 5:2. However, Paul told Timothy that the church should give “double honor” to those elders who served the church well, especially those who taught the Word. This honor could be money if an elder spends so much time in the assembly that he cannot earn enough at his work to support his own family properly, 1 Timothy 5:17,18.

But the elder’s real reward will be when the Head of the Church, the Chief Shepherd, gives him a glorious crown, as he stands before the angels and the whole Church. This joy will last forever and make any little sacrifice in this world seem small indeed. Elders can also have an inheritance with all the saints, Acts 20:32.

## **DISCIPLINE IN THE ASSEMBLY**

Elders should know the Scripture and set a good example for all others in the assembly. However, elders are only men, and Satan often attacks elders more than others. We must therefore see what the Bible says about sin in the assembly.

### ***Q: What should be done if an elder falls into sin?***

**A:** Elders are leaders, and sometimes people will accuse them falsely of doing wrong. We should never accept what only one person says; there must be at least two or three witnesses, Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Hebrews 10:28. This is important no matter who is accused of sinning.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught us what to do if a believer sins,

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Matthew 18:15-18:

1. **Go to him alone**, and ask him about this sin. If he confesses, you have won your brother, and you should not tell anyone else about this sin.
2. If he denies his sin, you should **take one or two others** and talk to him again. He or she may accept these witnesses and confess the sin.
3. If not, it is necessary to **tell the whole church**.
4. If he still refuses to confess, the church must **treat him as a sinner and put him out**. God will recognize the decision of the church if it is according to Scripture.

The elder is in a prominent position, and he must be rebuked before the church, 1 Timothy 5:20, even if he confesses his wrong.

### **Q: What should be done if someone else falls into sin?**

A: There are two reasons for putting anyone out of the church: *false teaching* and *sinful actions*.

Paul warned the elders of Ephesus that false teachers would come in, and, when Timothy was there, Paul told him about false teachers who were put out, 1 Timothy 1:3,20; 2 Timothy 2:17,18.

The apostle John also taught by the Spirit that we should not receive anyone who denies that Christ is God the Son, 2 John vs.7,9,10.

The Holy Spirit also has taught us what to do if any believer falls into sin. In the church of Corinth, a man became guilty of fornication, and the church put him out, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. Paul told them to:

clean out this sin in the assembly, because it would be like yeast, spreading through the whole church, v.7  
put away the wicked person, v:13.

The elders are responsible to see that no one in the assembly is going on in sin, but it is the whole church which gathers together, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and acts when putting someone out.

This is very solemn. Outside the assembly, Satan can attack this man, and God will judge him, vs.5,13. It is good that most people will listen to the elders and the whole church and will confess their sins before it becomes necessary to put them out.

The Bible says that we should warn those who are idle or disorderly, who do not walk or live as Paul teaches, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, and separate from them if they keep on in their unscriptural ways, 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14. Even so, we should not think of them as enemies, but keep on warning them as brothers.

We should not quarrel about small matters, but some persons are willing to divide a church rather than stop teaching their own thing. The elders should warn such a person once and again, and after that have nothing to do with him but avoid him as a sinner, Titus 3:9-11.

The Lord said we should treat a sinner like a heathen man and a tax-collector. We try to win such people for Christ, and we should try to bring every sinner to repentance. The church in Corinth put the sinful man out of the church, but later he repented and they received him back again, 2 Corinthians 2:6-11. God always judges His children when they fall into sin, but His purpose is to bring them back to Himself, Hebrews 12:7-11.







## *chapter eight*

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### What about deacons?

Not only are elders important for the overall health of the assembly, but so are deacons. When Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi, he addressed the letter: *“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”* Who were these deacons?

In the New Testament, the word “deacon” means *servant* or *helper*. Every believer must help in the church, just as every part of a man’s body is necessary for all the rest. So in this way, we are all “deacons”. However, the word is used for some who were specially active in helping in the church. Let us examine:

- 1. Some deacons in the early church**
- 2. qualifications of deacons**
- 3. How the deacons should serve**

#### **1. SOME OF THE DEACONS IN THE EARLY CHURCH**

Every believer tried to serve the Lord and to help in the church,

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but some were called deacons:

Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea, Romans 16:1

Paul and Apollos, preachers of the gospel, 1 Corinthians 3:5;  
Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:23

Paul and Timothy, teachers of the new covenant, 2 Corinthians 3:6; 6:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 11:23; 1 Timothy 4:6; Colossians 1 Tychicus, a faithful servant in the Lord, Ephesians 6:21

Epaphras, a servant of Christ for the church, Colossians 1:7

Stephanus and family, served the believers, 1 Corinthians 16:15.

### 2. QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

This word is also used for some who had special responsibility in the local church. Paul taught Timothy that the qualifications of the deacons should be almost as high as for the elders, 1 Timothy 3:8-12:

**v.8** They must be - serious, respectful

- truthful, sincere

- not heavy drinkers of wine

- not greedy for money.

**v.9** They must hold and keep hold of the truths of Scripture, even those which are hard to understand, and they must do so with a clear conscience, not with doubts in their minds. We noted that the elders must be able to teach the Word. Many deacons have this gift also, but it is not necessary. There are many things they can do to help the church

without teaching.

