

PREACHERS' HELP

THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES OF RUNNING A CHURCH

GEOFFREY STONIER

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Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB)

FOREWORD

Under pressure from our PH leaders, and many of our clients, I have put pen to paper and produced this small book. My hope and prayer is that it will meet a need, help pastors to be more confident in what they are attempting to do, and bring churches more into conformity with the plain teachings of the Bible.

If being called to be a pastor is the highest privilege before God, then leading a church biblically and thus successfully, in my view, leads to the highest satisfaction. It is not that there is not a great deal of material in the Bible about church leadership, or that it is found only in obscure places, but what surprises me is that books on running a church are so few and far between. I must confess that since I was called as a pastor to my first church, I have discovered only a small number of books written on the subject. Another problem in Third World Countries is the cost of books (which is comparatively high for poor pastors); and yet another problem is the need to produce books in indigenous languages. Thus, have I kept this book small, and made the entries of Biblical material very high, and the passages quoted extremely examinable, by asking readers to answer some simple and straightforward questions.

There are an ever-increasing number of churches being formed in the Third Word, and for that we are all very grateful to God. Christ is building his Church, as he promised. However, let me ask an embarrassing question: *"How many churches are happy churches?"* How many are really happy with their pastors? How many have experienced "splits" lately? How many can be assured that they are following the pattern laid down for the Church in the Bible? How many sense humbly that God is especially blessing them at this time? I trust that this little study book will add to the happiness of many churches.

Finally, it seems obvious to me that the success of any local church depends upon the relationship of its members with our risen and ascended and reigning Lord Jesus Christ. A close relation with Christ by the members, a love for him, and a conscious decision to acknowledge him as Head of the Church, with a desire to give Christ the pre-eminence in the Church, seems to me to be the secret of success for any fellowship.

The producing of this book has taken a considerable amount of time, of thinking and praying, and a consideration of the straightforward teaching of the Bible. It will be a great satisfaction to me, to the Trustees of Preachers' Help, and to our leaders in various countries, to know that this book has been of considerable help to our pastoral brethren. God bless you richly in your work of running a church, and your discernment of the Spiritual Principles that are found in this book! May you simply enjoy looking up the Scriptures quoted, and answering the questions asked!

To God be the glory!

Geoffrey Stonier (Rev. Dr)

(International Director of Preachers' Help)

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Some readers may be puzzled by the title THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES OF RUNNING A CHURCH. However, I have been enabled to write several books with such a title. This does not imply some new mystical insight into the nature of the Church. “Spiritual” is to be equated with “biblical”. What does the Bible teach us about the Church, and how do we apply this knowledge in a practical way?

Now, it is a fact that never in the history of the world are there so many Christian churches coming into existence. Some churches meet in their thousands in large buildings (often called mega-churches), some in dedicated buildings, and some in a great variety of buildings which are used for other purposes during the week. Some churches are very small, meeting in one another’s homes, sometimes in utmost secrecy. Some churches are organised into denominations, such as Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, whereas others (a significant number) prefer to remain independent.

Our experience in Preachers’ Help work, particularly in one particular African country, has shown that, although a great number of independent churches are proliferating, things are not what they seem. Many of the churches come about from splitting away from other churches to follow a popular leader who sets himself up as the pastor of the church. However, he has no understanding of the nature of the church, has received no training, possibly does not have in his possession a Bible, with no access to one, and does whatever he feels is right to the approval of those who come to his church. In the light of his lack of knowledge of the Bible, he has no ability to teach the scriptures, not even knowing what the books of the Bible are, or how they occur, or what they teach, or how they are connected with one another. To the astonishment of our Preachers’ Help workers in this country, these many pastors have never heard of repentance or being born again of the Spirit of God. In Third World countries, the pastors are so poor that they cannot afford a Bible, or a small selection of Christian books – such as Bible commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, etc – to help them in their preaching.

There is nothing to challenge their ignorance, and no one to work alongside them. There is nothing to help them learn the Bible or teach it, and no suitable printed materials for them to study.

To ask such basic questions as “What is the Church?” or “How do you know how to run a church according to the Word of God”, there are no answers. Such questions lie outside their knowledge or experience.

Imagine my astonishment when preaching the gospel in one such church, when over one third of a congregation of over 300 responded positively in faith after my preaching on the parables of the lost, saying that they had never heard of repentance of sin, nor that they needed personally to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This situation came about because the pastor was only recently converted; and, although he possessed a Bible, which he undoubtedly did not understand, he had no other Christian books to help him.

Therefore, the fundamental question that must be dealt with is “WHAT IS THE CHURCH?” Until the pastor can answer this question, and until he understands what the Bible teaches about this subject, and until he teaches what has learnt from the Bible, his church will remain ignorant of this most important subject, and fall into confusion. The result is a *weak* church.

I have included a set of questions for each of the Bible passages quoted. These questions and your answers are vital. They are designed to make the reader read the Bible verses very carefully. The questions will test whether the reader really understands what he is reading. The answers are all found in the verses under examination.

From the beginning of the Christian church, Christians were taught exactly what the church is, what they must do to join it, and what it does. Here are seven examples:

1. Jn. 17:14-23. "I have given them your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. "As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in me through their word; that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as we are one; I in them and you in me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that you sent me, and loved them, even as you have loved me."

(A small commentary - these words, among the last to be uttered by Jesus before the cross, are very challenging. So far as the church remains in the world, what is so strengthening to Christians is the Word of God. This word of truth is what the world hates the most, and therefore hates those who stay faithful to it. The church was not only the disciples when Christ was on earth, but all those who believe until the end of the world. Then they will be completed in glory.)

1. What is God's great gift to the Church? (His Word, the Scriptures)

2. How do we know that the Church has no connection with the world? (The world hates the Church, because it is not of the world)

3. "Sanctify" means to be set apart. How does the Bible do this? (It teaches the Church the truth, and shows how Christian behaviour is very different from the standards of the world)

4. What does Jesus say in these verses to indicate that Christians must take the gospel into the world? (The pattern is in God sending his Son into the world. Secondly, Jesus sends them into the world)

2. Acts 2:37-42:

"Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.' And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!' So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

(A small commentary: the Christian church began on the day of Pentecost. The conditions of membership of the church are as follows – conviction of sin (pierced to the heart), repentance and baptism, receiving God's forgiveness of sins, and receiving the Holy Spirit of promise. Every one of these is a spiritual exercise, and is a work of God in us.)

5. What do you think "pierced to the heart" means? (Convicted of sin)

6. What must immediately follow? (Repentance)

7. What brings about conversion in a supernatural way? (The gift of the Holy Spirit)

8. What was the first effect of conversion? (They received his word)

9. Why were they baptised? (Think of what Paul says about baptism in Romans 6:2-7)

"How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."

10. What four important things did the Church do to build itself up? (Remained under the Apostles' teaching; continued with each other in fellowship; participated in the Communion Service; and prayed together)

3. Acts 2:45-47.

"Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

(A small commentary - originally, there were no such things as solitary Christians. The first Christians were delighted to worship together in the temple and eating meals together in which they included the Communion Service. Notice that becoming a Christian is called "being saved", and every believer becomes a member of the Church automatically.)

11. How do we know that the Church met together regularly? (They met day by day in the temple)

12. What else did the believers do to maintain their fellowship? (They took meals together)

13. How do we know that the Jerusalem church was a growing church? (The Lord added converts daily to the church)

4. Acts 10:39-43.

"We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised him up on the third day and granted that he become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead. And he ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of him all the prophets bear witness that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins."

(A small commentary - all the apostles saw Christ after his resurrection from the dead. The cross and the resurrection of Christ became central in their preaching, and in the witness and belief of all Christians. A Christian is defined here in two ways: as one who has believed in the name of Jesus Christ, and has received the forgiveness of his sins.)

14. What does "witness" mean? (They had seen what had happened to Christ)

15. What two vital things remained at the heart of the Church's message? (The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ)

16. What convinced the believers that Jesus was alive? (They ate and drank with him)

17. What must the Church do as part of her witness? (Preach to the people)

5. Acts 14:21-23.

"After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.' When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

(A small commentary - for the spiritual health of every church that Paul and Barnabas had founded, they sent teachers to encourage them in the faith. These elders needed to lead the church, and prepare the believers for times of persecution.)

18. What did they do in that city? (They preached the gospel)

19. What was the result? (Many disciples)

20. What did they do to strengthen the churches? (They appointed elders in every church)

21. What 3 things did they do for the elders? (They prayed and fasted, and commended them to the Lord)

6. Eph. 5:22-27.

“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”

(A small commentary: this is a classic passage on the relationship between Christian husbands and wives. From this, Paul draws a vital analogy (picture) of the relationship between Christ and his Church. He also states that Christ loves his Church, and died on the cross to make her his bride, a theme found on a number of times in the New Testament. Christ has also set her apart from the world, cleansing and beautifying her by the Word of God, ensuring that at the end (often called “the consummation”) the Church will be presented to the Father “holy and blameless”. The importance of the Church of Christ in time, history, and eternity cannot ever be over-emphasised.)

