



YOU SHOULD KNOW THE

ONE

TRUE CHURCH

AS IT IS REVEALED IN

THE BIBLE

E z e k i e l A k i n y e m i

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The apostle John introduces us to the book of Revelation with these words: "*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand*". The things which are written in this small booklet have a claim. This claim is that they are written in harmony with the inspired word of the living God. On this ground, I confidently and prayerfully commend the writing to all readers. My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you will not think of me or what I have said in this booklet above the word of God – the Bible.

You are all aware of the various religious sects in the world today. Christendom has been divided into warring sects, each claiming to be serving God the right way. This group says: "We are on the right way," and another says, "Ours is the best.": "Everyone tries to claim himself better than all others. Was this the situation in the days of the apostles when the church started? No, it wasn't at all, because both the apostles and all Christians were members of one church. They were known by one name, one system of organization, one form of doctrine, one system of worship, and one way of becoming members, and in practically all aspects, the New Testament church was one united entity. There were no denominations or sects at all. Those who were even trying to sectarianize themselves at that time were condemned for it (I Corinthians 1: 10 – 13).

I am, therefore, prompted to write this booklet to show all my fellow men the nature of the New Testament church which Christ purchased with his blood. From the New

Testament we can determine its origin, name, worship, organization, doctrine, mission, membership, life, and destiny. And this is precisely what this booklet has done. Since the Bible is the sure and infallible decider of that which is right, go ahead and study this booklet with your Bible to find out which is the one true church, the only one Christ died for. You will agree that the church that belongs to Christ is the only acceptable one in God's sight. In it are all spiritual blessings, confidence, assurance, and hope. In others are doubts, guesses, insecurity, and hope that wane with the passing of materialism. In the Lord's church, it is all faith that is rooted, and a hope that is anchored in the word of God. In others are human opinions, ideas, and creeds that can't save even a single soul. Jesus said of them, *"Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted shall be rooted up"*.

Study this booklet with a critical, but honest and searching mind. Your doing so will be mostly rewarding. If at the end of your study, you are convinced it is in harmony with the word of God, I urge nothing upon you than that you proved your magnanimity by doing the things you learn.

Are you a leader of a religious movement? Have a deep pause, and measure yourself and your establishment with the divine standard, because of the possibility that you might fall into the category of those who are zealous of God, and confident that they would be with Christ in eternal glory, but would be shamefully rejected on the day of judgment, thus rendering your hope vain because your zeal and your religious exercise and works have not been guided by the law of Christ - the New Testament which is

the will of His father in heaven. Read the warning of Christ to this effect in Matthew 7: 21-23.

Are you a follower and partaker in the works of sectarian leaders and their establishment? You might also fall into the class of those who are described as the blind who follow blind leaders and false standards, your end in eternal destruction. Jesus warned, *"Leave them alone, for if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"*(Matthew 15: 13, 14).

Are you a follower of Mohammed or a worshipper of some kind of god? Jesus declared, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no cometh unto the father, but by me"*(John 14:6). This is exclusive. No middle way. You either accept Christ and obey Him or reject Him and await your eternal doom. Apostle Peter also declared of Jesus Christ, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* Therefore, I entreat you most earnestly to take up your bible and search with me through the following lessons. Should there be any doubt in you about any aspect of what I have expressed; feel free to address your questions with me. Our eternal destiny warrants we should look into these things scrupulously.

Finally, I would add my thanks to many of my brethren who have been grounded and settled in the faith, whose style of writing with spiritual insight has influenced this writing. The chief of them are the inspired writers of the New Testament. in fact, I have not written a new thing, but what those inspired apostles have said I simply repeat, for I dare not say or write a new thing. Apostle Paul said, *" But*

though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). In fearful recognition of this warning, I commend this booklet to all men: and if by it a soul is led to Christ, I shall feel the joy of my effort.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND/THIRD EDITION

As the contents of this booklet touch on the truth relative to the welfare of the soul of man, our only sure infallible source of information is the Bible. The first two chapters of this second edition are therefore added to focus on this unique book, the Bible.

Furthermore, a few points of emphasis are added in a few of the chapters, while the last chapter focuses on sin and the sacrifice of Christ. All the contents of the first edition are intact since neither I nor anyone has found anything therein contrary to the doctrine of Christ. I, therefore, commend it to your critical, but unbiased and sober scrutiny.

There is no addition to the content, but an effort has been made in this edition to improve the print quality to make the book more readable. Therefore, I encourage you to read and digest with all sincerity to obtain the blessings reserved for you.

WHAT SOME PREACHERS SAY

"I think the content of the manuscript, its arrangement, and its comprehensive is excellent. I know of no work in print that I think covers as much material in so brief a book. I would heartily recommend your book if printed neatly both for use there and anywhere the English language is used. It would be great if translated into Yoruba.

Leslie Deistelkamp

"The proposed publishing of the booklet on series of articles in the defender (vol. 2) is, in my opinion, good. There should be no doubt about whether it will be received. The soundness of the material is a must for those who have interest in the lost".

D.D. IsongUyo.

CONTENTS

Preface to the First

Edition _____ *iii*

Preface to the Second /Third Edition _____ *iv*

What Some Preachers say _____ *viii*

Chapter One

The Bible and Its Purpose _____ *1*

Chapter Two

The law by Moses - Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ ___ *9*

Chapter Three

Christianity _____ *18*

Chapter Four

The origin of the Church of Christ _____ *24*

Chapter Five

The Name of One True Church _____ *34*

Chapter Six

The Worship of the Church _____ *40*

Chapter Seven

The Organization of the Church _____ **53**

Chapter Eight

The Mission of the Church _____ **63**

Chapter Nine

Entrance into the church _____ **70**

Chapter Ten

The Doctrine of the Church of Christ _____ **78**

Chapter Eleven

The Life and Destiny of the Church of Christ _____ **84**

Chapter Twelve

*Some facts about Sin and the
Sacrifice of Jesus Christ* _____ **92**

CHAPTER 1

GOD DICTATED, CHOSEN MEN OF GOD WROTE

The Bible came from God. He used men as instruments in giving the Bible to all mankind, "*Holy men of God spoke and they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (II Peter 1:21). "*Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth*" (I Corinthians 2:13). It is further declared, "*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*" "*I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and what thou seest, write in a book*" (Revelation 1:11). The above passages of scripture show very plainly that God is the real author of the Bible, but used men as instruments.

Incontrovertible Evidence of Divine Inspiration

We have both internal and external evidence to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the Bible originated from God. Note a few:

Incredible Unity

1. It is a book of remarkable unity. About forty men were involved in the writing which took a period of about 1,500 years. These men had varying backgrounds, spoke different languages, lived in different areas and generations, and were not educated men by the world's standards. Yet their writings blend into a completely

harmonious whole without contradictions or discord. It is, therefore, never necessary to rewrite the Bible because it is ever up-to-date, being free of error from the beginning. It is only the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent God who could have done such a wonderful job, as it is written in II Timothy 3:16: "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God.*" That is God breathed out the words, and by His spirit moved men to speak and write the Bible

Indisputable Accuracy

2. The accuracy of the Bible in its reference to any scientific fact is convincing evidence that all the writings were guided by God. Some facts are scientific in nature but revealed and stated in the bible hundreds of years before men who are regarded as learned scientists discovered them through research and experiments in laboratories. This proves the bible in its reference to any scientific facts as original and accurate. Only God could have revealed such to primitive men who did neither research nor experiment.

No Geographical or Historical Discrepancies

3. The Bible is not only scientifically accurate but contains none of the geographical and historical inaccuracies that characterize the writings of men which are often outdated because of errors.

Prophecies Faultlessly Fulfilled

4. Fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament are another strong proof that the Bible is from God. Can any man (spiritualist or prophet) tell who will be head of State of his own country ten years from now – name his mother,

his town: tell what specific things he would accomplish and what would be the manner of his death? This is beyond man, even in the realm of speculations.

But the prophecies of the Old Testament, written hundreds of years in advance of events foretold, containing details that are beyond the scope of human speculations, yet fulfilled in minute details, constitute an unchallengeable proof of the fact that the Bible is from the Creator of man.

Immutable Moral Principles

5. The moral principles outlined in the Bible are beyond the scope of human sentiment. The book deals with every relationship of man simply and practically in a manner that is universally practicable. No wonder, man is ever and will ever be on trial before the Bible. The moral teachings of the Koran and other religious books are so sentimentally confused and inconsistent that revisions of them are made from time to time to soothe man's physical desires. They are all wrapped up in what is called situational ethics. This itself has rendered their claim to divinity very hollow.

The fact of sin, its origin, its devastating effects on the physical and spiritual life of moral creatures, and the eternal solution to this malady- redemption from sin wrought for man by the Christ of God, and obtainable freely through Him – have been the main theme of the unique Book. No other book on earth possesses such an attribute.

Unchallengeable Originality

6. The originality of the Bible in all its characteristics is veritable evidence of its divinity. The universe and all therein is a creation of God. Sure, you agree this creative

work of God is original. Just as the originality of the creative work of God is unchallengeable, just so is the originality of the Bible, a creature of God, unchallengeable.

Information about the true nature of God, the origin of earthly things, how sin entered into the world and its debasing effects on man, the duty and destiny of man, and the end of the world are original with, and indeed exclusive to the Bible.

Take time, if you wish, to examine the Koran of Mohammed, the Tripitaka of the Buddhists, the Vedas of the Hindus, The Zend-Avesta of the Zoroastrians, the mystics of the Rosicrucians or the Philosophies of Grail message adherents, their nakedness will stare you at the face as you try to compare them with the Bible. For as you have nothing to compare with the creative work of God in its originality, so you have no other book in the world to compare with the Bible in its originality.

Indestructibility

7. The Bible is indestructible. In Mark 13:31 Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away"* This declaration of Jesus Christ has been tested for centuries and has not failed. *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth forever....."* (I Peter 1:24-2). The more you read it without prejudice, the more it continues to be new and relevant.

Purpose of the Bible

1. **It is for Our Learning:** *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime (i.e., the Holy Scriptures) were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort*

of the scriptures might have hope" Romans 15:4). If you have a Bible, you must learn it to get its benefits; otherwise you gain nothing out of it. if you are not able to read, you must have someone preach the bible to you, otherwise, you live and die in ignorance and sin.

2. It is to Produce Faith: *"So then faith cometh by hearing (understanding), and hearing by the word of God" (Roman 10:17). "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30,31).*

Without this faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). But the source of this saving faith is exclusively the Bible. Any religious or spiritual exercise emanating from any other sources apart from the Bible is vain. When one rejects the Bible or goes beyond it in things pertaining to life and godliness, one is subject to seducing spirit and doctrines of demons (I Timothy 4:1).

1. It is to Perfect Man: The purpose of the Bible is summed up in II Timothy 3: 16-17: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished (prepared) unto all good works".*

The Way of Salvation/ the Doom of Sinners

In conclusion, let us share what noble people of the faith have truly expressed about the Bible; "This – book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its

precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.