- v.10** The church should not accept new or young Christians as deacons until they have proven themselves. Then they can serve in this way if they are without fault. Overseers also must be without fault, Titus 1:7.
- v.11** A deacon's wife must also be serious and respectful. She must not be a gossip, going around talking about others or spreading false stories. She must be sober and temperate, and reliable and trustworthy in all things.
- v.12** Like the elders, deacons cannot serve if they have more than one wife. Again, the deacon and his wife must have well-behaved children, vs:2,4,5.

The work of a deacon was connected with the money of the church in some verses. For example, the apostles in Jerusalem did not think that they should take time to look after the money, and so they asked the church to choose seven men for this service, Acts 6:2-6. These seven men had a good reputation, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Two of them, Stephen and Philip, were soon known as good preachers of the gospel but as deacons they served the church in looking after the money. The word for *deacon*, or *service*, is also used in Acts 11:29 and 2 Corinthians 9:1 in connection with money matters, but in a more general way in Ephesians 4:12 for building up the body of Christ. Donald Norbie makes a helpful point:

*“...To limit the work of these servants or deacons to [managing money or] helping the widows or sickly is not wise. Scripture nowhere delineates the precise duties of deacons. They are helpers to the elders. Let the elders then, with the fellowship of the congregation, appoint godly men to assist in the details of church life as the need arises.*

*The work and appointment arose out of a current need. Hence Scripture is vague about the duties of deacons. The needs of churches vary according to the local situation. In fact, in the beginning of an assembly there may be no special needs that require such an appointment. However, as time goes on and a fellowship grows, a building may be acquired. This will require maintenance and care. The elders will need helpers to relieve them of such duties. They need to give themselves to the word, to prayer and to the spiritual needs of the flock.*

*[Deacons] should prove themselves first by their godly, consistent lives, 1 Timothy 3:8-12. Faithfulness in these responsibilities will qualify them for greater work later, 1 Timothy 3:13. Stephen served the church faithfully, exercised his spiritual gifts and was a powerful witness for the Lord Jesus. May all deacons follow his example, Acts 6 and 7.”<sup>1</sup>*

### **3. HOW SHOULD DEACONS SERVE?**

In Romans 12 the Spirit commands us to present ourselves as living sacrifices to serve the Lord. We all have some gift and everyone should use his gift fully for the blessing of all others. If we have the gift of serving as a deacon, we should do our best, v.7.

Deacons will not receive any reward in this world, but they may in the next, if they serve well, 1 Timothy 3:13. The main thing is to please the Lord. Some day, we may hear Him say, “Well done, you faithful servant.”

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1. Norbie, Donald L. *What is this business about Deacons?* Precious Seed Magazine (2001: Volume 56, Issue 3)

**The New Testament Church**  
**Chapters 7 & 8 EXAM 4**  
**What do Elders and Deacons do?**

**Enter the letter of the correct answer:**

1. In the New Testament
  - a. a bishop was over several churches
  - b. there were always several overseers over one church
  - c. elders were different from overseers
2. Elders
  - a. should heed, feed and lead the flock of God
  - b. do not need to be able to teach
  - c. can be new Christians as long as they have a good reputation
3. The Greek word for deacon (sometimes translated as servant)
  - a. means servant or helper
  - b. is never used in connection with money matters
  - c. is never used in reference to a woman
4. Deacons
  - a. must be able to teach
  - b. have special responsibilities in the local church
  - c. do not need to have proved themselves
5. The work and duties of deacons
  - a. are limited to managing money and helping the widows
  - b. arose out of a current need
  - c. are clearly delineated in Scripture

**Enter TRUE or FALSE for each:**

6. Elders have many duties and responsibilities in the church.
7. All elders were to be paid.
8. The elders are responsible to see that no one in the church is going on in sin.
9. Deacons are helpers to the elders.
10. Faithfulness in their responsibilities will qualify deacons for greater work later.

**WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

What are the benefits of having a plurality of elders as is taught in Scripture?



## *chapter nine*

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### What are the main activities of the local church?

We have seen that a growing church will have saints, overseers, and deacons. All these people have their responsibilities. Now we will look at the main activities of the assembly as a whole.

- 1. Teaching**
- 2. Fellowship**
- 3. Breaking Bread**
- 4. Prayer**
- 5. Spreading the Gospel**

The first four activities are taken from Acts 2:42. We will see how the early churches continued in these things, while they were also very active in getting out the gospel to others around them and far away.

#### **1. THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES**

The apostles taught the early believers the ways of God as He

had made them known in the Old Testament. They also gave them new truth as the Spirit revealed it to them, mostly about the Church.

There are no apostles alive today, but the Spirit of God has kept their writings for us through all these years. So we learn what we should teach from the Old Testament, Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11, but much more from the New. In Acts, the apostles kept on teaching the Word:

Paul and Barnabas, at Antioch, 11:26, 15:35

Paul, in Corinth, 18:1,11

Ephesus, 20:20.

What they taught is important, and we should obey this teaching today, Romans 6:17. Some in the assembly may receive the gift of teaching (see chapter 10 in this book), and they then should teach others, 1 Corinthians 14:26; 2 Timothy 2:2. The Spirit warns us against listening to false teaching, Matthew 15:9; Acts 15:1; Ephesians 4:14; Colossians 2:22; Titus 1:11; Hebrews 13:9; Revelation 2:14,15,20.