22. What is the main characteristic of a true Christian? (Subjection to Christ)

23. What is a characteristic of a good husband? (Love for his wife)

24. What 4 things does Christ do for his Church? (Loves her, died for her, cleansed her with the Word, makes her glorious and holy)

7. Revelation 12:1-11.

“A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.’

(A small commentary - in view of the passage quoted above, “a small commentary” is an impossibility! However, I will do my best. So many Christians avert their gaze from the pages of the Revelation, preferring to refer it to the so-called experts. However, the message in Chapter 12 is really quite simple once the symbolism is correctly grasped. It opens with a picture of a glorious woman giving birth to a man-child. This woman is the church (yes, even in the Old

Testament), the faithful throughout the ages. It is from this Jewish community that Jesus was born. The dragon represents Satan, whose malice for Christ and his Church is beyond belief (but you had better believe it!) Christ resisted all his assaults, rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father's right hand in heaven, there to intercede from all who belong to his church.

The period of the persecution of the church is described as 1260 days (which is also described elsewhere as 3½ years – a short period from God's point of view). At the end of this period, Satan, and all evil forces will be destroyed, and the Church (because of the power of the blood of the Lamb = Jesus) will conquer in this spiritual battle, with some believers losing their lives for Christ as martyrs. In eternity, the whole church will be devoted to praising God for her salvation.

From this passage, it is easy to see the importance of the part the Church plays in history, and her testimony to the kingly rule of God and her Saviour.)

25. Who is the woman in this passage? (The people of God)

26. Who is the male child? (Jesus Christ)

27. Who is waging war against him? (The devil)

28. Where is Jesus now? (Heaven)

29. Why did the woman flee into the wilderness? (God has appointed a place there for her safety)

SOME QUOTATIONS FROM PAST WRITERS

I am indebted to John Blanchard for making a collection of quotations about the Church in his three books: *Gathered Gold* (1984), *More Gathered Gold* (1986), and *Sifted Silver* (1995). Here are some of them.

“He cannot have God for his Father who refuses to have the church for his mother” Aurelius Augustine (354-430)

“We should always regard communion with other believers as an eminent means of grace.” John Charles Ryle (1816-1900)

“Those that would enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ's family must submit to the discipline of it.” Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

“We don't go to church; we *are* the church.” Ernest Southcott (1921-1995)

“The church is nothing but Christ displayed.” William Gurnall (1617-1679)

“A holy church is an awful weapon in the hand of God.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“Stating it in just about the most simple terms we know, the Christian church is the assembly of redeemed saints.” Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963)

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Which one of these quotations did you enjoy the best? Say why?

CHAPTER 2

DID JESUS INTEND TO FOUND A CHURCH?

Alongside this important question, we must also add: Did Jesus give instructions for the running and maintenance of his Church? In answer to this second question, I will not go too much into the practical details, as this is dealt with in the rest of the book. However, let us explore the question further: *Did Jesus intend to found a Church?* What evidence do we have for this in the New Testament?

1. The concept of the church

It is obvious from the Old Testament books that God intended Israel to be a Church, to worship in the Tabernacle (later Temple), and to have priests and sacrifices. It is also immediately obvious that personal and household worship was acceptable, but that the Jews should come together regularly for the worship of the Lord, and for the many festivals during the year. Let us consider the Tabernacle first.

Exodus 39:32 – 40:13

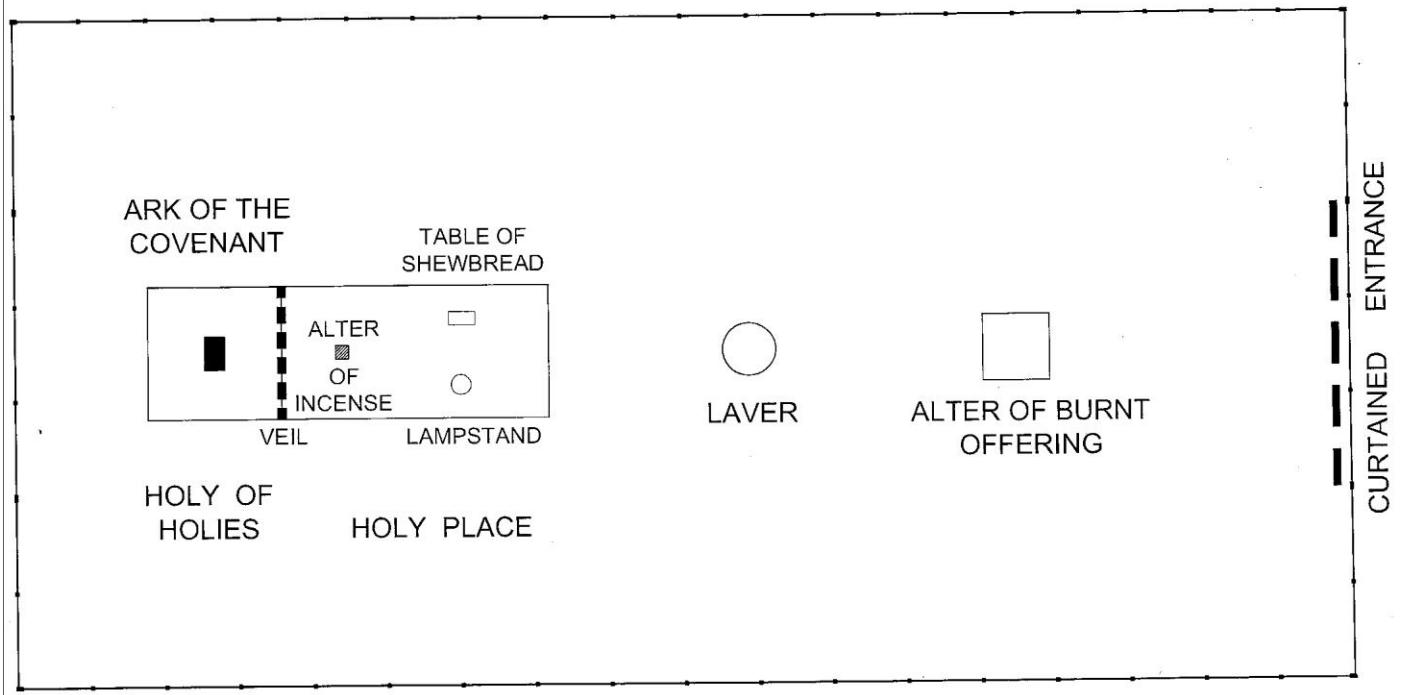
Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was completed; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did. They brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its furnishings: its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars and its sockets; and the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of porpoise skins, and the screening veil; the ark of the testimony and its poles and the mercy seat; the table, all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; the pure gold lampstand, with its arrangement of lamps and all its utensils, and the oil for the light; and the gold altar, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the veil for the doorway of the tent; the bronze altar and its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils, the laver and its stand; the hangings for the court, its pillars and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court, its cords and its pegs and all the equipment for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; the woven garments for ministering in the holy place and the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests. So the sons of Israel did all the work according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses. And Moses examined all the work and behold, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, this they had done. So Moses blessed them.

Here is Exodus 40:1.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. "You shall bring in the table and arrange what belongs on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and mount its lamps. Moreover, you shall set the gold altar of incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the veil for the doorway to the tabernacle. "You shall set the altar of burnt offering in front of the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it. You shall set up the court all around and hang up the veil for the gateway of the court. Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and shall consecrate it and all its furnishings; and it shall be holy. You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, and the altar shall be most holy. You shall anoint the laver and its stand, and consecrate it. "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. You shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint him and consecrate him that he may minister as a priest to me.

I include a pictorial representation of the Tabernacle below. Not only was it a place of meeting for the congregation, and where the priests ministered, but aspects of it pointed on in time to the work and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much has been made of the typology [picture language] of the Tabernacle, but I point out only some of the important aspects here. The Tabernacle sustained the worship of God, but its representation points to Christ, who alone is the way to God.

A representation of the Tabernacle



State how these pieces of furniture used in the Tabernacle worship represent the Person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

1. Lampstand (See Jn. 8:12)
2. Aaron the priest (See Heb 7:24-28)
3. Veil (See Mat. 27:51)
4. Altar of incense (See Rev.8:3)
5. Laver (See Jn. 13:5-11, 15:3)
6. Altar of burnt offering (See Heb. 13:10)

Jn. 8:12 - Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Heb. 7:24-28 - ...but Jesus, on the other hand, because he continues forever, holds his priesthood permanently. Therefore he is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

Mat. 27:51 - And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

Rev. 8:3-4 - Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

Jn. 13:5-11 - Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall you wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

Jn. 15:3 - "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Heb. 13:10 - We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

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After the Exile of the nation to Babylon in the 8th Century, for 70 years they remained there, they set up centres of worship called *synagogues* [meaning, where the people are gathered together; New Testament Greek often substitutes *ekklesia* = church] which continued on into the days of our Lord.