"It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven is opened, and the gate of hell is disclosed.

"Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you in life, will be opened in the judgment, and remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

Fellow men and women, I earnestly urge you, therefore, to read the following lessons with a deep and unbiased concentration on every Bible passage referred to. Do not just take my expressions for granted. Dig up the truth from the Book that is above all books, for this is the most rewarding aspect of this booklet.

CHAPTER 2

THE LAW BY MOSES, GRACE AND TRUTH BY JESUS CHRIST

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

What does the Bible mean when it speaks of "*the Law given by Moses*" and "*Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ*"?

The Gospel of Christ Supersedes the Law of Moses

"The Law given by Moses" simply refers to the Law of God given to Moses on Mount Sinai for the children of Israel after they were led out of the bondage of Egypt. *"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. ... I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage"* (Deuteronomy 5: 1-6).

We read in Galatians 3:16, 17 that this law given through Moses is that which came 430 years after the promise of a world redeemer was made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 46: 2-4). The scripture makes it clear that the Ten commandments with all their analysis, including all the commandments governing the worship of the Jews, are all referred to as the Law of God delivered by Moses. Luke 2:22-24 gives a very clear indication that all the laws given by Moses are the law of the Lord.

It is further stated that the law delivered through Moses was sanctified with the blood of calves and goats, signifying the stamp of the authority of God, without which it would not have become operative (Exodus 24:5-8; Hebrews 9: 19-20). But the scripture makes it clear that these elements of sanctification used in making the Old covenant operative was a temporary measure, being made a shadow or type of the perfect sacrifice Christ would offer, since "*it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin*" (Hebrews 10:4). Christ, therefore, abolished the old system when he offered himself a perfect sacrifice, by which the "*Grace and Truth*" which he brought has now been made the only operative instrument of redemption from sin with its reward of eternal glory to only those who abide in it. Please, take time and read Hebrews 10: 1-14 very carefully.

The Gospel of Christ

"*Grace and truth by Jesus Christ*" refers to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which means the good news of salvation in Christ, i.e., the system- "gospel" by which God had planned to save sinful man. This is the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12: 1-3 and referred to in Galatians 3: 16 as being fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

This gospel of Christ is also referred to as "the faith. "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5). "*By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name*" (Roman 1:5). "*But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in time past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed*" (Galatians 1:23). "*This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" (Galatians 3:2). It is obvious in these passages and many more passages of Scripture that the word "faith" is not

always speaking of believing or conviction, but speaking of that system - the gospel that produces belief or conviction.

Galatians 3:23 says *"But before faith (the gospel of Christ) came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed"* Jude, verse three, says, *" ye should earnestly contend for the faith (Gospel of Christ) which was once delivered unto the saints. "* Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ" is clearly shown in the scriptures to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is "The faith" once delivered unto the saints.

The Problem of False Doctrines

In the world today, many false doctrines are taught because people do not understand the relation between the law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ. Some organizations worship on the Sabbath (Saturday) on the ground that it was commanded in the Law of Moses. They do not worship on the First Day of the week (Sunday) as the New Testament church did.

There are other religious organizations which burn incense in worship and impose the payment of tithes on their members, not because these things are commanded in the New Testament, but because they were part of the Law of Moses. They mix the two laws and come up with a mixture of Christianity and Judaism. The majority of religious organizations also use mechanical instruments of music in their worship, but the only Bible authority they can ever find for this practice is in the Old Testament; whereas, the use of instruments is no part of New Testament worship, but was a part of the Old Testament worship. There are numerous religious acts that people engage in today which tend to confuse Judaism with Christianity because, among other reasons, they do not recognize the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Danger of Using the Old Testament System of Worship Today

This was a great problem in the church during the first century; A.D. and thereafter, because many of the Jews who were converted to Christianity still carried with them the notion that they must hold on to the Law of Moses (Act 15: 1-10). This is why the apostles wrote much on the subject in the books of Romans, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and even more analytically in Hebrews. These were written to impress on the Christians, especially the Jewish converts, that the New Testament had superseded the Old Testament, warning that any attempt to adopt any act of worship or practice from the old testament is spiritual adultery (Romans 7: 1-6), which puts such worshippers under a curse. *"For as many as are under the works of the law are under a curse"* (Galatians 3:10), and this separates them from Christ (Galatians 5:1-4). Colossians, chapter two, verses 14-15, and the book of Hebrews up to the tenth chapter explains in very clear terms and greater details that the Old Testament law with its system of worship has been abolished and replaced with the New Covenant, under which both Jewish converts and believers from all other nations of the world are reconciled to God in the one body, the church of Christ. Please read Ephesians 2:11-16.

The Old Testament confirms the Superiority of the New Testament.

Those who mix the old testament system with the new testament system do not seem to believe or understand the Old Testament at all. Jesus said to the Jews, *"For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"* (John 5: 46-47). Yes, the man who does not understand or believe the Old Testament will not be contented with the New Testament's

simple but perfect system. This is because he ignores the Old Testament teaching that the Law of Moses was to be cancelled and replaced with a new law which is the gospel of Christ. Please, read Deuteronomy 18: 15-18 and Jeremiah 31: 31-32.

Old Testament System Discarded but written for Our Learning

Explaining the need for the New Covenant, the apostles quoted the Old Testament predictions of Moses and Jeremiah. Read Acts 3:12-26 and Hebrews 8:1-13. Therefore, it is very profitable to study the Old Testament. It is written and preserved for our learning (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:1-11). In it, we learn.

1. Of the creation of heavens and the earth and all therein
1. Of our ancient ancestors and faithful men of God.
2. Of the many prophecies about the first coming of Jesus Christ.
3. Of the prophecy that a New and better Covenant would be given to replace the Old Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-32, Hebrews 8: 6-13).

Therefore, our rule of faith and practice today must in totality be derived from the New Testament which Jesus Christ sanctified with His blood. (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9: 15-28). It is stated in II Peter 1:3 that the covenant of Jesus Christ contains "*All things that pertain unto life and godliness.*"

There are many who sincerely but ignorantly feel that if the Ten Commandments have been abolished, it would mean we now have a license to commit those things forbidden in them. I do hope that with all that has been brought to our attention above, such a notion ought to have been dispelled. But for purpose of further clarification let us examine just three of the Ten

Commandments:

1. *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. "* (Exodus 20:8; 31-15)
2. *"Thou shalt not kill. " He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall surely be put to death. "* (Exodus 20: 13; 21:12)
3. *"Thou shalt not commit adultery". "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, the adulterer, and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21: 14, Leviticus 20:10).*

The provision in either of the above laws shows an immediate death for violation. And so, immediate penalties were imposed on violations of all commandments in the law of God given through Moses.

No one has ever been able to keep the Law of Moses perfectly

Now, if any religious groups or persons still insist that the Ten Commandments are binding on them, the Holy Spirit says: *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"* (Galatians 3:10) This is saying that once you bind yourself with any of the laws, you are under bondage to obey all the laws and their provisions to the letter to be justified in God's sight. If you kindle fire or engage in your pleasures on the Sabbath, you must be put to death in obedience to the Law. But who is obeying this today?

I have not seen any religious group in which any of their

members are being put to death for breaking any of the Ten Commandments, which means no religious group or individual is keeping the Law of Moses, because the laws and their provisions are inseparable. But since the Holy Spirit says the law has been abolished, do we now have the license to kill, fornicate, etc.? In the revelation of the New Covenant, commandments and principles are stated which not only replaced each of the Ten Commands but most often made them obsolete by improving upon them. Read Matthew 5:21-48. And in Hebrews, chapter nine, it is made abundantly clear that all the ordinances of divine service (worship) in the first (Old) Covenant had been abolished and replaced with the New.

Christians are under the Law of Christ only

Furthermore, Galatians 5: 10-21 lists seventeen sins and such like sins that will keep people from inheriting the kingdom of God as against the ten of Exodus 20 and 21. And it is indicated in I Corinthians 9:21 that Christians are not without law, but are under law to Christ.

The Scripture condemns those who have been mixing the two systems, the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ, as being guilty of spiritual adultery, putting themselves under a curse, and being separated from Christ. This is grievous. Those who have genuine concern for the salvation of their soul must repent and turn to Christ. *“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading (practice) of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is being read (i.e., when his law is being practiced), the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away”* (II Corinthians 3: 14-16).

CHAPTER 3

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is the religion established by Jesus Christ. There is nothing mythical in the development of Christianity. It is a historical fact. Just as the Nigerian 30-month civil war which ended in January 1970 or the American Middle East "Operation Desert Storm" of 1991 is a fact of history, so is Christianity a fact of history. The pagans had myths, but the Christians had their facts. The miracles and resurrection of Christ were first preached and had their greatest influence in the very location where they took place. The truth of Christianity does not rest merely on philosophy but rather upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and these facts are open to public investigation. There is hardly any religious or secular historian, dating back to the First Century A.D. that has not given prominence to the advent of Christianity. Some of these historians have been honestly sympathetic, while others have been hostile to Christianity.

Therefore, the adherents of Christianity do not rest their faith on the information of historians because of their shortcomings. However, there is a book called the Bible. The book has peculiarities that make it unique. It is not a creation of human wisdom or fancy. The wisdom and imagination of men have been perfectly outwitted by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Christianity, the Theme of the Bible

The whole theme of the Bible is centered on the religion of

Christ. The Old Testament describes the religion of the Jews (Galatians 1:13-16) under the leadership of Moses. This Mosaic system was provisional until Christ came, the law of Moses being a schoolmaster that brought men to Christ. Read Galatians 3:23-25, Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:6-13.

The New Testament terminated the Old Testament

When Christ established the New Testament system, the Mosaic system terminated. But we are told why this is so in Hebrews 8:6,7- *"But now hath he (Jesus) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place should have been sought for the second."*

The Holy Spirit of God revealed the Bible

Under the divine control, about forty men, who lived in different ages, had no contact with one another, and writing under varying circumstances, wrote all the sixty – six books contained in the Bible, with no mark of any contradiction.

Indeed, one of these writers confessed, *"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searched all things, yea, the deep things of God. which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth"* (I Corinthians 2:10 -13).

I have discussed as plainly as I could "The Bible and its purpose" and "The Law Given by Moses – Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ" in the first two chapters of this booklet, keep them fresh in your minds as you earnestly, but humbly, search with me the truth about the one true church in the lessons that follow.

The New Testament reveals the Christian Religion

Christianity, therefore, is the divinely revealed religion set forth in the New Testament Scriptures. It is a system of faith that sets forth the plan of salvation for the perishing world, and this plan embraces the church that Jesus promised to establish. In fulfilment of this promise the church came into existence in A.D. 33 in the city of Jerusalem upon the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ as recorded in Acts 2. This church is made up of all those who, in obedience, submitted to the will of Christ. It is the body of people who are saved from the world of iniquities (Act 2:40,41, 47). It is the body of people that has been purchased with, or washed in, the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7). We are plainly shown in the Scriptures that this church or body is one, and not more than one. Ephesians 4:4 says, "*There is one body*" and John 10:16 affirms there is "one fold".