## 2. FELLOWSHIP

The early Christians had great joy in that they shared the same spiritual blessings. *Fellowship* means to share in common with one another, and they learned that God had called them into fellowship with His own Son, 1 Corinthians 1:9. They all shared in the blessings which come from the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:16. They rejoiced to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with the Holy Spirit also, 1 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 13:14. In fact, they shared in the nature of God, 2 Peter 1:4.

They, therefore, had fellowship together one with another, 1 John 1:7. They shared one another's sorrows as well as joys, for ex-



ample, in suffering with the apostles, or with Christians in prison, 2 Corinthians 1:7; Hebrews 10:33. They understood that they were all one Body in Christ, so they had everything in common.



At first, they shared together all that they possessed, Acts 2:44,45; 4:32. Their love for each other resulted in giving help to any one in need, for example, Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:16; 1 Timothy 6:18. The churches of Macedonia and Greece sent gifts of money to the poor believers in Jerusalem, Romans 15:26,27; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13. The church in Philippi shared with Paul in the expenses of preaching the gospel, Philippians 1:5; 4:14,15. This was having fellowship with Paul in the work of the Lord, and it is right that we should share what we have with those who teach us the Word of God, Galatians 6:6.

### 3. BREAKING BREAD

The Lord Jesus Christ asked us to remember Him because He died for us. We can think about the Lord any time and praise Him for what He is and all that He has done for us. But the Lord asked that we should do this together as a church by breaking bread.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record that first Lord's Supper. This is not surprising: They were there at the time. What is truly remarkable is that Paul, too, described the event even though **he was not physically there**. In fact, he wasn't even saved at the time of this hallowed event. Yet, he writes about the Lord's dying request in 1 Corinthians 11 in almost the same language. Was this simply a case of Paul copying what the other gospel writers had written? Surely not! Most scholars agree that Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was penned *before* the gospel accounts were recorded. Paul explains from whom he received this revelation, "*For I received **from the Lord** that which I also delivered to you*" v.23. This testifies, once again, to the divine Authorship of the Scrip-

tures. Notice the similarities yourself:

Matthew (ch.26) Mark (ch:14)		Luke (ch.22)	Paul (1 Corinthians 11)
took bread		took bread	took bread
blessed it, or gave thanks		gave thanks	gave thanks
broke it		broke it	broke it
Said, “Take, eat, this is My body”		Said, “Take, eat, this is My body given for you. Do this in re- membrance of Me.”	Said, “Take, eat, this is My body which is for you. Do this in re- membrance of Me.”
He took the cup		In the same way, He took the cup	In the same way, the cup
gave thanks, gave to them		and said,	after the supper, and said,
“Drink it, all of you. This is My blood of the new covenant poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins.”		“This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you.”	“This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you.”
 The <b>BREAD</b> speaks of the body of Christ which He gave for us. It also speaks of the oneness of His Body, the Church, 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17		 The <b>CUP</b> speaks of His suffering and sorrow, Luke 22:42, and of our blessing, 1 Corinthians 10:16.	
		“Do this, whenever you drink it, in remem- brance of Me. When- ever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”	

As we think of the Lord's Supper, we can't help but think ahead to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, Revelation 19:7. What a joy that will be! No more need for emblems then. We'll have Him!

We have seen that worship is important (Chapter 6), and meeting to remember the Lord is the best time to worship together as a church. When should we do this? The Lord did not command us as to when we should break bread. He simply said, "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup...", 1 Corinthians 11:26. However, the early Christians did so on the first day of the week, Acts 20:7, and this is a good practice to follow. How we need to be reminded often of the Lord's goodness to us!

The Spirit also showed Paul that believers are to put aside some money for their offering on the first day of the week, 1 Corinthians 16:2. This is a sacrifice which we can make at the breaking of bread, along with the sacrifice of praise. The deacons may use this offering of money:

- to pay for the expenses of the church building
- to give some to poor people
- to give to widows in the church, 1 Timothy 5:3
- to help evangelists and teachers in the work of the Lord.

They should keep records of all money which is received in the offerings and should report to the church how the money is used. At least two men should be responsible for the money. Even Titus did not handle money by himself. The churches in Macedonia chose a brother to go with him and carry their gift to Jerusalem, 2 Corinthians 8:16-22.

Giving to the Lord is important. We should save up treasure in heaven, Matthew 6:19-21, not on earth. The Spirit gave Paul some

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teaching on this subject in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. He told the Philipians that their gift of sacrifice was sweet-smelling, like that of the Lord Jesus Christ, Philippians 4:18; Ephesians 5:2.

In a church, all believers are priests and should be ready to worship God. We worship God in spirit and, most of the time, silently. Everything should be done in order; God does not like disorder. Two or three men may preach or teach, but only one at a time, I Corinthians 14:29-33,40.

Only born again Christians can worship in spirit and in truth. Unsaved people may come to the breaking of bread, but they should not share in the bread or the cup until they are saved. How can they reject God's Son and worship Him too?

This is another good reason to take up the offering from Christians when the church comes together to break bread. Unsaved people often think that they can buy their way into heaven by giving their money to the church. The Lord's people alone should support the Lord's work.