This was the pattern of worship in the nation when Jesus was born, apart from the festivals in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Yet this still does not answer the question: *Did Jesus intend the Church to follow this pattern?* As we see from various Scriptures, that is exactly what Jesus did.

2. Jesus' idea of the Church

Instead of *ekklesia*, Christ generally used the terms "kingdom of God," "kingdom of heaven," or simply "kingdom," or thy kingdom, or the Son of Man's kingdom.

Now, here are three witnesses from Matthew's Gospel:

Mat. 16:16-18

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

(A little commentary – perhaps the most important evidence in the New Testament. Peter's reply was fully inspired by God concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. Then Jesus makes a pun on Peter's name (normally petros = a little rock. The rock Jesus is referring to is *petra* = huge rock). This huge rock on which the church would be built is the

confession of Peter. There is a lot of confusion about this, because the original Greek words must guide us in thinking here.)

7. What was Christ questioning Peter about? (Who he was)
8. In what sense do you think Jesus was using the word “church”? (Reader’s reply)
9. What or who would be the foundation of the Church? (Jesus Christ himself)
10. What would the Church be protected from? (The gates of hell)

Mat. 18:15-17

"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. [If you wish to look this up in the Old Testament, it is Deut. 19:15 - "*A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.*"] If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

(A little commentary – here, the church is assumed to be an institution to which disputes may be referred for a solution, in this case a member who had fallen into sin. It is an undoubted fact that churches that do not exercise discipline in the way our Lord prescribes here, will inevitably become weak and fail.)

11. Here are 3 stages in which a dispute is dealt with. Describe them. (1. Three witness confront the sinner with evidence. 2. If he will not listen, then the matter is brought before the church. 3. If he still will not listen, then he is expelled from church membership and considered as a pagan)

Mat. 18:20

"For where two or three have gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst."

(A little commentary – as in the last illustration, we have “two or three” constituting the church in miniature, meeting in a locality)

12. What is the significance of the word “gathered”? (It means the gathering of the local church)
13. What in this verse refers to a Christian church? (“...in my name”, that is, in the name of Christ)
14. What in this verse indicates that the church is a supernatural organisation? (“I am there in the midst”)

CHAPTER 3

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the New Testament, the “kingdom of God” is the same as “kingdom of heaven”. This is easily proved by comparing verses in the Gospels. Here are two examples:

1. Mat. 10:7 – And as you go, preach, saying, “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Mk. 1:14-15 – Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.”

2. Mat. 19:14 – But Jesus said, “Let little children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Lk. 18:16 – But Jesus called for them saying, “Permit the children to come to me, and do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

On other occasions, the kingdom is described in various ways as:

- the kingdom of Christ

Mat. 13:41-43 - "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

Rev. 1:9 - I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

(A little commentary - The “Son of Man” is Jesus Christ. His kingdom will be purged of all of the unsaved who show some outward signs of confessing Christ in the church, and they will be judged and cast out at the end. This purging of the kingdom is described in the Parables of the Tares in Mat. 13:25-30 - But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’

True Christians are in Jesus’ kingdom (“fellow partaker”).

- the kingdom of Christ and of God

Eph. 5:5 - For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

- the kingdom of David

Mk. 11:10 – “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!”

(A little commentary – Here is the cry of the crowd as Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. Jesus was a direct descendant of David, who, in his turn was a type (picture) of the kingly Messiah to come.

They all signify a divine kingdom (or kingly rule) concerning the glorious coming of the Messiah in triumph.

Significant passages are also found in the book of Daniel:

2:44–45 - In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.

7:14, 27 - And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And his kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed...Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey him.

Questions on the passages quoted above.

Read again Mat. 13:41-43.

1. Who is “the Son of Man”? (Jesus, in the days of his flesh)
2. What is the function of the angels at the Judgement? (To gather out the unsaved, and cast them into hell)

Read also Dan. 12:2-3 (from which the quotation is drawn) - Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

3. What is the fate of the unsaved at the Judgement? (They will rise “to disgrace and everlasting contempt)
4. What will happen to those who are true members of God’s kingdom? (They will shine brightly like the stars)

Read again Eph. 5:5

5. Which four categories are excluded from the kingdom (or Church) of Christ? (The immoral, the impure, the covetous, the idolater)
6. Write a brief description of these four categories which might be found associating with the local church. (Reader’s description)
7. For the spiritual health of the church, what should be done to such people? (See an example of a man who was having sex with his stepmother in 1 Cor. 5:1-13:

“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler - not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.”

(Answer: excommunicate from the membership)

Read also Daniel 2:44–45

- 8.** When will the kingdom be set up? (In the days of the kings and their kingdom)
- 9.** How do we know that this new kingdom is not an earthly one? (It will endure forever)
- 10.** Who do you think is the stone cut without hands? (Jesus the Messiah)

Read again Daniel 7:14, 27

- 11.** What 3 things will be given to the Messiah? (Dominion, glory, a kingdom)
- 12.** What distinguishes Christ's kingdom from earthly kingdoms? (It is everlasting)
- 13.** Who participate in the kingdom? (The saints of the Highest One)

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Thus the kingdom (or kingly rule) of the Messiah is represented as a time of true faith, holiness, peace and prosperity; undoubtedly to be understood in a spiritual sense. That which was prophesied in the Old Testament was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, and is still being worked out in the growth of the Church.

CHAPTER 4

ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

A very important principle of Bible interpretation is to decide what in the gospel is to be affirmed, and what is to be left behind. It is not often realised the great effect that was made by shifting from the Jewish Law to the “law of grace”. The Apostle John made this perfectly clear in his Gospel, chapter 1:14-17:

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’” For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”

(A small commentary: There are some important points to make in this passage.)

(1) The Jews made much of the glory of God (the Shekinah) which appeared even before the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai (Exodus 16:10 - It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud), in the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34 - Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle), and in the Temple (2 Chronicles 7:1-2 - Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD'S house). This same glory of God was now seen in Jesus Christ.

(2) John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament Prophets, and Jesus was greater than he, a fact readily admitted by John the Baptist in John 1:15 - John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”)

(3) The law is to be abolished as a means of grace before God (no one could keep it anyway!), replaced by the “grace upon grace” of Christ, and his bringing to mankind grace and truth. In the place of the law of Moses.)

1. In relation to Christ, what do think this phrase means – “The word became flesh”? (The Word is Christ, who came from God and was God. He was born a man, and died as a man).

2. If John the Baptist represented the very best of the Law, what did he think of Christ, who was bringing in the gospel of grace? (Christ far-outranked him, and in fact was killed by Herod almost from the beginning of Christ's ministry)

We find the same thought concerning the abolition of the Law and the Old Covenant in the words off the Christian Jewish writer of Hebrews, where he makes some strong comments about the ending of the dispensation of the Law, replaced by the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ:

Heb. 9:9 - Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

Heb. 10:1 - For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

3. What was the failure of the Law of the Old Covenant? (It could not make the worshiper perfect in conscience)

4. What was the “time of reformation”? (The New Covenant in Christ)

It is not clearly understood by many Christians what a huge difference there is between the Old and the New Covenants. I will illustrate this with several important examples:

1. The covenant made with Abraham concerning the nations.

Gen. 22:18 - "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

(A small commentary - The "seed" of Abraham has particular reference to the blessing of salvation made to Eve in Gen 3:15 - And I will put enmity between you [the evil serpent] and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

5. This verse is often called the PROTEVANGELIUM (the first mention of the gospel). In your own words, say how this was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

How could the nations become the seed of Abraham? The fact is that whoever believes in Jesus as his personal Saviour becomes a child of Abraham, and this includes all the nations.

Rom. 4:16-17 - For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU")

6. Which two words are used here to describe the transformation of believers of all nations into the children of Abraham? (Faith and grace)

7. Who are "those who are of the Law"? (The physical descendants of Abraham)

8. What is it that makes Gentiles the children of Abraham? (They are of the faith of Abraham)

To whom, then, is the gospel to be proclaimed? We find a two-fold answer in almost the last words of the Lord Jesus:

Mat. 28:18-20 - And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

9. Who issued this evangelical command with all authority? (Jesus)

10. There are three commands here. What are they? (Make disciples of the nations; baptise them; teach the converts to obey what Jesus had commanded them)

11. How long is this to go on? (Until the end of the age)

12. What did Jesus promise? (I am with you)

Mk. 16:15 - And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

13. Where must they go with gospel? (Into all the world)

14. How must it be communicated? (By preaching)

15. How successfully would you say this command has been obeyed by the Church? (Reader's answer)

2. The New Covenant.

We have already seen that the abolition of the Old Covenant (Testament) of Law was foreseen by the Old Testament prophets, and that the New Covenant was a spiritual one)

Rom 7:6 - But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

(A small commentary – The condemnation of the Law lay heavily on the consciences of the Jews because they kept breaking it, despite their best efforts. This condemnation lifted when they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, repented of their sins, and received forgiveness through the work Jesus did on the cross. This new way that did what the Law could not do was brought about by the Holy Spirit in the new birth.)