There is only one True Christianity

The pattern of this church or body of Christ is set forth in the New Testament. The uniformity of this pattern is shown in the title, in one doctrine, one organization, one system of worship, one mission, one practice, and one destiny. Though this church of Christ is organized in local independent units, they bear the same marks of identity in all these features. This is so because all local congregations (referred to as the "churches of Christ" in Romans 16:16) follow one creed, which is the New Testament. As long as these local units conform to the very one pattern revealed in the New Testament, the members constitute the universal single body over which Christ exercises supreme authority. The Lord says he is the shepherd of "one fold"(John 10:16), and the Holy Spirit reveals: "There is one body" over which Christ is head (Ephesians 4:4), Colossians 1:18).

Sectarian Churches (Denominations) are Perversion of New Testament Christianity

Is it not amazing then that the world is so full of various contradictory, sectarian churches? Their contradictions and party spirit are seen in their conflicting, sectarian titles, doctrines, organizations, systems of worship, etc. This is so because they subscribe to various conflicting creeds, using the Bible just as a cover for those creeds. But the Church of Christ is one, and every feature of it is marked by its uniformity because it subscribes to only one creed, the New Testament. This, therefore, makes the Lord's church unique.

The God of heaven and our Lord Jesus Christ have no regard for sectarianism, as it is emphatically condemned in the scriptures (I Corinthians 1: 10-13;3:4,5). There is, therefore, no divine approval for any denominational churches upon the face of this earth, since they all either partially or wholly neglect the New Testament pattern and substitute creeds or manuals, written in men's councils, conferences, or conventions; for in so doing they transgress the doctrine of Christ. John said, "*Whosoever transgresses and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ hath both the father and the son*" (II John 9). Moreover, Jesus declares all worship vain that has the creeds of men as its basis. "*But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9).

Examine New Testament Christianity with all sincerity

My plea is that all may examine Christianity closely. But in doing this, you must not allow the existing order of things, as presented in denominationalism, to bias your earnest investigation, or befog the eye of your understanding.

Denominationalism is a sordid perversion of pure New Testament Christianity. Take up your Bible, and search through its pages, particularly the New Testament which gives you the exact picture of the one true church.

Be it known to you that any church which falls short of the New Testament pattern in all or any of its features is a creation or building of man. The Psalmist said, "*except the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain that build it*" (Psalm 127:1). And the Lord himself affirms, "*Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*" (Matthew 15:13).

In the following lessons, I have tried to present the pattern of the Lord's church concerning its origin, name, worship, doctrine, organization, mission, entrance into it, life, and destiny, as they are set forth in the New Testament. I plead that you may study and meditate on these things, and make a decision. You can decide when you shall have diligently studied all the lessons in this booklet where you want to be in eternity. It is either eternal life in bliss with God or eternal destruction in torment with Satan.

CHAPTER 4

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

To identify the one true church, one of the important things to know is its origin. There is no institution without a beginning. The church that Christ built is a divine institution with divine origin. In this chapter you learn how the Old Testament prophets foretold the establishment of this church; you learn how John Baptist and Jesus spent their lives in preparation for its establishment, and how it was finally established in 33 A.D. in the city of Jerusalem.

God the Architect, Christ the Builder of the Church

First, we must realize that the church is God's creation. Christ, the builder of this church, said, *"For I have not spoken of myself, but the father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak"* (John 12:49). He said in another place, *"O my father Thy will be done"* (Matthew 26:42). In building the church, therefore Jesus did what has been in the eternal purpose and plan of God (Ephesians 3:9-11). This shows that the church is not an accident, but has a divine origin. The Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of Christ and the church he would build and establish are evidence of this fact.

Denominations are Churches Built by Men

When we talk of the churches that men have built, we usually

trace their origins to the man-made decision, rules, and regulations which incorporated them into distinct denominations. In this study, we are not discussing denominational churches, but the only church that Christ built, which is not a part of anything but the church in its wholeness. We can only trace this church to the Bible and not to the decision, rules, and regulations made by men in their councils.

The Beginning of the True Church

The church of Christ began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the city of Jerusalem, in 33 A.D. On this day, the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and the gospel in its completeness was preached for the first time. This great occasion culminated the work God had accomplished through prophecy, the temporary work of John the Baptist, and the miraculous life of Jesus.

The Church of Christ is the Kingdom of God on Earth

In any study of the establishment of the church, we need to understand the terms "Church" and "kingdom" as both are used to refer to the same institution. The church, in the Bible, actually means "a called out body". When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that he would build his church, he meant that he would call out his people, that is, separate a people unto himself. This Church is also variously called the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of Christ. When Jesus said, "*I will build my church*" in Matthew 16:18, He, in the same breath said to Peter in verse 19, "*I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*". Evidently, the two terms have been used interchangeably. In John 3:5, Jesus said a man must be born again, of water and of the spirit to enter into the

Kingdom. Paul said in I Corinthians 12:13 that by one spirit we are baptized (in water) into one body, which is the church (Colossians 1:18). In other words, the same action that puts one into the kingdom puts one into the Church.

That the church and the kingdom refer to the same institution becomes abundantly clear in the fact that the term "kingdom" illustrates the governing feature of the church – Christ is king; Christians are citizens; the New Testament given by Christ is the law; and the whole-world is the territory over which the king rules. These four essentials: king, citizens, law, and territory are all prerequisites that constitute the superstructure of the church; it is a kingdom, a spiritual, heavenly kingdom. Paul said he and the Colossian Christians were translated into this kingdom (Colossians 1:13). And when the end comes Christ will deliver his kingdom to God (I Corinthians 15:24; John 14: 2-3).

Denominations not related to the Kingdom of God

We have shown that the kingdom or church began on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the city of Jerusalem, 33 A.D. It must be pointed out, however, that no denominational church has this peculiarity in its origin. The oldest denomination, which bred all the other denominations, is the Roman, Catholic Church. It had its origin in the city of Rome and came into full bloom in 606 A.D. when emperor Phocas recognized Boniface III as the first pope. The church of England (Anglican) started in England about 1534 A.D. with King Henry VIII and his councillors as its architects. Hundreds of denominations have been started after these in different places on different dates. It is evident then, that the origins of the churches started by men cannot be traced to the Bible. Now, we will trace the origin of the church of Christ to the Bible.

The Church in Prophecy

Isaiah foretold, "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*" (Isaiah 2:2,3). I want us to consider four important facts in this prophecy as they relate to the establishment of the church.

The House of God would be the Church of the Living God

1. The prophet predicted that "*the Lord's house shall be established.*" in I Timothy 3:15, we learn that the Lord's house is the church. "*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*". Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in the establishment of the New Testament church that Christ built.

The One Body of Christ would be His Church

2. The prophet also said that "*all nations shall flow into it,*" that is, into the Lord's house which is the church. Jesus commissioned his Apostles in Mark 16:15, to "*Preach the gospel to every creature,*" and in Matthew 28:19, to "*teach all nations, baptizing them.....*" And we learn in I Corinthians 12:13 that we were "baptized into one body" which is the church (Colossians 1:18), thus showing how people, without nationality distinction, entered the one true

church.

The Church would start in Jerusalem

3. In the prophecy, we are told that "*out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" this has reference to where the church would begin. In Luke 24:47, Jesus told his disciples that "*repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*", and that they should "*tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high*" (verse 49). On Pentecost day in the city of Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, and Peter preached the gospel in its fullness for the first time and gave the condition of pardon-Acts 2:22-41. This event is in perfect harmony with the prophecy of Isaiah that "*out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*"

The Church would be in the Last Days

4. Isaiah also mentioned the time this event would take place-"*it shall come to pass in the last days*" When Peter delivered his first gospel sermon on Pentecost, 33 A.D., in Jerusalem, he said the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a fulfilled of Joel's prophecy "*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days*" The phrase, "in the last days," refers to a period and not just a day. Reporting to his brethren about the conversion of Cornelius, Peter pointed back to the event of Pentecost as the beginning of " the last days. " "*And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning*" (Acts 11:15), said Peter. Hence, the indisputable conclusion that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the consequent inauguration of the church on Pentecost ushered us into " the last days" which is the New Testament

age.

The Prophecy of Daniel Concerning the Church fulfilled

Let us also consider briefly the prophecy of Daniel in Daniel 2:31-45 as it relates to the establishment of the church. In explaining the dream of Nebuchadnezzar Daniel showed the existence of four world empires, the Roman Empire is the fourth and last, during which period the kingdom, which is the church, would be set up by the God of Heaven.

In Daniel 2:44 we read, "*In the days of these kings (the Roman Caesars) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.*" It is impressive how this prophecy was fulfilled. To the letter, for the New Testament began its story while the Caesars of Rome still ruled the world.

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And Saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3: 1-2). What days? Luke 3:1-2 says, "*In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar*". The Caesars of Rome were ruling when Peter preached the gospel sermon on Pentecost, 33 A.D. (Act 2). When Paul's persecutors took him to court and Paul found no justice, he declared, "*I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged ... I appeal unto Caesar*"

Daniel also said it is a kingdom "*when shall never be destroyed.*" in the book of Hebrews 12:28, the writer says we receive "*a kingdom which cannot be moved*". Jesus has also said, "*The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:18).

Daniel shows further that this kingdom "*shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms*" that is, the four world empires he saw in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. This simply shows that

membership or citizenship in the church or kingdom of Christ could not be restricted by national boundaries but shall penetrate all nations.

We have seen now how the Old Testament gave us information about the birth of the kingdom, which is the establishment of the church, about (a) the time: "in the last days" which had its beginning on Pentecost when the Roman Caesars were ruling; (b) the place: Jerusalem; (c) the duration: everlasting (d) the scope; worldwide; and (e) its nature: a peaceful kingdom.

The Church in Preparation and Reality

Contrary to the thinking of many that the church began during the life of John the Baptist or the personal ministry of Jesus, the Bible shows us that the events of this period were preparatory to the coming kingdom. *"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matthew 3: 1-2). "At hand" here means close by or about to happen. John himself did not see the kingdom (Matthew 11:11), and indeed, he had been beheaded (Matthew 14:10) before Jesus made the promise in Matthew 16:18 to establish the church or kingdom in Matthew 16:19.