### 4. PRAYER

We should be ready to pray at all times, asking the Lord for what we need, according to His will, and thanking Him for all His goodness to us. The early church met together for prayer, and this is important, Acts 4:31; 12:5,12; 13:3. The apostle, by the Spirit, taught that men should pray in the church at all times, for the government, and for all men that they may be saved, 1 Timothy 2:1-4,8. The apostle Paul asked the churches to pray for him, Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:18,19; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; also the writer of Hebrews in 13:18.

## 5. SPREADING THE GOSPEL

It is not God's will that anyone should be lost, and this truth is found throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament. The church should be a testimony to outsiders, 1 Corinthians 14:23-25. From the church in Ephesus, the gospel spread out to the entire province of Asia, in only two years' time, Acts 19:10.

Cenchrea was a small town near Corinth. We do not read that any of the apostles preached in Cenchrea, but there was a church there, Romans 16:1. It seems that the believers of Corinth went out and started a work in that town. The early churches met in believers' houses.

The church should also help those who go out to preach in other lands. In Antioch, the Spirit chose two of the five teachers, the best two, to go out on a great missionary journey, the best two. The church should be willing to send out its best young men and women, Romans 10:14,15. It is necessary to pray for them all the time because they are facing the enemy who would like to destroy them. It is also necessary to support them with church gifts so they can continue in the work of the Lord without having to spend too much time working for their daily food. The missionaries should come back and report to the church about the blessing which the Lord has given, Acts 14:27.

Paul and Barnabas went to different nations to preach the gospel. Those nations had different languages and customs and their own religions. Paul and the apostles suffered persecution; sometimes the people beat them and threw them into prison, but they kept on. When some were saved, the apostles gathered them together and taught them more about God. The Spirit gave gifts to these little churches, and they were able to continue after the apos-

tles had left. But the apostles came back again and again to help them and to teach them more truth.

It is the same today. There are no apostles, but missionaries are doing these things. Every church should think about sending out the gospel to other tribes and nations. The church should pray for those whom they send out for this work. They also should support them with their gifts of money.

It must be stressed time and again: While all these activities are expected of the local church, they cannot be achieved through human energy. In order to fulfill God's pattern, we need God's power. He unleashes that power through His Holy Spirit working in us and through us. To do this, the Holy Spirit gives every believer one or more spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10. Let's examine these next.



## *chapter ten*

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### Gifts for the Church

**“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren,  
I do not want you to be ignorant.”**

**— 1 Corinthians 12:1**

God is a giver. He gave us His **Son**, John 3:16. His Son gives us **Salvation**, John 10:11, and He gives **soul-rest**, Matthew 11:28. God gives us His **Spirit**, Romans 5:5. He gives us **security**: A child of God need not fear losing His standing with God, John 10:28. He has given us His **Scriptures** to help us navigate our way through this journey of faith, John 17:14. The hymn writer correctly concludes, “He giveth and giveth and giveth again.”

But God has given His people a different set of gifts as well. All the above gifts are for the personal benefit and encouragement of the Christian. But the spiritual gifts that Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 12 — gifts for service — are for the benefit and encour-

agement of *others*. They are for the “*perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*” Ephesians 4:11-13.

This is amazing grace! The Lord Jesus Christ not only saves us and sets us apart for Himself. He also invites us to be co-workers with Him in the building up of His Church, 1 Corinthians 3:9.

Let us consider:

- 1. The Distribution of the Gifts
- 2. The Differences in the Gifts

1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE GIFTS

The Spirit teaches about gifts for the Church in three key passages of the New Testament. We discover that each Person in the God-head is responsible for giving these gifts:

PASSAGE	THE GIVER	THE RECIPIENTS	THE GIFTS
Romans 12	The Father	Christians	Various Functions *
Ephesians 4	The Son	The Church	Individual Believers **
1 Corinthians 12	The Holy Spirit	Christians	Divine enablements
* See also 1 Peter 4:10,11    ** See also 1 Corinthians 12:28			

2. THE DIFFERENCES IN THE GIFTS

Error can creep into the church if we don’t understand the differences between spiritual gifts. Here are all the gifts listed:



Romans 12:6-8	1 Cor. 12:8-10	1 Cor. 12:28-29	Eph. 4:11	1 Peter 4:10-
		apostles	apostles	
	special wisdom			
prophecy	prophecy	prophets	prophets	
encouraging				
teaching		teachers	teachers	
	special knowl.			
				speaking
			shepherds	
			evangelists	
	miracles	miracles		
	special faith			
	healing gifts	healing gifts		
serving				serving
giving		helps		
show mercy				
leaders		leaders		
	tongues	tongues		
	interp. tongues	interp. tongues		
	identify evil spirits			

These gifts had different purposes during the beginning, middle and current stages of Church growth:

Beginning	In-Between	Continuing
<p><b>Purpose of Gifts: REVELATION</b></p> <p>These gifts were meant to reveal the mind of God to His people before the New Testament was complete. These helped lay the foundation for the Church. Having served their purpose, these gifts have ceased. (Eph. 2:20)</p>	<p><b>Purpose of Gifts: SIGN (PROOFS)</b></p> <p>These gifts were meant to validate or prove that the apostles were really speaking on behalf of God. Once the canon of Scripture was complete, both foundational and sign gifts were no longer needed. (1 Cor. 13:8-10)</p>	<p><b>Purpose of Gifts: EDIFY</b></p> <p>These gifts are on-going and will remain so until the Church has reached completion,*unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* (Eph. 4:13). We must seek to use these gifts to the glory of the Lord Jesus.</p>

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### Further Explanation to the Chart:

Some of these gifts were necessary in the early days as signs to the Jews that Christ had risen from death. The Jews demanded signs, John 4:48; 6:30; 1 Corinthians 1:22, but many did not believe them, John 12:37; Acts 28:28. God gave Israel every opportunity to repent, then He took away the sign-gifts.