16. What does “released from the Law” mean? (No longer under the condemnation of the Law)

17. How does Paul describe the old Law? (Oldness of the letter)

18. How, then, are Christians to live? (In newness of the Spirit)

Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:25-27

"And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and do them. Then they will be my people, and I shall be their God."

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances."

(A small commentary – Both these quotations refer to “a new spirit”. This is in contrast to Jewish love of the Law, and their attempt to keep it, but through their many sins (particularly of idolatry) their hearts became stone, preventing them from truly coming to God. God has a new covenant in which he will make the people clean from their sins, and they will then have a “heart of flesh”. Notice that both quotation make mention of the fact that once conversion under the New Covenant has come about, then they will have the power to walk in his statutes, and be careful to observe his ordinances.)

19. What do you think is meant by “heart of flesh”? (A spiritual life, a desire to serve God)

20. What do Christians call this experience? (Reader can choose from a long list of descriptions in the New Testament!)

3. The New Israel

So much in the Old Testament is a type (shadow) of what was to come spiritually in the New Testament. We have already looked earlier at the Tabernacle and its fulfilment in Christ. We can say the same of Israel which is a type of the Church. As soon as the Church came into being after the day of Pentecost, the nation and all the buildings in Jerusalem were destroyed. This, Jesus prophesied in Mk. 13:1-2 - As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."

There was to be no more nation of Israel with its Temple, sacrifices, and priests. All was swept away by the Roman army after AD 70.

In the place of national Israel, we find a trans-national Church. That Israel should be transformed into the Church is acknowledged by the Apostle Peter:

1 Pet. 2:9-10 – “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.”

(A small commentary – This description of the Church (by now predominately Gentile, due to the evangelism of the Church) is very similar to that of Israel found in Ex. 19:5-6 - ‘Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be my own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” However, there are three important differences – the Church has been brought out of darkness into the light, are now the people of God, and once did not experience God’s (saving) mercy, but now knows God’s mercy)

21. Speaking of the Christian Church, Peter gives 4 descriptions. What are they? (Chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, God’s possession)

22. What then is the most eminent purpose of the Church in her witness to the world? (To proclaim the excellencies of God through Christ)

God’s rejection of Israel (and the building up of the Church) harks back to the time of the Exodus. When the Hebrews came out of Egypt, they almost immediately fell into idolatry by making a golden calf while Moses was receiving the Law from God on Mount Sinai. Ever afterwards, they were complaining about their wilderness wanderings, which quite wore Moses out. Then, at the return of the spies, they refused to enter the Promised land beyond the river Jordan. The result was that they all died in the wilderness except the two faithful spies – Joshua and Caleb.

Consider these solemn words:

Heb. 3:7-19 –

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, ‘THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS’; AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, ‘THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.’" (This is quotation is from Ps. 95:7-11) The writer to the Hebrews continues – “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME." For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?"

23. What bad thing did the Hebrews do in the wilderness? (They hardened their hearts)

24. From which book in the Bible is this quotation taken? (Psalms)

25. What happened to these unbelieving Hebrews? (Their bodies fell in the wilderness)

When Jesus came, the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah, and was in turn punished and rejected by God for their unbelief. Christ was then seen to be the Messiah of all the nations. What, then, happens to the Jews when they come to believe in Christ? Many Jews have believed in Christ through the centuries, and are thus joined to the believing Gentiles in the Church. Paul’s words are very joyful on this account:

Rom. 11:23-27 – “And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery - so that you will not be wise in your own estimation - that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

(A small commentary – Admittedly, this is a very difficult passage to interpret, particularly in answering the question: Has Israel got a future? Paul appears to be rather tentative in his conclusions about the Jews, and guards his words carefully. I have avoided the many controversies by keeping to the obvious facts of the case, which are as follows:

- (1) That believing Jews are grafted into God's salvation and Church.
- (2) That the partial hardening of Israel means that some (perhaps many) Jews will come to believe in Christ.
- (3) That their coming into the Church coincides with the coming in of the Gentiles.
- (4) That "all Israel definitely includes the Gentile believers.)

26. What will God do to those many Jews that believe in Christ? (They will be grafted in again to the olive tree)

27. In your own words, say what you think the cultivated olive tree is. (Reader's answer)

28. How can we be sure that the believing Gentiles are included in Israel? (It says, "all Israel will be saved, which includes the believing Gentiles")

It is also quite clear from Gal. 6:15-16 that Paul saw the new Israel, under the New Covenant, as the Church - "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

(A little commentary – membership of the Church does not depend on circumcision (the Jews) or uncircumcision (the Gentiles). Both groups are brought into the Church in exactly the same way – by believing in Jesus Christ. The "new creation" is the same for both groups – see 2 Cor. 5:17-19 – "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation.")

29. Who are the circumcision? (The Jews who practised it and the Law)

30. Who are the uncircumcision? (The Gentiles)

31. What is the new creation? (Those – Jews and Gentiles – who are saved and brought into the Church)

32. Why do you think that the setting aside of the "old things" is very important to the Jews? (The Law, the traditions of the Law, the sacrificial system, etc)

33. Both saved Jews and Gentiles find that God has done something wonderful for them. What is it? (They are reconciled to God)

34. Both Jews and Gentiles become one in the Church. Say how they are reconciled with each other. (Reader's answer)

CHAPTER 5

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

What a great surprise it is to new converts to find themselves part of a spiritual fellowship locally, the whole Church worldwide, and the company of the saints in heaven! What a family!

1. Looking after spiritual and physical needs

There was not a spiritual (and often a physical) need that was not met by the Church. This commenced from the very beginning of the Church after Pentecost.

Acts 2:42-46

"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart."

1. Which four things did the apostles encourage for the spiritual benefit of the church? (Teaching; fellowship; breaking of bread [Communion]; prayer.
2. What very practical things did the church practise? (They shared their property, possessions and money with the needy)
3. "What do you think "one mind" meant? (Reader's answer)
4. Which phrase shows that they acted as a family? (Took their meals together)

2. What is needed for church membership?

The prerequisite for church membership was the "new birth" – coming into the kingdom through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jn 3:3-7

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

5. Two verbs are used in this passage to describe the kingdom (church). Which are they? (See, enter)
6. Why was Nicodemus amazed when Jesus said, "You must be born again"? (Reader's answer)
7. What does "born again" mean? (Reader's answer)
8. "How do you know that the "kingdom of God" means the Church? (Readers' reply)

These verses mean that whoever is born again automatically becomes a member of the Church of Christ. Whoever is born again is born into the family of the Church of Christ. It also means that every member of the Church is regenerate. Under the old covenant, national Israel contained many unbelievers and idolaters, and in some periods, only a few were saved.

Is 6:13 - "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, and it will again be subject to burning, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

9. How do we know that this prophecy was fulfilled? (A remnant Israel of Israel returned from exile in Babylon; among whom were to be found faithful people like Simeon and Hannah at the birth of Jesus)

Ezra 9:8 - "But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in his holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage."

10. What work of grace did God do? (He brought the Jews out of exile)

11. What two things did Ezra want God to do for his people? (Enlighten their eyes to spiritual things; to revive them)

12. In what proportion of Israel do we find here true believers represented? (One tenth)

13. What act of grace did God show to the Jews after their return from Exile in Babylon? (To leave an escaped remnant)

14. The doctrine of the remnant was given for two purposes. What were they? (To enlighten their eyes; and to revive them spiritually)

2. Membership of the Church is about a spiritual union of the members. Paul was very fond of describing it under the analogy of the body.

A classic statement is found in 1 Cor. 12:14-27:

"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as he desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honourable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."

15. Make a list of some of the members of the human body which are mentioned by Paul. (The foot, the ear, the eye,)

16. What was the point in mentioning these members? (To show the each member had a different function)

17. To which members of the body is special care given? (The less honourable members)

18. What does this say about some members of the church? (Readers' answer)

19. What happens when a member is suffering? (All the other members suffer with it)

3. A membership roll

Many churches have a formal membership, when believers of the local church are invited into membership. This does not appear to be a practice of the Church in New Testament times, but there is no teaching in the New Testament that might condemn such a practice.