Jesus promised to build His Church

Jesus also, during His personal ministry, preached that the kingdom *"is at hand"* (Mark 1:5). He taught his disciples to pray that the kingdom might come (Matthew 6:10). In Matthew 16:18, he said, *"I will build my church,"* pointing to what was yet to happen. He said in Mark 9:1 that the kingdom would come in the lifetime of the apostles. Luke 19: 11 and Mark 15:43 show that the disciples were yet expecting the kingdom, and even when Jesus ascended to heaven the kingdom had not come

(Acts 1: 6-11). As we read in Mark 9:1, the kingdom was to come with power, and Acts 1:8 shows that this power was to be received when the Holy Spirit came, and Acts 2: 1-4 shows that the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost. With the Holy Spirit came power, which power was to accompany the kingdom of God. Hence, the unavoidable conclusion is that the kingdom or church came into existence on Pentecost, 33 A.D., in the city of Jerusalem.

The Church Began on the Pentecost of AD 33

All passages after this date speak of the church or kingdom as being in existence. Acts 2:47 says, "*the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" Paul said in Colossians 1:13 that God "*hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son.*" The Hebrew writer also said, "*Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved*" (Hebrews 12:28). And the Apostle John informed us he was a partaker in the kingdom (Revelation 1:9).

Dear readers, we have now seen clearly from the Bible that the church or kingdom of Christ started in the city of Jerusalem on Pentecost, 33 A.D. This knowledge is important for us to determine which church has the divine origin. The Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and all the rest of the denominations cannot be traced to the Bible at all, and are therefore of human origin.

CHAPTER 5

THE NAME OF THE ONE TRUE CHURCH

In the last chapter, we discussed the origin of the church of Christ, showing from the Bible that it had its beginning in the city of Jerusalem on the Pentecost, 33 A.D., after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2). Another identifying mark of the church is the name it is called. In order for a church to be recognized by God as belonging to Christ it must match all the marks of identity in every detail. The name of the church is one of its identifying marks. It must be that which is found in the law of Christ – the New Testament.

Is the Name of the Church Important?

Before touching on this, however, let us remind ourselves of the plea made in this confused religious world. Some say, "There is nothing in a name anyway, " and others say, " Name cannot save. " "These are men's ideas. To the denominationalists, a name may mean little or nothing. They could call themselves Methodist Church or Scientific Church, Roman Catholic Church or London Catholic Church, or whatever their imagination may fancy. Yes, men have proved, by their actions, that name, when it pertains to religion or the service of God, does not mean anything to them, but when it pertains to themselves they have one hundred percent regard for names. Let us use a few instances:

Even the Name of a country is a constitutional issue

- 1 It has been decreed in the constitution of Nigeria that it should be known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and no one would call it Togo, Dahomey, or any other name other than the one given in the constitution. Yes, the name "Nigeria" is important to its citizens because that is what the law sanctions. But in Christendom, many people place no importance on name, even though the law of Christ – the New Testament – sets forth the name of the church. Men say, " Don't bother, the name isn't important; the name doesn't save anyway! "They respect men's law but despise the law of God. This is serious and sad.

The church as the Bride of Christ must bear His Name

2. It is a recognized social custom that the wife of a man wears the name of her husband. Did you ever see a faithful wife who refuses to be called by the name of her husband? I have not seen any. The Bible says the church is the bride of Christ, but men say it doesn't matter whether or not this bride wears her husband's name so long as it does not pertain to them! Every man I have known would refuse to be called Judas or Demon, yet "name doesn't matter," they say.

At this point, let us consider some of the consequences of sectarian names and the nonchalant attitude of men toward the law of Christ.

1. Sectarian names involve a transgression of the law. John said that transgression of the law is sin (I John 3:4), and Paul said, "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). When we fail to wear the name set forth in the law of Christ, we transgress.

-
-
2. Sectarian names show deliberate disobedience. It is a sin of pre-sumptuousness. King Saul disobeyed God as recorded in I Samuel 15. He presumed he could do some other things. Read the passage and see the end of Saul. Nadab and Abihu presumed they could use "strange fire," which God had not commanded them (Leviticus 10: 1-2). When we wear the name not sanctioned in the law of Christ, we disobey, and II Thessalonians 1:7-9 says disobedience will earn nothing but everlasting punishment.

 3. Sectarian names promote divisions. The party names are given to distinguish one faction or sect from the other, suggesting differences in doctrine, worship, work, organization, etc. but Christ prayed "that all may be ONE" (John 17:20-21). His apostles pleaded that we should not divide, but speak the same thing (I Corinthians 1:10), and we are warned that when we distinguish ourselves into factions in the service of God by wearing assorted names, we sin. *"for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?"* (I Corinthians 3:3-4). One step toward unity is to call the church what the Bible calls it, and not the contradictory names decided in men's councils, synods, or conferences.

A Scriptural name

Descriptive Names of the Church

The Bible describes the church in certain figures to show both its structural and functional spiritual nature. It is described as the kingdom of Christ (John 18:36; Colossians 1:13); the body

of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23); the house of God (I Timothy 3:15); the temple of God (Ephesians 2: 21-22). But its identifying literal name is quite noticeable beyond any misunderstanding. The church must wear the scriptural name to be recognized by God.

The Real Name of the Church

In the New Testament, the church is referred to as the church more than seventy times. More than ten times it is referred to as the church of God (Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 1:2; 10-32; 11:16, 22, etc.). Matthew 16:18 Christ called it my church. Referring to the church in localities, the apostles Paul called it the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). This is illustrated by such passages as Revelation 2:1 – the church at Ephesus; I Corinthians 16: 1 – churches of Galatia; II Corinthians 8:1 – churches of Macedonia; Galatians 1:22 – Churches of Judea; etc. therefore, in writing to Christians at Rome, Paul said, " *the churches of Christ salute you.* " We never read of the contradictory denominational names in the writing of the apostles.

To call the church "the church of God" is just as scriptural as calling it "the church of Christ. " No student of the Bible will argue this because it is what the New Testament says. It is possible, however, for a church to have a scriptural name and be wrong in other things. Just because one church is called the church of Christ or the church of God does not make it such. Before a person claims a picture to be his posture it must fit his features in every particular. So, before the church can be recognized by Christ, to be his it must fit in every particular of its features as shown in the New Testament. The organization, work, worship, name, membership, discipline, etc. must be considered together in identifying the true church.

The Church of Christ

We notice in the statement made by Christ in Matthew 16:18, "*I will build my church,*" that he claims personal possession of it, Christ has robbed God of no glory in saying "*my church.*" In John 17:10, he said, "*And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am gloried in them.*" God is the divine architect of the church (Ephesians 3:10), and He is given glory in the church by Christ (Ephesians 3:21). It is safe to call the church what the Bible calls it, and we cannot be wrong in doing so.

Accept the Name Sanctioned in the Word of God

I appeal to all men to reject all unscriptural names and accept with meekness the name sanctioned in the word of God. God forbid that the church of our Lord should be called St. Peter's or St. Paul's Methodist or Scientific church, Lutheran or Baptist, Roman Catholic, or Lagos Catholic, or whatever man may fancy. Renounce sectarian names today and turn ye unto God by speaking where the Bible speaks and keeping silent where it is silent.

CHAPTER 6

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

For God to recognize a church as belonging to Him, the acts of worship and how they are performed must correspond with that of the New Testament. The worship of the church, as in all other matters, must be by divine order.

Worship must be in Spirit and in Truth

In John 4:23, Jesus said that "*true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*" what does it mean to worship in truth? What is truth? Jesus answers the questions in John 17:17, "*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. the word of God is truth.*" To worship in truth, therefore, means to worship according to what the word of God says. We must be able to produce chapters and verses for all we do in the worship of God. But some may wonder why it is so important to follow God's direction in our worship of Him.

Worship according to our thoughts is not acceptable

In Isaiah 55:8 we read, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, said the Lord.*" The thoughts and ways of man fall far below the thoughts and ways of God. Therefore, Jeremiah concludes, "*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). For our worship to be worthy of God's

respect, we must follow his direction in the New Testament.

The importance of following God's direction in our worship is further impressed on our minds by some statements of Jesus Christ in Luke 6:46 and Matthew 15:9. *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say?" But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* When we do things in worship not authorized in the New Testament, Jesus condemns such worship as of no value.

Abel's worship accepted, but Cain's rejected

At this point, let us consider some instances of unacceptable worship in the Old Testament. The first recorded worship in the Bible is that of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-8). Both of them offered sacrifices to the true God, but *"the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."* The Hebrew writer explained why Abel's worship was acceptable and Cain's rejected. *"By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain..."* (Hebrews 11:4). We read in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by hearing the word of God. That Abel offered his sacrifice by faith, therefore, means that he believed and obeyed the word of God directing him and his brother in their offering. But Cain did what seemed better in his own eyes. This rendered his worship vain.

Nadab and Abihu died for Disobedience in Worship

We see again the case of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10: 1,2. *"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded not. And there went out fire from the Lord."* These men did what the Lord commanded them not in worship, and the result was tragic death! *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples:*

and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Corinthians 10:11).

The Items of Worship

There are five items of worship engaged in by the church of Christ as recorded in the New Testament:

1. Eating of the Lord's supper upon the first day of the week
2. Free-will giving upon the first day of the week
3. Singing (without any instrument of music).
4. Teaching, preaching, or studying the word of God.
5. Prayer.

The Lord's Supper

In Luke 22:19 we read the command of Jesus Christ. "*And he took bread, and gave thanks, and break it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.*" We note from verses 7 and 18 that the elements used were unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. If we will follow the example of Christ we must use unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine-grape juice. To use other things is to transgress.

Weekly Observance of Lord's Supper in Remembrance of Jesus Christ Commanded

Jesus told his disciples to observe the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him. It did not become a memorial until after he died and ascended to heaven. We see that the church was steadfast or regular in the observance of this (Acts 2:42). In I Corinthians 11:26 we are told, "*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*" How often this was done is shown in Acts 20:7. "*And upon the*

first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them...."

Since every week has a first day, it follows that the Lord's supper was eaten as regularly as the first day came by. The Jews were commanded to "*remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*" They did not have trouble knowing which Sabbath to keep holy. They observed the Sabbath as regularly as it came by. If "*the Sabbath, to keep it holy*" was understood for every week, then "*the first day of the week, To break bread*" should be understood for every week. We can't escape that perfect parallel. Only weekly observance of the Lord's Supper has divine backing. We have no authority for eating it at any other time. Taking it quarterly or yearly is a decision of men, and has no divine sanction.

The Lord's supper is taken by every Christian who has been taught how to remember the Lord. There is no class distinction as the denominational churches are doing. "*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*" (I Corinthians 12: 13).

Contribution of Money as God Prospers, not Tithing

The plan of God for raising money for the church to meet its obligations is set forth in I Corinthians 16: 1,2. "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so, do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*" Collection should be done weekly – "*upon the first day of the week*", just as the Lord's Supper is taken weekly. Everyone must decide what to give, depending on how one has been prospered. Tithing is one of the

Jew's ways of raising money to fulfill their religious obligations. Today we are no longer under that system of worship. No one should be taxed in any manner. It must be a personal decision and should be done liberally and cheerfully. "*Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for god loveth a cheerful giver*" (II Corinthian 9:7).