*Miracles of healing:* Peter and Paul had this gift, but it was for a special sign. James taught that the elders should pray for any sick person, especially if he or she had been guilty of some sin, James 5:14-16. But Paul told Timothy to take a little wine as medicine to help his stomach, 1 Timothy 5:23. Paul did not quickly heal his good helper, Epaphroditus, who nearly died, Philippians 2:26,27. Paul did not cure Trophimus but left him behind, 2 Timothy 4:20.

*Special wisdom and special knowledge* were necessary before the New Testament was complete. At first the believers had only the Old Testament and there were very few copies except in the Jewish synagogues. Many problems arose in the churches, so God gave special gifts of wisdom or knowledge to some of the Christians. Now we can study the whole Bible and learn about God, but this takes time. The Spirit said that special knowledge would come to an end, along with the gift of telling the future, 1 Corinthians 13:8.

*Different tongues* also would cease. The Spirit gave this gift to a few believers as a sign, and some used this gift in the church meeting. The Spirit told the Corinthians that this should be done only if someone could explain what was said and, also, that everything must be in an orderly way, chapter 14:28,40.

*Discerning spirits* was also necessary before the Bible was complete. Now we can tell that some teaching is false because it does not agree with the Word of God, 1 John 4:1.

So today, not all the spiritual gifts listed in the Bible are in operation. It is important to understand this, or we might begin to stray from God's Word and will bring trouble upon our local churches.

Some of the gifts still in use today in our local churches are the evangelists, teachers, and shepherds. The *evangelists* win people for Christ, and the Holy Spirit adds these new believers to the church. The *teachers* explain the ways of God to all the Lord's people. The *shepherds* feed and lead the sheep and bring back those who start to go away from the Lord. It is beneficial if the elders of the church have the gifts of shepherding, teaching, and leading.

### REMEMBER!

Everyone has a spiritual gift, 1 Corinthians 12:7.

Only the Holy Spirit can choose which gift to give to each person.

All gifts are for the blessing of the whole church.

We should each try to use our gift fully for the Lord's glory, 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6.

### Another Important Difference: Men's Gifts and Women's Gifts

Every believer has some gift from the Holy Spirit — men, women and children. Four daughters of Philip were prophesying, and Phoebe had the gift of serving the church at Cenchrea. Priscilla with her husband Aquila could explain the Word of God to Apollos, Acts 18:26. Lois and Eunice could teach the child Timothy the Holy Scriptures, 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15. In Christ, there is neither male nor fe-

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male, Galatians 3:28; that is, we are all saved in the same way, by faith. We are all children of God, we have all put on Christ, and we are all heirs according to God’s promise.

There are only two differences between men and women in the New Testament Church.

Difference #1 - The Woman’s Head

A woman should cover her head when she prays or speaks.

	Read 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and note:
v.3	God is the <b>Head of Christ</b> ;
	Christ is the <b>Head of the man</b> ;
	man is the <b>head of the woman</b> .
v. 4	A man dishonors Christ, his Head, when he prays
	or prophesies <b>with a covering on his own head</b> .
v. 5	A woman dishonors her head, her husband (or her
	father), when she prays or prophesies <b>without a</b>
	<b>covering on her head</b> . These verses are part of
	God’s Word, so she also dishonors Christ her Head
	when she <b>disobeys</b> .
v. 6	She might as well have all her hair cut off and her
	head shaved.

	Read 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and note:
<b>v.7</b>	God made man for <b>His glory</b> , Genesis 1:27.
<b>vs.8,9</b>	Woman <b>was made for man</b> , Genesis 2:22.
<b>v.10</b>	<b>Angels</b> see the head covering as a sign that the
	woman is under the authority of her husband and
	of Christ.
<b>vs.11,12</b>	Both man and woman <b>need each other</b> .
<b>v.13</b>	<b>It does not seem proper</b> for a woman to pray or
	prophecy with her head uncovered.
<b>vs.14,15</b>	Woman's hair <b>grows long naturally</b> , much longer
	than a man's, and woman's long hair is beautiful.
<b>v.16</b>	It was the custom in all the churches: <b>men</b> pray or
	prophecy with their <b>heads bare</b> ; women cover
	<b>their heads</b> .

Today, many women resist this teaching because they feel that they are equal to men. So they are. In fact, in many ways, they are better than men. But the Lord asks them to show their love for Him by obeying this simple command. Some men also wear hats even when they pray or speak in a church meeting. They too should obey these things and take their hats off. "If a man loves Me, he will keep My words."