This practice also has a practical purpose in the following things:

(a) It can be used by the church (or leaders of the church) to discipline anyone falling into a serious sin that brings dishonour on the church, or in failing to attend regularly. If no repentance is exhibited, or behaviour improved, then that member might be given time, after a reproof, to prove repentance; participation in the Communion might be taken away from such a member; or, as a final resort, removed from church membership (excommunication) unto repentance is shown

(b) The local church may follow the democratic principle under the congregational system. All members of good standing are allowed to vote in matters concerning the church; so losing one's membership (temporarily or permanently) means no participation whatsoever in the affairs of the church.

4. Church membership as stated in the New Testament

Rev. 21:27

"And nothing unclean, and no one who practises abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

20. Who are forbidden to enter heaven? (Spiritually unclean; those who practise abominations [for example, idolatry and sexual sins]; liars.

21. Believers' names are all recorded in which heavenly document? (Lamb's book of life)

22. If the Lamb is Jesus, when does he enter the names of every believer? (Reader's answer)

Heb. 12:22

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood."

23. Where is the city of the living God? (Heaven)

24. What happened to Mount Zion on earth? (It was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70)

25. Who inhabits the heavenly Zion? (Angels, the general assembly of the Church, God himself, the perfectly righteous, Jesus)

26. What do you think the phrase "enrolled in heaven" means? (Reader's answer)

CHAPTER 6

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

The New Testament makes it clear in many verses that there is only one Head of the Church, and that is Jesus Christ to whom all the leaders are answerable. Unfortunately, in some churches, the leaders seem to act and feel that they are the head of the church, and are answerable only to themselves. The chief of the church is not the pastor, but Jesus Christ himself. We have an example of this in 3 Jn. verses 9-10:

"I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church."

1. How do we know that Diotrephes was misusing the leadership? (He loved to be first)
2. What was his attitude toward the spiritual authority of John? (He would not listen to him)
3. What was he saying about John? (Unjustly accusing him with wicked words)
4. What did he do? (He would not receive the brethren)
5. What did he do to those who disagreed with him? (He put them out of the church)

Here are some quotations about the headship of Christ over his Church and her leaders:

Luke 20:9-19

And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time. At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out. The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!" But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone'? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that he spoke this parable against them.

(A small commentary – these words of Christ show why Christianity did not become a part of Judaism. The parable is a very vital one, exposing the fact that the religion of the Jews in Jesus' day was entirely antagonistic to the revealed plan of God in saving souls through his Son, and the formation of the Church. Two historical events occurred: (1) the vineyard of God (that is, his true Church) has nothing to do with the religion of the Jews; (2) that the Jewish nation would be destroyed, to be replaced by the Christian faith and the Christian Church. The verse Jesus quoted – "The stone which the builders reject, etc.", is from a passage in Ps. 118:19-23. This is a prophetic passage, speaking of the source of salvation through a work of God in Christ, and not through the works of men. This would replace the Old Covenant, which was based on works.)

6. What do you think Jesus was saying about Israel in this parable? (Readers' answer)
7. What was the stone rejected by the builders? (Jesus Christ himself)

8. What will happen to those who fall on the stone? (They will be destroyed)

9. What will happen to the covenant made to Israel? (Because it could not save anyone, it would be replaced by the New Covenant)

“Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous will enter through it. I shall give thanks to you, for you have answered me, and you have become my salvation. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvellous in our eyes.”)

10. Why are “the gates of righteous” so very important? (Christ alone is the way to God)

11. How has the rejected cornerstone become “my salvation”? (Reader's answer)

Eph. 2: 20-23

“He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

12. What has God done in connection with the Church? (Made Christ the head of the Church)

13. What other four things has God done for his Son? (1. Raised him from the dead; 2. seated him at his right hand; 3. put him above all rule, authority, power, dominion and name; 4. put all things under his subjection)

Colossians 1:18

“He is also head of the body, the church; and he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he himself will come to have first place in everything.”

14. What is the body of Christ? (The Church)

15. Why does Christ have the first place in everything? (He was the beginning, and the first to rise from the dead)

Col. 2:10

“In him you have been made complete, and he is the head over all rule and authority.”

16. With Christ, in what sense can the church be said to be “complete”? (Reader's answer)

17. What is the position of Jesus Christ today? (Head in all rule and authority)

2. The Biblical offices of the Church

(1) **Deacons.** We cannot be sure exactly what the deacons did. The probable origin for the verb “to minister” or “to serve” (Greek diakoneo) is from Christ himself in Mark 10:45 - “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

The idea of service is continued with the Church's choice of seven servants in Acts 6:1-5:

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God

in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

18. Why would the Apostles not serve at tables? (They did not want to be hindered in preaching and teaching the Word of God)

19. So what did they do? (The selected 7 men for this practical task)

20. How do we know the church approved of this arrangement? (The whole congregation approved)

21. What two great qualifications did Stephen have? (He was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit)

Phil. 1:1 speaks of the deacons as distinct from the elders (overseers) – "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons."

Paul mentions by name such a servant (a deaconess), commending her for her practical help, in Rom. 16:1-2:

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well."

22. What did Paul say about Phoebe? (Reader's answer)

23. What was surprising about Phoebe? (She was a woman)

24. What was Paul's testimony of Phoebe? (She was my helper, and to many others)

Finally, by the time Paul wrote to Timothy at the commencement of young Timothy's pastoral ministry, we have mention of the deacons as officers in the church in 1 Tim. 3:8-13:

"Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

(A few remarks – the words "women must likewise be dignified" mean either that they were the wives of the deacons, or deaconesses.)

25. What must deacons be above everything else? (Men of dignity)

26. Deacons must not be double-tongued. What do think this means? (Reader's answer)

27. What two others things must they not be? (Not to be addicted to alcohol, or greedy for money)

28. What must the church do before they select them? (Test out their faith and way of life)

29. What four qualifications did the women need to have? (Dignified, not gossips, temperate, faithful)

30. What sort of homes must the deacons run? (With only one wife; manage their children; and run their homes well)

(2) Elders

Whereas the deacons were set apart to minister to the physical needs of the church, the elders were chosen and set apart to look to the spiritual needs of the churches. Paul considered this so important that he himself appointed elders in the Galatian (Asian) churches: Acts 13:23 – “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

The first mention of elders is found in Ex. 3:16-18, where God gives directions to Moses to go to Egypt and bring the Hebrews out of slavery:

“Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. “So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.’ They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’”

In AD 55, the Church in Jerusalem called a special meeting to discuss whether Gentile converts should live like the Jews under the Law. Of course, the final answer given by James was “No”. Here is a short passage about the calling of this Council, where we find a distinction drawn between the Apostles and the Elders in Acts 15:4-6:

“When they [Paul and Barnabas] arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.”

In some churches, the elders abused their office to gain power over others. Read the direction Peter gives in this tragic matter, where the Elders should lead the church, and serve the church, not taking the foremost position over all the members in 1 Pet. 5:1-5:

“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders.”

31. What does Peter call himself here? (A fellow elder)

32. Which word does Peter use to describe the work of the elder? (Shepherd)

33. Paul states three things about their exercise of oversight in the church? (1. Not compelling the people; getting the people to obey them voluntarily; 3. fulfilling the will of God)

34. Which word beginning with e_____ should the elders be? (Examples)

35. What do you think the words “not lording” mean? (Reader’s answer)

When Paul called together the elders of Ephesus, this is found among his advice to them in Acts 20:27-30:

"For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."

36. Put these words of instruction from Paul into your own words. (Reader's answer)

37. Who are the "savage wolves"? (Reader's answer)

3) Pastors

You will notice in the previous quotation that the pastors were included among the elders. Indeed, it is New Testament teaching that all pastors are elders. Note also that elders and pastors are called "Shepherds".

In the Old Testament, God himself is called the "shepherd [pastor] of Israel" in Ps. 80:1-3:

"Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth! Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your power and come to save us! O God, restore us And cause your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved."

Jesus calls himself "the good shepherd" in Jn. 10:11-16:

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear my voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd."

38. How could it be that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, should laid down his life for his sheep? (Reader's answer)

39. How would you identify "a hired hand" in the ministry? (Reader's answer)

40. What do you think Jesus meant when he said that he had other sheep "not of this fold? (He was referring to the Gentiles)

41. What is the "one flock with one shepherd?" (The Church world-wide)

Here is the absolute model for any pastor in the Church – his life should follow that of the Lord Jesus Christ who has called him to this high and responsible office in his Church.

What are the responsibilities of the pastors?

(a) To lead, guide, and guard the "flock" like a shepherd.

(b) To teach the members from the Bible, and preach to them regularly.