Men's extra devices to raise money are sinful

Denominational churches have violated the law of Christ through the many fund-raising schemes which they have devised. Such things as harvest ceremonies, bazaars, merchandising, and levying of money on members are not authorized in the word of God. Many think that the plan of God is insufficient to meet the church's obligation, so they devise their schemes. They think themselves wiser than God! Remember! Nadab and Abihu thought they could improve upon God's wisdom, but that earned them a dreadful and irrevocable sentence of death. Jesus has said that the schemes or commandments of men render worship useless (Matthew 15:9).

Singing Praises to the Lord

We must not use Mechanical instruments when we sing

In Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, we are commanded to sing. "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*" (Colossians 3:16). In this verse, we are commanded to sing and there is no indication whatever in the passage of using any

instrument of music: we have three kinds of music (1) singing (Vocal), (2) playing (instrumental), or (3) a combination of the two.

God specified Singing

If God has told us to make music without specifying any of those three kinds, we would be left to choose which kind we want. When a command includes some other actions it is called a generic command. The command to make music is generic because it included singing (vocal, playing (instrumental), or a combination of both. We can therefore exercise the freedom to choose which kind we want. In the New Testament, we are commanded to sing (vocal). This is a specific command which excludes the other kinds of music, and we cannot, therefore, exercise any freedom of choice at all.

Generic or specific command is further illustrated in the story of Noah and the ark. God told Noah, " *Make thee an ark of gopher wood;*" If God had told Noah to make an ark with wood, this would be a generic command, and Noah could have been free to choose which kind of wood he liked. But God specified the kind of wood- gopher. This excludes every other wood, and Noah would be disobeying God if he used another kind of wood. In the matter of making music, God specified singing (vocal). All other kinds are therefore excluded. We will be guilty of doing what God did not command if we use instruments of music.

Other kinds of music are Excluded

Many, of course, are ready to argue. "But David used instruments, and he was a man after God's heart. Since David did it, we also can do it". David indeed used instruments, but he sacrificed animals and burned incense. Friends, are you ready

to sacrifice animals and burn incense in your worship? If not, why not? The truth is, David lived under a different law- the law of Moses but we are today under the law of Christ. If we try to justify our practices by the Old Testament law we are told, *"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace"* (Galatians 5:4). Another argument is that we are not told not to use instruments. My friends, we cannot justify our practices by appealing to God's silence. Remember, God, commanded Noah to use gopher wood in making the ark. God did not have to say, "Do not use pine wood, or this or that wood. " Since He has specified gopher wood, all other kinds of wood are excluded. Likewise, God has specified singing (Vocal), and other kinds of music are therefore excluded. Whenever we use instruments of music in our worship we profane the worship, doing what the Lord commanded not. Remember Nadab and Abihu!

Teaching or Preaching the Word of God/ Righteousness of God is completely revealed

We learn in Acts 20:7 that preaching was done when the disciples met to worship. We have no specific method of teaching or preaching, but we are limited as to what we must teach or preach. Christ himself limited his teaching to "word received from the father." In John 12:49, he said, *"For I have not spoken of myself. But the father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. "* The Holy Spirit also did not speak for himself (John 16:13). The apostles spoke only that which had been revealed to them (II Peter 1:16-21; Galatians 1:5-12). The church today must therefore limit its teaching to the revelation of Christ through the Apostles. For *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the father and the Son"* (II John 9).

Why should the church limit its teaching to that of Christ and the apostles? First, we are shown that the righteousness of God is completely revealed therein. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is second, the word of God furnishes us unto every good work. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (II Timothy 3: 16-17)

All the creeds of men are thus eliminated. The word of God is all-sufficient as our rule of faith and practice. Thirdly, we have a solemn warning from the Apostle: *"If any man teaches otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which according to godliness..... from such withdraw thyself* (I Timothy 6:3-5). *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:8).

Prayer

Also in I Corinthians 14:15 Paul declared, *"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."* The use of written prayers, read by the preacher and recited by the congregation is contrary to the statement of Paul. And this is what many denominational churches do. Since the denominations do not adhere to the Bible from which we derive understanding (Psalm 119:104), it is impossible for them to pray with the spirit, and the understanding and adhering to Bible teachings are a sort of vain babbling in God's sight. We are told, *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"* (Proverbs 28:9)

Women in the Worship

In most sectarian churches, women play a leading role which the Bible does not permit. In these churches, women share the pulpits with men and lead the prayers and the singing in their worship. They are even made officers having authority over men. Does the word of God approve of these practices in the church? Let us ponder the following:

God commands Women to keep silent in the Churches

"Let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home. For it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (I Corinthian 14:34,35). The word "speak" is used here in the sense of teaching. Consider the use of the word in verses 2-4. To say that a man is a speaker at a lecture doesn't mean the mouths of others are to be locked upon, but it simply indicates that the speaker leads the discourse. Others do not do the speaking but they may talk. In the bible, women are commanded not to speak in the church, but they may talk- saying the amen, singing together with men, etc. in Timothy 2: 11-12 we read, *"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."*

Wherever men and women are gathered together to study the word of God or worship, women must learn in subjection. For them to teach, lead the prayers or the singing is usurping authority over men. Such is condemned. However, women may teach other women and young children (Titus 2 2-5). The sectarian churches, however, care not an iota about this plain

Bible injunction. All of them, therefore, stand condemned by the word of God. "*Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the father and the son* (II John 9).

Quit Vain Worship!

My dear reader, if you are a member of a church that does not follow the Bible teachings on those things we have discussed, or on other matters, let it be clear to you that you are not yet a member of the Lord's church. The Lord has but one church. All the saved are added to this church by him (Acts 2: 47). The church that follows every teaching of Christ is the true church.

You must have to quit vain worship. Consider what you have learned seriously with your Bible and do God's will. Your soul is at stake if you fail to consider and obey. Jesus said, "*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth, not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*" (John 12:48).

CHAPTER 7

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

In the preceding chapters, we discussed the origin, name, and worship of the church that belongs to Christ. No honest reader could have failed to see what the Bible plainly teaches on those subjects. There is no disagreement whatsoever because all of us can understand the Bible alike. Now, we want to see from the Bible how the church of Christ is organized. This is another picture of one of the identifying marks of the one true church. If a church exists today that does not match the organization of the church as it is set forth in the New Testament, that church is not of God but of men.

"Set in order the things that are lacking"

The word "organization" is not used in our English Bible, but the idea is given in the words of the apostle Paul in Titus 1:5: *"For this, cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain (appoint) elders in every city...."* The verb usage of the word "order" in this passage means to arrange, systematize.

The word "organize" itself means to give orderly structure to, frame, and put into working order. This implies an arrangement in which all persons or things are so related to each other that they work as a unit, each individual having his (or its) proper function, duty, or the like. Every human institution is activated through some form of organization. Whenever some people bind themselves together for a purpose,

they must be organized to achieve this purpose.

Give gave the Church an orderly structure

The church of Christ is a divine institution. It is the "called out" body of people from the world of sin into the service of God. Since God is the architect of this church, He has given it an orderly structure through which it must function. Just as God created man and gave him a body that has a working structure that is not subject to man's ability to change or mend, so God created the Church and gave it a working order. In the Old Testament, God took Moses to the mountain and gave him the pattern of the Tabernacle. He gave its length, height, breadth, the different division, the materials out of which it was to be built, and all of its peculiarities.

No single part of the Tabernacle was left up to Moses or the people. God told Moses, "*See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount*" Read Exodus 25. Paul refers to this injunction and applies it to the church of Christ, as every particular part of it has been planned by God. Just as in all other matters, the New Testament scriptures describe the organization of the church.

In the city of Jerusalem on Pentecost, 23 A.D., people heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, and were baptized. And people continued to do these for their salvation, the Lord continued to add them to his church (Acts 2: 41-47). The church grew in Jerusalem (Acts 5:14), but persecution caused them to scatter to other places, and they "*went everywhere preaching the word*" (Acts 8:1-4). Anywhere that people heard the gospel that was preached on Pentecost and did what those people on Pentecost did, a local body or church emerged. This is why we read of the church at Antioch (Act 13:1), the church at Ephesus (Act 20:17), the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 1:2), the churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:2), the seven churches of

Asia (Revelation 1:11), etc.

Jesus Christ is the Only Universal Head of the Church

Members of all the local churches on earth, when considered together, constitute the one universal body or church over which Christ exercises universal authority. Christ, through the written word of the inspired apostles, is the only central authority. Jesus declared, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matthew 28: 18). God has made him to be head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). There is no universal structural or working order apart from this one. There is no earthly centralization of authority because every authority resides in Christ and this is through his word. In the Roman Catholic Church, authority is centered around the Pope of Rome. The Pope is the universal head of the Catholics, though every pope that has ever lived has blundered! The church of Christ has not had such characteristics at all. Jesus Christ is the only head with all authority in heaven and on earth. Every problem, every question, and every act is settled by His word which has been revealed by the inspired apostle and prophets.

Christians in any community or Town Constitute a Local Church

The church, however, has a local organization. In every community, those who obey exactly what people on the day of Pentecost obeyed are brought together in a local body. Paul refers to these local bodies as the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). Every local church assembles to worship as Christ directs in his word, does the work of preaching the Gospel, ministers to the poor, and edifies one another in the word of God.

The Lord designs every local church to have Elders

After establishing many local churches in their first preaching journey, Paul and Barnabas "*ordained (appointed) them elders in every church*" (Act 14:23). Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5). *'From Miletus, he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church'* (Acts 20:17). It is significant that in each local church, there was appointed a plurality of elders.

Elders are made Bishops/Overseers

The term "elders" implies old age and indicates the mature spiritual experience and understanding of those so described. When Paul sent for the elders in Ephesus (Act 20:17), he told them in verse 28, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood.*" The Holy Ghost made the elders, overseers or bishops, to feed (pastor) the church of God. The term "bishop" or "overseer" indicates the nature of the work undertaken by elders. The word "feed", from the spiritual standpoint, is primarily used of a pastor. Pastors guide as well as feed the flock, as expressed in Acts 20:28, which with verse 17, indicates that this was the service committed to elders (overseers or bishops).

The term "elders", "bishop", and "pastors" are never mentioned together as three different orders of officers. The elders are pastors in the sense that they feed the church of God. They are bishops or overseers in the sense that they supervise the affairs of the local church. The elders of Titus 1:5 were called bishops in verse 7. The elders of (Acts 20:17) were made bishops or overseers in verse 28, who were to feed (pastor) the church. Paul wrote to the church "*at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons*"

(Philippians 1:1). The qualifications of these bishops are outlined in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, and that of deacons in I Timothy 3: 8-13. The idea of separating bishops, elders, and pastors as if they are distinct orders of officers is foreign to the New Testament.