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Difference #2 — The Woman’s Voice

The second difference is that women may not speak (teach) in a church gathering. Notice the clear teaching in the Bible:

1 Corinthians 14:34-38	1 Timothy 2:11-15
<p><b>v.34</b> Women should keep silent in church gatherings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- not allowed to speak</li><li>- must <b>obey</b>, as in O.T. Law</li></ul> <p><b>v.35</b> She should learn at home; ask husband (or father).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- a shame for women to speak in church gatherings.</li></ul> <p><b>v.36</b> The Word comes from God; it is for all the churches.</p> <p><b>v.37</b> A prophet or a spiritual man must agree that Paul was writing the commands of the Lord.</p> <p><b>v. 38</b> God will judge those who refuse to obey this command.</p>	<p><b>v.11</b> must <b>obey</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- learn in the church in silence</li></ul> <p><b>v.12</b> She should not teach or take authority over a man.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- She must remain silent.</li></ul> <p><b>v.13</b> God formed Adam first.</p> <p><b>v.14</b> Eve was deceived, not Adam.</p> <p><b>v.15</b> Woman sinned and has great pain in bearing children, but usually she will be able to bring them up properly.</p>

The Spirit teaches the same thing in both passages, that women should be quiet in church gatherings, but He gives different details and reasons. Some people think that Paul was speaking on his own authority and so this teaching is not for us today. But it is all part of God’s Word and we must do what He says, even when we do not fully understand. There is no true joy in following man’s teaching instead of God’s.

## **The New Testament Church**

### **Chapters 9 & 10 EXAM 5**

#### **The Main Activities of the Church - Gifts for the Church**

**Enter the letter of the correct answer:**

1. The Lord Jesus
  - a. gave a special revelation to John about 'breaking bread'
  - b. commanded believers to 'break bread' every week
  - c. commanded believers to 'break bread' in remembrance of Him
2. The Church
  - a. should be a testimony to outsiders
  - b. is not responsible for evangelising other lands
  - c. has no financial responsibilities outside the church
3. Spiritual gifts - gifts for service - are
  - a. for the benefit and encouragement of others
  - b. for personal benefit and encouragement
  - c. given only to special believers
4. According to Scripture
  - a. Every believer has some gift from the Holy Spirit
  - b. Men's and women's gifts are the same
  - c. There are no differences in roles for men and women in the New Testament Church
5. The practice of taking bread and wine
  - a. was introduced by the Lord Himself
  - b. was revealed to Paul
  - c. both of the above

**Enter TRUE or FALSE for each:**

6. Believers today do not need to study the Old Testament
7. Fellowship means to share in common with one another.
8. In order to fulfil God's pattern, we need God's power.
9. Spiritual gifts are given only by the Holy Spirit.
10. God's Word teaches that 'God is the head of Christ:  
Christ is the head of man: man is the head of woman'.

#### **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

What is your gift and are you using it for the building up the Church?



## *chapter eleven*

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### *Who's really in charge?*

We have seen that the New Testament pattern includes several bishops, or overseers, in every church. In today's religious landscape, there is often one bishop over several churches, and there are hundreds of bishops in all the different denominations of churches.

What about the Lord's Church as a whole? Do we need a Bishop, or Overseer, over all the churches? Yes, and the Holy Spirit tells us who that Bishop is. In 1 Peter 2:25 the Lord Jesus Christ is called the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Some Bibles use a different English word, but, in the Greek language, it is the same as the one used for bishop or overseer in Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7. As Shepherd, the Lord died for us, feeds and leads us, and will give us rewards when He comes again. As Overseer, He wants to know if we are following Him in all things here and now.

#### **CHRIST AND THE SEVEN CHURCHES**

The Lord is seen as Overseer of the churches in Revelation 1 to



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3. He has the right to ask questions and to discipline us if we do not obey. That Christ is keenly interested in the health of His local gatherings is seen in the vision He gave to John in Revelation 1:12-18. He examines them each carefully and provides His own holy evaluation. Look at what we discover about Christ:

**v.12** Christ is seen standing among seven gold lampstands, which are pictures of the churches.

**v.13** He looked like a man (He is a Man) but a man in glory, the Son of Man. He was wearing a robe like the High Priest or King, Exodus 28:4; 1 Kings 22:10, with a gold band around His breast.

**v.14** His hair was as white as wool or snow, like God, Daniel 7:9. His eyes were like blazing fire. He can see everything and will burn up whatever is not according to God's will. Seven times He said to the seven churches, "I know your works."

**v.15** His feet were like bronze, because He is ready and able to judge and stamp out every evil thing in His churches. His voice is loud enough to drown out all other sounds or voices.

**v.16** In His right hand He held seven stars, the messengers of the seven churches, v.20. John saw a sharp sword coming out of His mouth. This is the Word of God, Ephesians 6:17, and He will judge the churches according to His Word, the holy Bible. His face was like the bright sun, Matthew 17:2. No wonder that John fell down like a dead man before this glorious Person. But the Lord told John who He was and what he John to do.

The Lord Jesus Christ had a message for each of the seven churches of the province of Asia, Revelation chapters 2 and 3. There are churches today in the world like one or another of these seven in Asia, and the Spirit has a message for each one.

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## CHRIST EVALUATES HIS LAMPSTANDS

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### EPHESUS

This church is busy with a flurry of activity (their “labour” is mentioned twice!). They do not accept evil teaching or evil men. **BUT** they have left some of their first love for the Lord, and He tells them to repent or that He will take away their opportunity to witness for Him.

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### SMYRNA

This church is suffering persecution from the enemy. Some of them will be thrown into prison; some will die for Christ's sake. The Lord promises them crowns if they remain faithful to Him.