This presupposes that the pastors have first been taught, and continue faithfully in learning and studying the Word of God. Notice how the pastors are described in the list of the leaders of the Church in Eph. 4:11-12:

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

42. Name three kinds of work a pastor can be involved in. (Equipping the saints; serving others; building up the church)

(4) Apostles

We are bound to ask, "Whatever happened to the apostles, as we do not have any today?" Before we answer that question, we need to see how and why Jesus appointed them in the first place.

The word *apostle* means "someone who is sent". After calling the twelve apostles, he appointed them to go out before him doing miracles and preaching the gospel. The Mission of the Twelve is described in Mat. 10:1-15:

Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. "As you enter the house, give it your greeting. "If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city."

43. Where did the apostles come from? (From among the disciples)

44. Why do you think that Jesus chose twelve apostles? (After the twelve tribes of Israel)

45. What does the word *apostle* mean? (Sent out)

46. What was the limitation Jesus set on the Mission? (They were only to go to the lost sheep of Israel)

47. What should they do first above all their other activities? (Preach the gospel)

48. What four things should they do? (Heal the sick; raise the dead; cleanse the lepers' cast out demons)

The apostle Paul was specially chosen to take the gospel to the Gentile world: Acts 26:12-18:

"While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.'"

49. What was the Lord going to do through Paul? (Turn the Gentiles from darkness to light and the dominion of Satan; and bring to them the forgiveness of sins and sanctification by faith in Christ)

You will notice particularly that the apostles, in the later stage of the Church in the first century, were reluctant to call themselves apostles. As an example, see how John introduces himself in his letters:

1 Jn – No title

2 Jn. 1:1 – “The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth.”

3 Jn. 1 – “The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.”
Revelation 1:4 - “John to the seven churches that are in Asia.”

Jesus did not tell his apostles to appoint further apostles in the Church. John was the last one left at the end of the first Century. After him, the office of Apostle was never found in the Church. The task of the apostles was to evangelise, preach and teach (as the elders and pastors did), to make sure that false teaching did not enter the church, and that whatever writings appeared, and were accepted by the Church as Scripture, were sound.

CHAPTER 7

MONEY AND THE CHURCH

It is an obvious thing to say, but it is impossible to run a church without some sort of income, whether in material things or in money.

1. Giving as a voluntary principle

In ancient Israel, it was the Hebrews themselves who gave for the support of the Lord's work, very willingly indeed: 1 Chron. 29:1:

Then King David said to the entire assembly, "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is still young and inexperienced and the work is great; for the temple is not for man, but for the LORD God. Now with all my ability I have provided for the house of my God the gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, onyx stones and inlaid stones, stones of antimony and stones of various colours, and all kinds of precious stones and alabaster in abundance. Moreover, in my delight in the house of my God, the treasure I have of gold and silver, I give to the house of my God, over and above all that I have already provided for the holy temple, namely, 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the buildings; of gold for the things of gold and of silver for the things of silver, that is, for all the work done by the craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?" Then the rulers of the fathers' households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over the king's work, offered willingly; and for the service for the house of God they gave 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, and 10,000 talents of silver, and 18,000 talents of brass, and 100,000 talents of iron. Whoever possessed precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, in care of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the LORD with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly. So David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed are You, O LORD God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; yours is the dominion, O LORD, and you exalt yourself as head over all. Both riches and honour come from you, and you rule over all, and in your hand is power and might; and it lies in your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone."

(1) Were the gifts from the people given willingly? (Yes)

(2) Make a list of the gifts. (Reader's answer)

(3) What did David and people acknowledge concerning riches? (They come from God)

The same principle of voluntary giving was continued in the Church. Consider 2 Cor. 9:6-12:

"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER." Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God."

(A small commentary – Some think that the more one gives to God, the more one gets back. But this is not so. God's response to our gifts will often be to pour out much spiritual blessing upon the church to which the gifts are directed. God is a generous God, as seen in Paul's quotation from Ps. 112:9 – "He has given freely to the poor, His righteousness endures forever; his horn will be exalted in honour.")

(4) Should generosity be seen in all the members of the church? (Yes)

(5) How should a Christian not give? (Grudgingly or under compulsion)

(6) How much should a Christian give? (Just as he purposed in his heart)

What the Apostle Paul did in his evangelistic and teaching ministry in Corinth, when the funds ran out, was to do some work? See Acts 18:1-3:

"After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers."

(7) What were the names of Paul's Christian friends? (Aquila and Priscilla)

(8) What trade did they follow? (Tentmakers)

(9) What does this say about Paul? (He also was a tent maker)

2. Paying the Pastor

It is the duty of every congregation to support their pastor in the ministry. See 1 Tim. 5:17-18. The two quotations Paul gives are from Deut. 5:18 and 24:15)

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The labourer is worthy of his wages."

(10) What do you think "double honour" mean? (Possibly give a double salary, or above the usual wages)

(11) To what were the elders devoting themselves? (Preaching and teaching)

(12) Why was it wrong to muzzle the ox? (It became hungry while doing the heavy work, and needed to eat)

3. The need for a church treasurer

Jesus appointed a treasurer for the needs of his disciples. Fortunately, John appointed himself to oversee his work, and discovered that he was stealing the money.

Jn. 13:29 - "For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor."

Jn 12:6 - "Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it."

(13) What was the full name of the treasurer? (Judas Iscariot)

(14) What did he do to the money box? (He used to pilfer from it)

(15) What terrible thing did he go on to do for money? (He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver)

4. Some practical ways in which the church may overcome problems concerning money

It is as well for the elders and pastors never to handle church money so that they can never be accused of thieving. In fact, in some churches in the Third World, the offering is given to the Pastor to look after, and no one knows where it goes, or what it is used for. There is always the suspicion that the Pastor might be taking the money for his own personal circumstances.

It is also a good idea to appoint two treasurers, so that they both become responsible for the money, and can keep an eye on each other, and record the amounts that are given in a church cash book, to resist the temptation to steal it. This will overcome the suspicions of the church.

CHAPTER 8

PREACHING AND TEACHING IN THE CHURCH

There can be no doubt that these were the main activities of all the Christian churches in the first Century. Without the preaching of the gospel, there can be no increase in the church, and, without Bible teaching, the Church becomes very weak spiritually; where the Bible should be the authority of the Church.

1. The preaching of the gospel

How can we tell that preachers are preaching the gospel? It is important to consider very carefully what is being preached, and see if it conforms to what we discover as gospel preaching in the New Testament. This provides the authority for making demands of so-called gospel preachers, and having the ability to see if they are really preaching the gospel, or are teaching error. The following statements are true of both evangelists and pastors, or of any church member who has the desire to reach out with the gospel. So what should gospel preachers proclaim?

A gospel preacher should have a wide understanding of the whole Bible. We notice how the Apostle Paul taught the young men that went around with him, not only teaching them about the gospel, but showing them how to do it by his own example. Only after this rigorous training did he send them out to various churches on his behalf.

(a) The preacher of the gospel needs to firmly base his teaching on his whole knowledge of the counsel of God. This is a big task, for it depends on the preacher's knowledge of the Bible!

Acts 20:27-28:

"For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

(Small commentary - Paul is addressing the elders (the preachers) of Ephesus, whom he had been training in the Scriptures for several years)

1. What was Paul's attitude to teaching them so much? (He did not shrink from the task)
2. In no more than 100 words, explain what is "the whole purpose of God" in evangelistic terms? (Reader's answer)
3. What was the best way of guarding themselves and all the flock? (By teaching them the Bible)

(b) The foundational doctrines of the sovereignty and the salvation of God.

Eph. 1:3-14

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his kind intention which he purposed in him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times,

that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

"In him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory."

4. From the first paragraph, make a list of the things God has done for the believer. (Reader's answer)
5. Paragraph 2 speaks of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Make a list of these things. (Reader's answer)
6. From paragraph 3, say what connection the Holy Spirit has with the preaching of the gospel. (Reader's answer)

(c) The gospel of God's grace

Eph. 2:8-10

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

7. What is grace? (God's free gift of salvation)
8. Why are grace and salvation so linked in these verses? (There is no salvation unless God (through his gospel preachers) offers it freely.)
9. What were the Jewish "works" Paul had in mind? (Works of trying to keep the Law)
10. If sinners had works to commend to God, what would they do? (They would boast)
11. What is God's workmanship? (Those saved by grace)

(d) The exposure of Jesus Christ in all the Scriptures.

Lk. 24-27

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.

12. To which part of the Scripture initially did Jesus refer his hearers? (Prophets)
13. Search through Isaiah 53, and write out the prophecies concerning Christ's sufferings and death.

Isaiah 53:3-12:

"He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we did not esteem him. Surely our griefs he himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his

scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet he was with a rich man in His death, because he had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the LORD was pleased to crush him, putting him to grief; if he would render himself as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in his hand. As a result of the anguish of his soul, he will see it and be satisfied; by his knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as he will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot him a portion with the great, and he will divide the booty with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.”