Officers of the True church

Since the work of the apostle and prophet, which is the laying of the foundation and the complete revelation of God's word, has been accomplished, we have in the church today the evangelists to proclaim the word, the members to work, the deacons to serve, assisting the elders or bishops to supervise the work, feeding (pasturing) the flock. The area of authority of these elders is not beyond the local church over which they exercise oversight. Peter tells them "*feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof ...*" (I Peter 5:2). By this order, the bishops of one congregation cannot exercise oversight in another congregation. Every local church, therefore, is an independent, self-governing unit. This is the only organization through which the work of evangelism and benevolence was done in the days of the apostles. Any organization larger or smaller than this is unscriptural.

Officers of Counterfeit Churches

Friends, you see that no such officers as Pope, Cardinal, Archbishop, Archdeacon, Reverend Father or Mother, etc are in the New Testament. The Roman Catholic and Anglican hierarchies are foreign to the New Testament pattern of organization and are therefore not of God. Many of the denominations who believe in visions and dreams and miracles still appoint Apostles, Senior or Chief Apostles, local Prophets and international Prophets. This is just ridiculous. Where do we read of 'chief' or 'senior Apostles', 'local' or "international'

Prophets in the word of God? One wonders who made them such or what qualifies they have.

Bible Qualifications for all appointed officers in the church

The qualification of an Apostle is indicated in the appointment of Matthias in Acts 1:21-25. An apostle must have companied with the Lord Jesus, "*beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us.*" Apostle Peter stressed further this qualification in Acts 10: 39-41. Paul, the last of them was not a whit behind the rest of the Apostles (Act 9:1;11) Corinthians 12: 11-12; 1 Corinthians 15:8-9). Today there is no possibility of any man being qualified as an Apostle.

The qualification of a prophet is also indicated in Acts 8:13-18; 19: 5-6, where the apostles laid their hands on men to receive the Holy Spirit so that they might be able to prophesy, speak in tongues, or perform miracles. None of the apostles are living today to bestow such power on anyone. The work of the apostles and prophets was foundation laying, which is the revelation of the New Testament upon which our faith is built. Paul said that Christians "*are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone*" (Ephesians 2:20). There can be no addition to or subtraction from the complete revelation of the apostles and prophets (revelation 22:18-19). What then is the work of the self-appointed modern-day Apostles and Prophets?

Another foundation or revelations? Paul declared, "*For other foundation, can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*" (I Corinthians 3:11). "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Galatians 1:8). There are no modern-day Apostles and Prophets.

Local Churches Independent of One Another; Heaven is the Headquarters

Furthermore, we note that New Testament churches were not bound together in some sort of federations, councils, synods, or conferences where laws and by-laws are made. Each local church is an independent self-governing unit with its bishops or elders to oversee and feed the flock. Heaven is the headquarters, since Christ, the head is now sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. He rules the church through his written word.

Men with Bible Qualifications are appointed Elders and Deacons in each local church

The church, therefore, has no universal working order by which local congregations are bound together rather, the church is made up of Christians who are organized into separate independent congregations. In each of these congregations, elders or bishops or pastors (as you may choose to call them) are appointed upon their qualifications (I Timothy 3: 1-7) to oversee the work of the congregation. Deacons are also appointed upon their qualifications (I Timothy 3: 8 -13) to serve the church, assisting the elders, there are also preachers or evangelists, but their work is to preach or teach the word and not to rule over the congregation. They are to work under the oversight of the elders.

All are governed by Christ through the written word. Appeal is made to the written word to settle every problem, answer every question, and determine every act. This, however, has not ruled out the brotherly cooperation that exists among local churches. A needy church is relieved by another church without either of them losing its independence.

Any organizational system different from the New Testament pattern is condemned

Many have likely overlooked this New Testament organization because of its simplicity. The minds of men of high things, sophistry, and pageantry have been corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Tell the Pope, the Archbishop, and all those dubbed clergymen to renounce their high-flown titles which are unknown in the word of God, and you are either intimidated or charged as a heretic. But when a church exists upon the face of this earth that does not fit the God-given pattern of the organization outlined in the New Testament, Christ disowns such. He declared, "*Every plant, which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*" (Matthew 15:13).

I believe that no reasonable and serious man or woman would be able to endure staying in human churches which do not conform to the God-given pattern as the New Testament shows. "*wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*" (II Corinthians 6:17).

CHAPTER 8

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In our efforts to identify the one true church that belongs to Christ, we have already considered four of its features: namely, the origin, name, worship, and organization. Now, we want to discuss the mission of the church in the world. This is plainly shown in the New Testament Scriptures, and to please God, the church must not engage in any work that the New Testament does not sanction.

Main Mission is Saving of Souls

The Lord's church is a spiritual institution. Its mission on earth, therefore, is spiritual in – nature. It is neither political nor social. It is noncommercial and non-entertaining. Its main concern is the saving of souls. The world is lost in sin, and the truth is the thing that frees men from sin (John 8:32). Men are saved by obeying this truth, and the scriptures say that the church is "*the pillar and ground of the truth* (I Timothy 3:15)."

Salvation by Preaching of the Gospel

How does the church fulfil this divine task of being "*the pillar and support of the truth*"? The Apostle Paul expressed this in Ephesians 4:12, "for *the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*" The "*perfecting of the saints*" would mean instructing and training of Christians in right living (Titus 2: 11-12). The "*work of the ministry*" carries the idea of service, which is the helping or

relieving of needy members. The “*edifying of the body of Christ*” carries the idea of building – up the church, which is done by the preaching of the gospel (Matthew 28: 19-20; I Corinthians 1:21; Romans 10: 14-15; Acts 13: 1-3).

Evangelism

The basic mission of the church is to evangelize the world. The word evangelism comes from a Greek word meaning “good news”. The Evangelist proclaims the good news of salvation. The disciples were commissioned to teach all nations, baptize those who believe and repent and teach them all things commanded by Christ (Matthew 28: 19-20). The preaching was done in their lifetime, and what they preached has been written down for us. This is why Paul told Timothy, a young Evangelist at that time, to “*preach the word*” (II Timothy 4:2); and “*the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*” (II Timothy 2:2)

We are told, however, that the people will be able to hear, believe and obey the gospel if Preachers are sent to them. “*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?*” (Romans 10: 14-15). The church at Antioch fulfilled this obligation by sending out Barnabas and Saul on a preaching mission (Acts 13: 1-3). Paul showed how the church at Philippi sent support to him directly (Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16), and pointed out that other churches paid him wages while he was serving the church at Corinth (II Corinthians 11:8)

Apart from sending out and supporting Preachers in the field, each local church engages in teaching and training its members and influences the people in the locality to obey the truth. We see that the church at Thessalonica is a good example of this, as its influence was felt both in its locality and abroad. ”

So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing” (I Thessalonians 1: 7-8)

God designs each local church to preach the gospel according to its Capacity

You can see in all New Testament that it is the design of God for each local congregation to fulfill the obligation of preaching the gospel and supporting preachers both locally and abroad. It is significant to note that the local church is the only medium through which evangelism is done. The local church is the only society that God has planned for this unique work of evangelization. Any society or organization separate and apart from the local church is only a human device, and such is a reflection on the wisdom of God. Who can stand the consequence of such audacity?

Ministering to the Poor

Another aspect of the mission of the church is the care of its needy members. In Acts chapter six, we see the church in Jerusalem taking care of its needy members. This shows that each local church is primarily responsible for its own needy. In I Timothy 5: 9-10, however, we see that the needy members to be relieved should be qualified. Also in verse 16, we read, "*If any woman that believeth hath widows, let her relieve them, and let not the church be burdened: that it may relieve them that are widow indeed;*". This limitation shows the extent to which benevolent work within a congregation could be carried.

The scriptures also teach that one congregation contributed to the needy members of a sister congregation when there was an

emergency. When there was a famine in Judea, other churches sent relief to them. In Antioch, *"the disciples determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea"* (Acts 11: 27:30). *"But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem"* (Romans 15: 25-26)

We can see again that the relief was limited to the "brethren" or "saints" in Judea. This shows the extent of benevolent work the church can engage in. There is no general program of benevolence embracing unbelievers. The work of benevolence was never used as a means of introducing the gospel to the people. If men are enticed to accept the gospel by material things, they will turn away when we stop giving those things because they have not been attracted to the gospel by their convictions. The building of schools, hospitals, or the provision of entertainment or therefore, cannot be engaged in by the church. The energy and resources of the church are perverted in doing such things. Much of the teaching in the New Testament on benevolence is directed to individual Christians and not to the congregations. Read Galatians 6:10; I Timothy 6: 17, Hebrews 13:16, I John 3:17 – 18.

Edification

The New Testament church is a self-edifying institution. The word "edify" means to build up, strengthen, more firmly establish, instruct, and improve. The proper objective of a congregation is not numerical growth alone but the development of spiritual strength. Christians must be strengthened in faith and grow in godliness and ability to overcome temptation and lead pure lives.

This work is done through the teaching program of the congregation. And this is accomplished as Paul expressed in

Ephesians 4:15-16: *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working of itself in love. The phrase "by that which every joint supplieth" is to be attained through individual effort as each member is to "desire the sincere milk of the word and grow thereby" However, the congregation may edify its members through these avenues.*

1. Through worship, Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:10; Hebrews 10:25
2. Through faithful teaching of the word. Matthew 18: 18-20. II Timothy 2:2; 4: 1-5.
3. By proper discipline. Titus 3:10; I Corinthians 5:1-13; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15 Romans 16:17,18
4. Through proper love and consideration of the members one for another. Ephesians 4:29-32; I Corinthians 8: 7-13; 10:23-33.

It must be noted that all these are done within the framework of the local congregation. No congregation has the right to build and support any other organization or society through which to accomplish its work of edification.

In Conclusion. We have seen that the Lord's church is obligated in three specific fields – Evangelism, benevolence, and edification. We have also seen that all of these are performed within the framework of the local congregation. Any church that engages in works that are not mentioned in the New Testament is not of God but of men. *"Examine yourself whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves"* (II Corinthians 13:5)

CHAPTER 9

ENTRANCE INTO THE CHURCH

As the New Testament shows how and when the church of our Lord Jesus originated, the name it wears, its essential elements of worship, its working organization, and its mission in the world, just so we are shown plainly on New Testament pages how men entered into this church in the days of the Apostles. That the New Testament must determine every act, solve every problem, and answer every question in all matters religious has been our proposition, a proposition that is too plain and authentic to need argument.

Every human organization has a way of initiating people into it. Sectarian churches have various conflicting ways of initiating men into them. Here, we are concerned, not with any human organization or church built and organized by the wisdom of men, but with the church of our Lord Jesus Christ which he purchased with His blood. We have recognized that Jesus built one church which he called His kingdom (Matthew 16: 18-19; John 18:36). The New Testament is its rule of faith and practice. It has nothing to do with man-made creeds or catechisms, written in the councils of men.