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### PERGAMUM

These also work for the Lord and do not deny His Name, even though one of them gets killed. **BUT** they live where Satan's throne is, and they accept some false teachers. The Lord commands them to repent, or He will fight against them with the Word of God. You see how important it is to live and do everything according to God's Word.

### THYATIRA

This church also does many good works, perhaps they even teach that this is the way of salvation, which is bad doctrine. They allow a woman to teach them, and she says they can commit fornication and worship images. Christ is ready to judge such churches but there is a small group of true believers also in this church. He tells them to hold fast to the truth which they have learned.

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### SARDIS

People think that this church has a good name, **BUT** the Lord says they are dead. They say they are Christians and believe parts of the Bible, but they do not have eternal life. Again, there is a small group who truly believe, but they still stay in a dead church. The Lord gives them a special promise.

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### PHILADELPHIA

This church has some strength, keeps the word of the Lord Jesus, and does not deny His name. He gives them an open door of service and promises that everyone will know that He loves them. Philadelphia means “Brotherly Love”.

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### LAODICEA

This church is neither cold nor hot. They love the world and think they are rich, but the Lord warns them that they are very poor. He stands outside the door, but He would be glad to come in and have fellowship with anyone in this church who will receive Him.

## WHAT ARE THE GREAT DANGERS FOR CHURCHES TODAY?

In **Ephesus**, they had *left their first love*. We must keep close to the Lord and serve Him faithfully, or we too will lose our love for the Lord.

In **Smyrna**, the enemy was trying to *force the believers back to their old religion*. Satan persecutes this church and kills some of the believers.

In **Pergamos** and **Thyatira**, there were *false teachers*. Some come from within the church; some come from outside, Acts 20:29,30. They look like good Christians, but really they are like wolves wearing sheep's clothing, Matthew 7:15.

The main lesson that we learn from the Lord's evaluation of these churches is this: Spiritual activity is important, but it is necessary to constantly grow our love for the Lord Jesus. As we know Him more, we will desire to know His Word more. And as we know His Word more, we will love Him more!

Also, we will be kept safe from those who would try to lead us astray. We must be on the look-out for those who:

try to teach that we must be saved by works, Acts 15:1;  
Galatians 1:8,9.

tell us they have a new religion and that we should worship  
angels, Colossians 2:18.

teach us to follow the Law, 1 Timothy 1:6,7,19.

teach a lot of truth with a small dose of error mixed in, as was  
the case when some taught that the resurrection was  
past, 2 Timothy 2:18.

claim to communicate with evil spirits which tell lies,

1 Timothy 4:1.

outrightly teach terrible false doctrine which God will surely judge, 2 Peter 2:1.

teach that God's grace means we can do anything we want, that we do not have to obey Jesus as Lord, Jude v.4.

teach that Christ is not God's Son. We should not receive them or listen to them, 2 John vs.9-11.

False teaching is Satan's effort to take away honor from the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes these teachers say that He is not really God the Son: He could not do something. He did not know everything, He could have sinned. They say He is less than God.

Others say that His work was not good enough to save us. We must add our good works or pay money to be saved. All these teachers want money, and most of them become very rich. But God will judge them.

Many people today call themselves "Christians" and they teach that we should have one great church organization, the ecumenical church. They say that Jesus prayed to His Father that "they all may be one". It is true that the Lord Jesus prayed these words, but then He said He wanted us to be one as He and the Father are one, that is, spiritually one. Now all true believers are spiritually one, because the one Holy Spirit dwells in us all. We have seen in Chapter 2 that we are one Body. This is the work of God — no man can make us one Body, and no demon can destroy it.

The only organization in the New Testament is the local church. There was no denomination with a man as the head, dividing his church from the other believers. Some in Corinth tried to divide the church by following Peter or Paul or Apollos, but Paul told them this

was very bad, 1 Corinthians 3:3-9. Even in one country or province, we do not read of the Church of Galatia, but the churches of Galatia, Galatians 1:2. Today we have groups of churches with various names. These are all dividing up the Body of Christ.

There was no organization of churches in the New Testament and no command to unite all Christians in the world under one great organization. We have seen that we should not join up with unbelievers or those who deny the truth about Christ, 2 Corinthians 6:14. There should be happy fellowship between independent churches who love the Lord. A church could send a letter to another church to introduce a believer who wanted to move or travel, Acts 18:27. Churches can join together for some special purpose, like sending money to the poor, 2 Corinthians 8:1-4. But this is quite different from setting up a man or a few men to control the affairs of many churches, giving them a name different from all others, making rules for them to follow.

The Lord Jesus Christ alone is our Bishop, Shepherd, and Overseer. He is alive and well, He is present with us, and we need or want no other. He promises rewards to those who are faithful in any church. And, dear Christian, take heart: He is coming soon! And when He does, what will happen to the Church then?