14. Which books of the Bible are called “Moses”? Give a list of them.

15. What passages would you go to in the books of Moses for preaching the gospel? (Reader’s answer)

2. The teaching of the gospel

It is a fault with many gospel preachers that they read into their chosen passage their own ideas. To prevent this, we must learn about EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

When the work of PREACHERS HELP began over a decade ago, it was our intention to improve preaching in two respects: firstly, in the noticeable lack of substantial Biblical content and correct interpretation of the text and context in most preaching in the world today, and secondly, in the absence of a preaching method practised over many centuries, even from the Early Church, and which has now largely fallen into disuse; that is, **Expository Preaching**.

Our initial assessment has, sadly, been proved all too correct. Since the beginning of the PREACHERS’ HELP work, I have been able to travel round the world several times. On most occasions, when I have been asked to lead Pastor’s Conferences, I have asked the organisers to invite one or two of the local pastors to preach. A whispered translation now and again was quite sufficient to get the gist of the message. On almost every occasion, I discovered the two failings I mentioned in the earlier paragraph.

Those who do not prepare beforehand, and rely on the “inspiration” of the Holy Spirit during the act of preaching, will not like expository preaching. The reasons are evident in the following two quotations from great preachers who wrote books about preaching (one in the 19th Century, and the other in the 20th Century):

“By way of precaution, however, let me remark that we ought to be always in training for text-getting and sermon-making. We should constantly preserve the holy activity of our minds. Woe unto the minister who dares to waste an hour.” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon: ON THE CHOICE OF A TEXT. In ‘Lectures to my students’, 1875)

“You must be expository; and in any case my whole argument is that it should be clear to people what we are saying is something that comes out of the Bible. We are presenting the Bible and its message...So you start with exposition; not only in your own preparation, but you are going to give this to the people as well. What you are going to say, the burden of your message, arises from this exposition. If you have truly understood the verse or passage you will arrive at a doctrine, a particular doctrine, which is a part of the whole message of the Bible. It is your business to search for this and to seek it diligently. You have to question your text, to put questions to it, and especially this question – What is this saying? What is the particular doctrine here, the special message? In the preparation of a sermon nothing is more important

than that.” (David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, ‘PREACHING AND PREACHERS’, Hodder and Stoughton, 1971)

So many preachers today decide on a subject first, and then look around for biblical materials that they think will suit that subject. The result is that many opportunities are lost by the omission of Bible passages that are difficult to fit into most subjects. Also, difficult passages are never preached, and congregations could miss out on important teaching.

The Bible is the Word of God, and it is our thoughts that should be made to conform to Scripture, and not the other way round. The writer to the Hebrews describes God’s Word as “living and powerful like a sharp two-edged sword.” The best way for preachers to wield such a powerful weapon is by expounding it?

CHRIST EXPOUNDED THE SCRIPTURES

‘Then he [Jesus] said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me.” And he opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then he said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”’ (Luke 24:44-49)

16. What did Jesus teach his disciples? (That he fulfilled the Scriptures)

17. Into which three parts did Jesus divide the Old Testament? (Law of Moses, Prophets, Psalms)

We notice that Christ’s teaching was comprehensive – notice the extent of Christ’s teaching: ‘...in all the Scriptures’. Secondly, it was systematic – taking in the whole of the Old Testament, and going through the Bible books each in its turn. ‘Moses’, ‘Prophets’, and ‘Psalms’ are the three divisions of the books of the Old Testament in their usual order.

The words ‘opened their understanding’ are rendered by the Greek word from which comes ‘HERMENEUTICS’ = the interpretation and application of the Bible text. Every preacher should have at least two objectives: (1) to explain the Bible text in such a way that what was formerly hidden is now open to the understanding of the hearers; (2) the application of the text, so that sinners, hearing the gospel, will repent and be saved, and the children of God will be built up in their most holy faith.

Thirdly, Christ stated his objectives from the beginning – ‘...it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day’. Here is a kind of sermon title, so that the disciples would know exactly what Christ was teaching, and what he was determined to prove from the Scriptures.

Fourthly, on the basis of what he had proved from Scripture, Christ demanded that the disciples should do these things: (1) preach to all the nations repentance and remission of sins; (2) become [my] witnesses; (3) wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit of power. The exposition of Christ demanded both a verdict from his hearers, and a modification of their behaviour based on the words of Scripture.

TITLE

INTRODUCTION

EXPOSITION

APPLICATION

(1) **TITLE.** The title should sum up the whole of the sermon in one sentence. It should concentrate the mind of the preacher on the one truth that the sermon is designed to convey. It is best for the preacher to limit himself to that one truth; for more than that tends to confuse the hearers. Usually the title goes un-stated; but it could be used beforehand in a printed order of service, or by way of an announcement.

(2) **INTRODUCTION.** This is a brief introduction to the text being expounded. The TITLE is explained in a little more detail, and any particular aspects of the text – difficulties, challenges, doctrines – explained briefly.

(3) **EXPOSITION** means following the Bible passage in the way it is set out, commenting on every phrase in order. It is important to treat the text in context – which means in the context of that part of the chapter, the book, and even the Bible. Doctrinal problems are solved by reference to easier passages in the Bible that are similar; that is, by comparing Scripture with Scripture. It is good to write down headings in order as reference points for the sermon.

(4) **APPLICATION.** Every preacher should aim for a verdict from his hearers. So far as the unsaved are concerned, this will take the form of an evangelistic appeal. For Christians, the doctrines in the chosen passage will be examined, and applied to their lives – involving dedication to Christ, submission to the revealed will of God, moral decisions in view of the inward working of the Holy Spirit and the Second Coming of Christ, etc.

THE ADVANTAGES OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

1. Preaching through a passage, chapter or book in the Bible takes away the anxiety of seeking a text to preach from. The choice has already been made.
2. Exposition brings out doctrines and applications that might otherwise remain unknown.
3. The logic of the Bible is clearly seen in the exposition the Scriptures.

THE BENEFITS OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

1. The expository outline is so simple that it can be used with small groups of people, with young people's work, and even with individuals.
2. Exposition gives greater authority to the preacher, for he is seen to be preaching the Word of God.
3. The expository method requires the preacher not only to study thoroughly the passage

under consideration, but also whole books of the Bible, and, eventually, the whole Bible.

4. Expository preaching builds up the faith and biblical understanding of the Church as no other method can do.
5. Exposition looks carefully at every passage for an application to the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 9

THE EVANGELISM OF THE CHURCH

The Lord Jesus definitely designed his church to grow.

1. The Great Commission

There was no evangelism before the day of Pentecost, for the apostles shut themselves up in an upper room with others, and spent their time in prayer. But through the centuries, the Church has always responded to evangelism by called these words THE GREAT COMMISSION, directed not only to the apostles, but to all converts subsequent to their evangelism.

He instructed the disciples in the following way in Mat. 28:18-20:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

1. On what authority was Jesus able to issue such a commission? (His authority was all-inclusive, derived from God himself)
2. Which word from Jesus begins the command to evangelise? (Go)
3. What would be the result of their evangelism? (They would make disciples from the nations)
4. The second command was to baptize. In the light of Rom. 6:-3-4 – why did baptism follow successful evangelism?

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."
5. How do you think "newness of life" could be applied to the new converts?
6. In whose authority did the Church baptise? (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
7. What special name is given to this three-fold authority to baptise the converts? (The Trinity)
8. What particular aspect of teaching was applied to the new converts? (Obedience to Christ's command?)

The effect of seeing the thousands converted on the day of Pentecost coloured the subsequent evangelism. We will consider briefly the contents of Peter's evangelism, and then look at the result of a severe persecution of the church by the Jewish authorities.

Acts 2:36-41

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is

for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

9. How do we know that Peter was convicting the Jews of sin? (That they were responsible for crucifying Jesus? (First, they were told by Peter – “this Jesus whom you crucified”; second, “they were pierced to the heart)

10. How do we know that they repented of their sins? (First, Peter told them to repent, then secondly they cried out, “What shall we do?”)

11. What was the result of their repentance? (They were forgiven their sins)

12. What word did Peter use to describe their being Christians? (Saved)

Acts 8:1-4

“Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.”

13. What happened to Saul, the great persecutor of the Church? (He was converted, and became an evangelist to the Gentiles)

14. What happened to the apostles in this first wave of general evangelism? (They stayed in Jerusalem)

15. What did the Christians preach? (The Word of God)

16. What did this imply? (That the apostles had trained them in the word)

Jesus made it very plain in his last instructions to his disciples before the cross, that he expected the disciples to evangelise and make converts.

Jn. 17:20

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in me through their word"

17. Who are “these”? (The apostles)

18. How did Jesus expect them to make converts? (Through the preaching of the Word)

2. The office of an evangelist

Besides all the Christians who undertook the work of evangelist, there were many set apart by the Lord to do the work of an evangelist.