The church consists of only those who should be saved

On the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord, A.D. 33, in the city of Jerusalem, the church or kingdom of our Lord began (Act 2). This was in fulfillment of the promise he made in Matthew 16: 18-19. In verse 47 of Acts 2, we read that "the Lord

added to the church of Christ daily such as should be saved" This means that the church consists of only such people "as should be saved. " Therefore, those outside are not saved, because the church consists only of the "saved."

The Apostles preached Repentance and Remission of Sins

Let us find out then what action peculiarized certain people to be described as "such as should be saved." Before Jesus ascended to heaven he had commissioned his apostles: "*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28: 19-0). "*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" (Luke 24:47). I call your attention, therefore, to the sermon preached by Apostle Peter on that memorable Pentecost in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 2: 14 – 36. This is the first time the gospel was preached in its fullness. Peter showed that the life and work of Jesus proved his divinity, that he was crucified, buried, and was raised on the third day. He charged the people with wickedness in crucifying the Lord. "*Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly (beyond doubt), that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ,*" Peter declared.

The people who heard Peter were convicted of their sins. They had sinned against God and were doomed. Therefore, they wanted to know what they must do to be saved. Peter minced no words, telling them plainly what must be done to be forgiven. There is no ceremony about the matter. Verbal pleading and fasting would avail nothing, for it is written that God does not hear sinners (John 9:31). And the son of God had already declared that except a man be born again of water and the

spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

All must repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the people asked (Acts 2:37). Then Peter said unto them, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). Is this all that was required of them to enable God to forgive them? Acts 2, verses 41 and 47 settle it. *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"*

The same steps were taken by those who were being saved

Who were the people the Lord added to his church? They were *"such as should be saved."* And who were *"such as should be saved"*? they were the people who heard the gospel, believed the gospel, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of sins. This is the plan followed through the days of the apostles as recorded in the book of Acts. The people of Samaria, the Ethiopian in Acts 8, and Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9:1-7 all followed the same plan to be saved and added to the church. The condition of pardon or rule of admission into the church is uniform throughout the New Testament. There is neither variation nor conflict. All did the same things to obtain forgiveness of sins and were added to the church by the Lord.

The following diagram from a tract, "What must I do to be saved," by brother Cecil Willis, is a summary of New Testament teaching on the plan of salvation or the rule of admission into the church. I urge the reader to study this carefully.

The Plan of Salvation as Given in the Book of Acts

Heard Gospel	Believed	Repented	Confessed	Were Baptized	Saved from past sin
3,000 2:1-47		Repented		Baptized 2:38,41	Sins remitted 2:38,41
Samaritans 8:5-12	Believed 8:12			Baptized 8:13	Saved Mk. 16:16
Simon 8:13	Believed 8:13			Baptized 8:13	Saved Mk. 16:16
Ethiopian 8:26-40	Believed 8:37		Confessed 8:37 Rom. 10:9-10	Baptized 8:38	Went on his way rejoicing 8:39
Saul 9:1-18;22:1-18			Confessed 22:10	Baptized 22:16	Sins washed away 22:16
Cornelius 10:1-48;11:1-18	Believed 15:7	Repented 11:18		Baptized 10:48	Was saved 11:4
Lydia 16:14,15				Baptized 16:15	Saved 16:14,15
Jailer 6:25-34	Believed 16:31,32	Repented 16:33		Baptized	Rejoiced greatly 16:34
Corinthians 18:8	Believed 18:8			Baptized 18:8	Washed-saved ICor. 16:1;15:2
Ephesians				Baptized	Redeemed-saved

HEAR + BELIEF + REPENTANCE + CONFESSION + BAPTISM = SALVATION FROM PAST SINS

In cases where any of these actions are not specifically mentioned, it is necessarily implied that all actions took place. To enter the church today we must do exactly what those in the New Testament did. If they received the remission of sins and the Lord added them to his church when they did those things, we can be sure we shall be forgiven and added to the same church when we do the same. *"for there is no respect of persons with God"* (Romans 2:11).

Sins separate people from God

Prophet Isaiah told the Israelites, *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have*

hidden his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). This is still true of all men in the world today, for the Holy Spirit has revealed that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 3:23); 5:23). To receive the forgiveness of sin and be added to the church that Christ purchased with his blood, all must obey the rules of admission as shown in the word of God. However, wicked a person may be, Christ shed his blood for all. Remember that those who crucified Jesus were forgiven when they obeyed the rules of pardon given by Peter.

You may also be morally good, yet the spirit says *"all have sinned."* Jesus told Nicodemus, the rich Jewish ruler, that *"Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). Cornelius was religious and morally good, yet he was told to send for Peter who would tell him words whereby he and his house would be saved (Acts 10:1-6; 11: 13,14). He and his house obeyed the condition of pardon to be saved (Acts 10:47,48). The Ethiopian was also a prominent man in government administration, and was a religious man, too. When Philip preached Christ to him, he obeyed the rule of pardon to be added to the fold of Christ (Act 8: 26-39).

You are born again only when you obey

What about you? Are you wicked and immoral? Are you religious and morally good? Are you rich or poor? There is no way of escape; you must obey to be born again, for *"the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction...."* (II Thessalonians 1: 7-9)

After obeying the gospel, one must associate himself with a

local congregation of the church of Christ, worshipping God by continuing "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" as those on Pentecost began to do. And "*as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*" (I Peter 2:2). "*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Colossians 3:2). "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:25). And the Lord promises to give the crown of life to those who are faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10)

Do not delay your obedience

I, therefore, plead with you to obey the rules of admission into the church that Jesus shed his blood to purchase. The Lord adds only the saved to his church, and to be saved you must believe the gospel repent of your sins, confess that Jesus is the son of God, and be baptized (immersed in water). Act before it is too late. Your best opportunity is now: "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*" (II Corinthians 6:2)

CHAPTER 10

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

I have discussed six of the main identifying marks that feature the church that Christ purchased with his own blood, as it is described in the New Testament. To maintain its identify with the church established by Christ and controlled by His authority, the church today must teach no more and no less than the apostles' doctrine as it is outlined in New Testament scriptures.

The commandment God gave to Christ is the doctrine of the Church

Christ was implicitly loyal to God by teaching nothing but *"words received from the father."* In John 8:26 and 12: 49-50 Christ said, *"I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." for I have not spoken of myself; but the father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I knew that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the father said unto me, so I speak."*

The Holy Spirit, who guided the apostles into all truth, did not speak from himself. *"Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come"* (John 16:13). The Apostles of

Christ also spoke only that which had been revealed to them. *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual"*(I Corinthians 2: 12-13). *"for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (II Peter 1:21).

The true Church today will limit its teaching to the revelation of Jesus Christ

If Christ taught no more nor less than what the father commanded him, and the Holy Spirit revealed nothing from himself but from Christ, and the apostles spoke and wrote only that which had been revealed to them, the church today is therefore obligated to limit its teaching to the revelation of Christ through the apostles. This revelation is the New Testament. Any church that teaches what is not authorized in it is not recognized by God as belonging to Christ. We are warned that *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the father and the son"* (II John 9).

The New Testament is the teaching of Christ and the Apostles and must be the sole and all-sufficient creed of the Church of Christ. Therein is revealed the righteousness of God (Romans 1: 1,17); it furnishes unto every good work (II Timothy 3: 16,17), and unto all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3). It is the one faith preached by Paul (Galatians 1:23;

Ephesians 4:5), and it is once and for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). This is the rule of faith and practice for the church that Christ established.

Denominational Churches submit to the Wisdom of Men

Denominational churches subscribe to the creeds made in their councils, conferences, or synods. These creeds, being the creation of the wisdom of men, are unreliable. They are continually being revised or amended, thus showing their imperfection. There is no divine authority to back them up, and this renders them religiously unenforceable. They also disagree and conflict with each other, and therefore cannot all be true. And the very fact that they conflict with the word of God proves them to be all wrong.

The New Testament is the Perfect Law of Liberty

Truly did Jeremiah say long ago, "*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). The Psalmist has also said concerning the Scriptures, "*The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure*" (Psalm 111:7). "*Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever*" (Psalm 119: 89, 160). And James calls the New Testament teaching "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). The scriptures, therefore, need no revising or amending, for they are perfect and the provisions are immutable. They are bound upon us by divine authority. Therefore, all efforts made by mortal men to formulate religious doctrines or creeds, and bind them on the people, are totally useless and it is fatal to

their souls and those who follow them. For Jesus has made it clear enough, saying "*But vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9).

Only those who abide in the Doctrine of Christ will be Saved

Dear readers, you have seen plainly how futile it is to be guided by the creeds of men in what we must do to be members of the one true church, or how we must worship and serve God in this church. The Lord Jesus wonders why men should acclaim him to be their Lord when in fact they fail to do what he says they should do. "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46). If it has been made necessary for you to consult some human creed to find the religious teaching to which you have subscribed, Christ says you worship him in vain (Matthew 15:9). If you cannot depend only upon the teachings of the New Testament to learn how to worship and serve God in the church to which you belong, but subscribe to the creeds formulated in councils or synods of men, Christ says he will disown you on that great day, even though, by those creeds you have done many wonderful works. "*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*" (Matthew 7: 21-23).

Therefore, it behooves us, who are already members of the Lord's church, to consent only "to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. Apart from being a command that must be obeyed, this is a necessity because the identity of the church

can easily be destroyed by corrupting its teaching as it can be by corrupting its worship or wearing an unscriptural name. Be warned that "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the father and the son*" (II John 9).

You must be Born Again

I plead with those of you who are not yet members of the Lord's church to consider the word of our Lord by simply doing what the New Testament teaches you must do to be saved and serve God in the church that Christ died for. Only therein you can give glory to God (Ephesians 3:21).

Denominationalism is born from the creeds and practices of men. Let all men renounce all man-made creeds, and in humility accept the teaching of Christ and his Apostles as revealed in the New Testament. It is "*given by inspiration of God, and it profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (II Timothy 3:16 - 17).

CHAPTER 11

THE LIFE AND DESTINY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

In the last seven articles, we discussed some basic features of the New Testament church. This enables us to distinguish the Lord's church from the churches established by men. Now, we are discussing the final subject in this series, and it concerns another important aspect of the church, viz., the kind of life members are expected to live, and their destiny. Remember that the church is made up of God's people, who are severally accountable for what they do.

True Christians must live to maintain the Purity of the church

Let us remember that Christ died to establish the purity of the church. In Ephesians 5: 25-27, we read, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that they might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" In view of the great sacrifice Christ made to establish the purity of his church, members must live to maintain this purity.

A sinner is forgiven of his sins at the point of true baptism, and the Lord adds him to his church. He arises from true baptism to "*walk in newness of life.*" He has died to the old life (Romans 6: 3-4). Now, "*old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (II Corinthians 5:17). Having been thus raised with Christ, a Christian sets his mind on heavenly things and not upon worldly things, for he is living a changed and different

life which is "*hid with Christ in God*" (Colossians 3: 1-3).