## *chapter twelve*

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### The future of the Church

We learned that the Church began at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down to dwell in every believer. This made many persons into one Body, the Body of Christ, who is the Head. Now we ask, “How long will the Church continue to exist?” We can think of the Church’s future in two aspects:

- 1. The Church up until the Lord comes**
- 2. The Church after the Lord comes, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, at the Wedding, back on the earth and then existing in heaven forever and ever.**

#### **1. THE CHURCH BEFORE CHRIST COMES**

The Lord Jesus Christ said that all the power of death could not overcome the Church which He was going to build, Matthew 16:18. The apostles died, all the early believers died, but the Church is still going on. Satan has tried to kill Christians and still does, but the Bible says that many will still be alive when the Lord comes. There



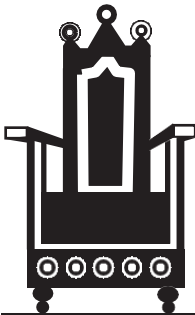
are two main passages that teach us about the coming of the Lord, when the Church will be removed from this earth: 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-58:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18	1 Corinthians 15:51-58
<b>v.15</b> Some believers will be alive when the Lord returns.	<b>v.51</b> We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed.
<b>v.16</b> There will be a shout, the voice of the Archangel, and <i>the trumpet sound</i> ; the Lord comes down, <i>dead believers</i> will rise first.	<b>v.52</b> Very suddenly, in the blinking of an eye, we'll hear <i>the trumpet sound</i> . <i>Dead believers</i> will be raised; living believers will be changed.
<b>v.17</b> Living believers will be caught up to the clouds and meet the Lord in the air. We shall be with Him forever.	<b>v.53</b> The bodies we have now can die, but our new bodies will never die. <b>vs.54-57</b> So death will be overcome.
<b>v.18</b> We should <i>comfort and warn</i> one another with these words.	<b>v.58</b> Therefore we should <i>stand firm and steady and keep busy</i> for the Lord.

We may use the word “rapture” for the coming of the Lord for His Church because we will all be “caught up” to Him in the air. This will be followed by a time of terrible trouble on earth when God judges both Jews and Gentiles for the sin of rejecting Christ. The Church, of course, will not experience this as She will be in Heaven where Christians will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2. THE CHURCH AFTER CHRIST COMES

After the Rapture, we will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Many believers will receive rewards, or crowns, for serving the Lord faithfully, Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 9:25.



2 Cor. 5:10

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.."

Romans 14:10-12	1 Corinthians 3:12-15	2 Corinthians 5:9,10
We shall all stand before Judgment.	Our works will be shown.	We must all appear before the Judgment Seat.
Everyone will give a verbal account of himself to God.	Revealed by fire of what sort it is:  Gold, silver, precious stones will survive fire; we receive a reward. Wood, hay, straw will be burned up; this will mean great loss, but believer will be saved.	We will receive the things done while alive,  good or bad
So do not judge one another.	So be careful how you build up the Church.	Make it your aim to please the Lord.

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After this judgment, there will be the Wedding Feast when Christ will take His Church as His Bride, Revelation 19:7-9. Then the Lord will come to this world as King of kings and Lord of lords and will rule for a thousand years. The Church will be with Him as His Bride. At the end of these thousand years, Christ will triumph over the last assault that Satan and his armies will wage against Him. Then the Church will enjoy basking in the glory and love of the Savior forever.

### **A GLORIOUS PROSPECT!**

God will get glory from Christ Jesus and His Church forever and ever, Ephesians 3:21. So the Church is eternal; it will never cease to exist.

We have:

eternal life, John 3:15-16,36; 5:24; 6:40; 10:28; Romans 6:23;  
Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:13; Jude v.21

eternal salvation and redemption, Hebrews 5:9; 9:12

eternal inheritance, Hebrews 9:15

eternal glory, 2 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 5:10.

The Church will be glorious in the future. It is very precious to the Lord Jesus Christ today. He loves His Church, and we ought to do the same. And if we share His love for the Church, we will seek to build up our local churches just as He has taught us in His Word. This will bring pleasure to Him.

The Church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
she is His new creation  
by water and the Word.  
From heaven, He came and sought her  
to be His holy bride;  
with His own blood He bought her,  
and for her life He died.

—*Samuel J. Stone, 1839-1900*

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## **The New Testament Church**

### **Chapters 11 & 12 EXAM 6**

#### **Who's Really in Charge? - The Future of the Church**

**Enter the letter of the correct answer:**

1. In Revelation chapters 2 & 3 we learn that the Church in
  - a. Ephesus is suffering persecution from the enemy
  - b. Pergamum have lost their first love
  - c. Laodicea is neither hot nor cold
2. In Revelation chapters 2 & 3 we learn that the Church in
  - a. Philadelphia is give an open door of service
  - b. Smyrna is commanded to repent
  - c. Sardis is promised crowns if they remain faithful
3. Before Christ comes
  - a. everyone will be saved
  - b. Christians should stand firm and keep busy for the Lord
  - c. the Church may be overcome
4. The Lord Jesus Christ
  - a. will one day rule this world as King of Kings and Lord of Lords
  - b. will triumph over the last assault that Satan and his armies will wage against Him
  - c. both a. and b.
5. At the Judgement Seat of Christ
  - a. we will give an account of our sin
  - b. we will give an account of our service
  - c. we will find out if we are saved or not

**Enter TRUE or FALSE for each:**

- 6 As Overseer, Jesus wants to know if we are following Him in all things here and now. \_
- 7 False teachers always come from outside. \_
- 8 At the Coming of the Lord, living believers will rise first.
- 9 All believers will appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ.
- 10 God will be glorified through Christ and His Church forever.

#### **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

How can we recognize false teaching?