True Christians must keep from fleshly sins

In Romans 12: 1-2, we read, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*" In order to maintain the identity of the church every member must keep from fleshly sins listed in I Corinthians 6: 9 – 10 and Galatians 5: 19-21. Paul said some of those at Corinth have been in such sins before they became Christians, but as Christians, they have sustained a new relationship. "*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God*" (I Corinthians 6:11).

Keep yourself pure

For the church to maintain its identity as the one that Christ died for, every member must maintain purity of heart and life. Young Timothy was admonished to "*keep thyself pure.*" Even though the church may be scriptural in its worship, organization, etc., the Lord will disclaim any church that dabbles in worldliness. Pure religion, we are told, includes keeping oneself "*unspotted from the world*" (James 1:27) and abstaining "*from all appearance of evil*" (I Thessalonians 5:21-22).

The Glory of being a faithful member of the true church

Apostle Peter has this to say of members of the Lord's church. "*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of*

him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy"(I Peter 2:9-10). And in order to maintain this glorious position, Peter said in Chapter four, verses three through five: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, reveling, banqueting, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Christians must grow in the knowledge and Grace of Jesus Christ

With all that is demanded in the life of true Christians, it does not mean that they are sinlessly perfect. Just as a child grows by being protected from things that are harmful to his body, by taking proper nourishment and proper exercise, so Christians are to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To do this, Christians must keep from sin, receive the constant nourishment of God's word, and exercise daily in practicing all that Christ has commanded. They must diligently add to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

Christians must confess and forsake any sin committed to receive forgiveness

However, because of human weakness, Christians can make mistakes and stumble. We need not be cast down, but must rise again. This is done by repenting and confessing our sins to God, and if need be, to our brethren in Christ, and praying for forgiveness. But for this to be effective we must keep walking in the light, as he is in the light, having fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us

from all sin. Read I John 1: 7-10; Proverbs 28:13.

Wayward members must be disciplined by the church

Some members may want to persist in sin, and fail to repent. For this, the church has a responsibility to protect itself from being corrupted. The Lord has authorized that wayward members be disciplined to save the church and possibly the sinner. The church should have no company with those who persist in sin, and *"such wicked men must be put away from among yourselves,"* for *" a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."* Read I Corinthians 5: 1-13, II Thessalonians 3, 13-15. Christians are admonished to be holy. *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"* (Ephesians 1:4). *"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation"* (I Peter 1:15). And in Hebrews 12:14, we read, *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."*

Destiny

Some have a materialistic view of life that centers itself on this world. This is believed and taught by a sect called Jehovah's witnesses. Members of the Lord's church *"live by faith and not by sight"*(II Corinthians 5:7). Earthly joys may fade and present hope may grow dim, but we have a hope *"both sure and steadfast"* that is an anchor to the soul and reaches beyond the veil of death (Hebrews 6: 18-19)

"An inheritance... Reserved in Heaven for you!"

Apostles Peter and Paul have this to say: *" Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance*

incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1: 3-4). "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1: 4-5). There should be no mistake at all about the hope of faithful Christians. Peter said it is "reserved in heaven for you," and Paul said it is "laid up for you in heaven."

Everlasting life for the faithful, eternal destruction for the disobedient

Christ has ascended to heaven *"to prepare a place for you,"* leaving a promise to come back again to claim his own (John 14:2-3). At this time the Lord will take *"vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"* (II Thessalonians 1: 8-9). But for those who are faithful in the Lord, we read, *"for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"*(I Thessalonians 4: 16-17). We also read in I Corinthians 15:24, *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power"*

"Look unto Jesus, the Author, and finisher of our faith"

The Hebrew writer, after citing the examples of men and women of great faith in the eleventh chapter, encourages Christians in chapter twelve, verses one and two, *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset*

us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the Joy that was set before him endureth the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night"

Finally, Apostle Peter tells us what shall be the fate of this material world, and admonishes us therefore to maintain our lofty, glorious relationship with God. *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness"* (II Peter 3: 10-11)

Believe the gospel and be baptized today

We plead with those of you who are not members of the Lord's church to believe the gospel (Mark 16:16; John 8:24), renounce denominationalism and all sins which have closed the eyes of God against you (Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3), confess that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God (Matthew 10:33; Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). At this point, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from all your past sins, and you become a sanctified child of God. And if from this point, you will make an unrelenting effort to order your life in accordance with the gospel of Christ, worship and serve God faithfully in this present life, the Lord assures you of an eternity with him, in which you have no tears, neither sorrow, crying, pain, nor death, but joy unspeakable forever (Revelation 21:4). Decide your destiny now, for *"now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."*

CHAPTER 12

SOME FACTS ABOUT SIN AND THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST

Many people think that sin is nothing more than a violation of current social standards. They feel it is just mere moral laxity. Sin is much more than this. The Bible tells us what sin is. I John 3:4 says: "*Whosoever committed sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*" A translation puts it: "*sin is lawlessness.*"

Sin is Rebellion against God

Sin, therefore, is a rebellion against God. Sin is so serious because it is not just a rebellion against our parents, or society, but against our God who created us. Sin is contrary to God's nature. Man sins by failure to do what he ought to do or by doing what he ought not. It is just as sinful to refuse to obey the commands of Christ as to commit a grievous act such as fornication, drunkenness, or murder. Any of these will send man to hell. Read II Thessalonians 1:7-9 and I Corinthians 6: 9-10.

Obedience to God is much more than morality

It is wrong to think that morality is more important than obedience to God's religious commands or that it is worse to do something wrong than to fail to do what is right. The Bible teaches that omission is as sinful as commission and that disobedience to God's religious laws as well as immorality

brings condemnation.

Believe and be saved: believe not and be damned

Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16). He also said, "*true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23), but declared that those who follow the doctrines of men instead of his teachings worship God in vain (Matthew 15:9). If a man refuses to believe that Jesus is the son of God, refuses to repent and be baptized in His name, and fails to worship God as He directs in the New Testament, that man has not committed any moral sin, but he sins anyway just as if he commits deceits, theft, etc.

Sin separates man from sinless God

Sin entered into the world when man disobeyed God as he yielded to Satan's deceit (Genesis 2:17, 3:1-6). Even though Adam's sin is no moral transgression, man had disobeyed his creator, and the result was tragic, leading to his separation from God as stated in Genesis 3: 7-24. So, sin separates man from sinless God. This sad condition is re-echoed in Isaiah 59:2 "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*" And I John 3:8 says, "*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.*" As long as people remain in sin, they are "*strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*" (Ephesians 2: 12f).

Thus, sin deprives man of all the blessing of fellowship with God in this present life; and if he will not turn from sin, it shall lead to his eternal separation from Him in the life to come. II Thessalonians 1: 7-9 says those who know not God and obey not the gospel "*shall be punished with everlasting destruction*

from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power".

Heaven! A place of beautiful mansion; Hell! A place of Torment

It is revealed in the Bible that every person will go either to heaven (I Peter 1:4) or to hell (Matthew 10:28). Read also Matthew 25: 41-46. Heaven is a real place that is eternal: a place of "mansions" (John 14:2), a place of righteousness (Revelation 21:27), a holy place, so beautiful, the beauty of which the human mind cannot comprehend (Revelation 21:10), a place where there shall be no more death! (Revelation 21:4). And this condition will be forever. No ending! But hell is a place of everlasting torment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:30; Luke 16:23-24).

This condition also is forever and in unceasing torment in outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. No relief. No ending. What a horrible, terrifying place! And yet, as the devil deceived man in the beginning, people are still being led to think that sin is just some kind of harmless pleasure. But the Bible warns, *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, or effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist, shall inherit the kingdom of God"* (I Corinthians 6: 9-10).

"All have sinned"

Are you a sinner? Yes, of course, many admit. The Bible says, *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). There is no responsible and sincere person who will argue this. But, let the sinner get out of his self-deception. Sin is contrary to God, our creator. Sin is the root of all human woes in

this present world, and in the world to come eternal destruction. Let the sinner, therefore, reflect soberly upon his own life and brood on the judgment that will come on the children of disobedience; and if he is normal; he cannot but be filled with anguish, terror, and foreboding.

Can man save himself from sin?

The Bible says "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Realizing the very bad effects of sin, one may resolve, I shall not sin again. The resolution is good, but this does not absolve you from the guilt of the sins you have committed before your resolution. Besides, you must know and continuously practice the righteousness of God as revealed in the gospel of Christ perfectly and faultlessly after such resolution in order to be free from the guilt of sin. Man just cannot save himself.

Man is saved by the grace of God through faith

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourself; it is the gift of God."(Ephesians 2:8)

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure of for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."(Romans 5:7-8)

"But after that, the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 1: 4-5)

Before Jesus Christ came, God had always accepted animal

sacrifices from those who had faith in Him. There was Abel's sacrifice (Genesis 4:4). There was the Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12: 3-12). Under the law of Moses, sacrifices were made daily. "*And almost all things are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Hebrews 9:22).

Christ: the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world

When Christ came, John the Baptist declared, "*Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Christ was God's final sacrifice for sin. Christ, "*who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree*" (I Peter 2:22-24), thus offering himself once, and for the whole world (Hebrews 10: 12-14)

He was abused, mocked, spit upon, slapped, whipped, and tortured by being nailed to the cross. Consider the pain and anguish He endured on our behalf to save us from sin and its terrible consequences. This ought to move man to love Jesus Christ. But He said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14: 15). And the Holy Spirit says, "*though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him*" (Hebrews 5: 8-9). Check lesson nine of this booklet again. Believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized in His name for the forgiveness of sins, and remain faithful in His teaching even unto death.

about the

BOOK

This book is titled “**YOU SHOULD KNOW THE ONE TRUE CHURCH**” because the book discusses, with amazing clarity and accuracy, the church that Jesus Christ promised to build (Mt 16:18) and eventually built (Acts 2:1-47) as revealed in the New Testament. The book exposes the characteristics of the one true church that Jesus established as distinctly different from the various denominational churches established by men.

The book further leads readers to consciously appreciate the scriptural truth about the simplicity and reality of the Lord's church as the only body that contains those who are being saved from the world of sin. In other words, the Bible is saying that only those who are in the Lord's church can be saved.

If you read and digest this book without prejudice it will help you to distinguish the church that our Lord Jesus Christ built from the denominational churches that men have built in the world. It will also help you to know what the Bible says you should do so that the Lord will add you to it, and then remain a faithful, fruitful member in your life time and enjoy the hope of eternal life in the end.

Certainly, it is imperative that you know the one true church as revealed in the Bible, that you may not be swept away and perish in the errors of denominationalism and false religions. I, therefore, commend this book to your critical, but unbiased and sober scrutiny.

-Ezekiel Akinyemi