Acts 21:8

“On the next day we [Paul and others] left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.”

19. Say what happened to Peter earlier, when he came to Caesarea? (He brought the gospel to the soldier Cornelius and his household)

20. Who else had his home in Caesarea? (Philip)

21. What title was given to him? (Evangelist)

22. What other work had he done in Jerusalem? (He was of the seven deacons)

2 Tim. 4:5

“But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.”

23. Paul encouraged Timothy to do what? (The work of an evangelist)

24. What would being an evangelist fulfil? (Timothy’s ministry)

So important did the church take appointing evangelists, they are mentioned in Eph. 4:11-12:

“And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”

25. Which office ensured the growth of the Church? (Evangelists)

26. Which result among the three that are mentioned here is particularly applicable to evangelists? (Building up the body of Christ)

3. Some quotations from two Puritan preachers and writers

(1) John Bunyan in his “Pilgrim’s Progress”. Here is his description of the evangelist:

“A man who had his eyes up to heaven, the best of books was in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, and he stood as if he pleaded with men.”

(2) Richard Baxter:

“We have greater work to do here than merely securing our own salvation. We are members of the world and Church, and we must labour to do good to many. We are entrusted with our Master’s talents for his service, in our places to do our best to propagate his truth, and grace, and Church, and to bring home souls, and honour his cause, and edify his flock, and further the salvation of as many as we can.”

27. In your own words, how does Bunyan describe an evangelist? (Reader’s answer)

CHAPTER 10

THE ELEMENTS OF CHURCH WORSHIP

Israel was a worshipping community – first in the Tabernacle, then the Temple, and then Synagogue. This pattern of worship came into the Church from its first founders, who were all Jews.

1. Prayer and praise

Jesus himself was an example of prayer.

Luke 6:12-13

"It was at this time that he went off to the mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called His disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also named as apostles".

1. How do we know that Jesus wanted to pray alone? (He went off to a mountain)
2. Why do you think Jesus chose to pray at night? (He would not be disturbed)
3. We could have a fair guess what Jesus was praying about. What was it? (The choice of his apostles)

Mat. 6:6-12

"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray, then, in this way:

`Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

(Small commentary – although this was in response to the disciples asking to be taught to prayer, and although it refers to private prayer, yet the LORD'S PRAYER, as it has come to be called, is for all the Church (Our Father), and has been used by the Church in communal prayer, even to today)

4. What does God do in response to prayer? (He rewards by answering the prayer)
5. What warning does Jesus give? (Not to do as the Gentiles, and repeat over and over long and meaningless phrases)
6. What great encouragement does Jesus give in relation to prayer? (He knows what we will say beforehand)
7. The *Lord's Prayer* contains many petitions. Make a list of them. (Reader's answer)
8. Why do you think Jesus added the last sentence? (God who answers prayer is the king in his kingdom, and has all power and glory – a great incentive to approach him in prayer)

Paul tells us what is the most important element in prayer in Phil. 4:6-7:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

9. What should we do when we are anxious about anything? (Pray)
10. In Paul's thinking, what were three elements of prayer? (Supplication, thanksgiving, requests)
11. What usually follows prayer for anxieties? (The peace of God)

I have always been greatly impressed and inspired by the prayer meeting of the church in Jerusalem during a time of persecution. See Acts 4:23-31:

When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is you who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.' For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your purpose predestined to occur. And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that your bond-servants may speak your word with all confidence, while you extend your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

12. What was the response of the church to the persecution? (They fell back on God who had made everything, and rules over everything)
13. How do we know they continued in their ministry? (They asked the Lord to help them speak the word with confidence)
14. Three things resulted from this prayer meeting. What were they? (The place was shaken; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit; they spoke the Word of God with boldness)

The most important meeting of the church is the prayer meeting. It is the engine room of the church, and from it remarkable things happen from God.

2. Public Bible reading

Again, we find an important example in Jesus Christ. Every week in the Synagogue, the portion from the Old Testament was read, and one of the rabbis would comment on the passage. Jesus followed this tradition when he was invited to read the passage, and comment on it.

Lk. 4:16-21

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." And he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

15. What was significant about Nazareth? (Jesus was brought up there)

- 16.** Which prophet read here was speaking of the coming of the Messiah? (Isaiah)
- 17.** What did Jesus do after he had finished the reading? (He sat down, and preached)

The churches continued the practice of reading the scriptures out loud and commenting on the passage.

1. Tim 4:13

“Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.”

- 18.** What did Timothy have to do? (Give attention to the public reading of Scripture)
- 19.** What was to follow each reading? (Exhortation and teaching)
- 20.** What does this say about Timothy’s knowledge of the Scriptures? (Reader’s answer)

As the early Church found it important to read the Scriptures in its services, so it is that churches today must not omit the practice because: (1) it show that the church is showing great respect to the authority of Scripture; (2) the Scriptures are accompanied by the work of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens the mind, and touches the conscience of the readers and hearers; (3) it reveals the truth of God.

3. The songs of the Church

From the beginning, Israel included songs of praise in its worship.

Exodus 15:1-21

Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said, "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; the horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him; my father's God, and I will extol Him. The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has cast into the sea; and the choicest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deeps cover them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. And in the greatness of your excellence you overthrow those who rise up against You; you send forth your burning anger, and it consumes them as chaff. At the blast of your nostrils the waters were piled up, the flowing waters stood up like a heap; the deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my desire shall be gratified against them; I will draw out my sword, my hand will destroy them.' You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like you among the gods, O LORD? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them. In your lovingkindness, you have led the people whom you have redeemed; in your strength you have guided them to your holy habitation. The peoples have heard, they tremble; anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; the leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; by the greatness of your arm they are motionless as stone; until your people pass over, O LORD, until the people pass over whom you have purchased. You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. The LORD shall reign forever and ever. For the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, but the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea."

Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. Miriam answered them, Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted; the horse and his rider he has hurled into the sea."

- 21.** Describe in your own words the great event that occasioned this triumphant song of praise? (Reader’s answer)

22. Which separate words did Moses use to describe what God had done for his people. (Salvation, purchased, redeemed)

23. Which separate words were used to describe the character of God? (Highly exalted, Lord, burning anger, awesome in praises, working wonders, strength, reign forever)

24. How do we know that this song was accompanied with music apart from the singing? (Miriam and the women played their timbrels)

Singing is the excitable result of exciting events. Here are a few verses to illustrate this:

Mat. 26:26-30

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

25. What Jewish meal were they celebrating? (Passover)

26. The meal has been celebrated often in the Christian Church. What is it called? (Holy Communion)

27. What great event was about to take place, illustrated by the bread and cup? (The crucifixion)

28. How did the disciples react to the announcement of the death of Christ? (They sang a hymn)

Eph. 5:18-20

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father".

29. How do we know that this "speaking to one another" is actually singing? (It says, *making melody*)

30. Singing seems here to be linked with the Holy Spirit. Explain. (Reader's answer)

Rev. 5:8-10

When he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals; for you were slain, and purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

(Small commentary – the vision is in the throne-room of heaven where Christ is worshipped. The twenty-four elders represent the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles of the Church. The books with the seals represents Christ's grasp of history)

31. Here, in heaven, the "new song" is accompanied by what? (Harps)

32. In view of Moses' song described earlier, why is this song called a "new song"? (Readers' answer)

33. Who are redeemed by Christ's blood? (Men from every tribe, tongue, people, nation)

4. Preaching the Word

There can be no greater examples of the importance of the preaching of the Word than in the Acts of the Apostles.

Acts 2:16-32:

...but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.' (Joel 2:28-32) "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know - this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death. But God raised him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.' (Ps. 16:8-11) "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE (Ps. 132:1), he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. (Ps. 16:10) This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.' (Ps. 110:1) Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified."

34. How many times did Peter quote from the Psalms? (Four times)

35. What great event happened to the Church in fulfilment of Joel's prophecy? (The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost)

36. Ps. 16:8-11 prophesied something wonderful in the life of Christ. What was it? (His resurrection)

37. Ps. 132:1 speaks of David's reign. What had this to do with Jesus Christ? (Reader's answer)

38. Why do you think Peter quoted from the Bible so often? (Reader's answer)

Acts 3:18-25

"But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED (Deut. 18:15, 18) to everything he says to you. 'And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' And

likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.'" (Gen. 22:18)

39. 'How did Peter show that Jesus was superior to Moses? (Reader's answer)

40. How does Peter show that the other nations would believe in the Jewish Messiah? (He quoted Gen. 22:18, a promise made to Abraham)

It is obvious that the Church placed a great emphasis on the preaching of the Word. Here is just one example.

1 Timothy 4:1-2:

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."

41. What did Paul say to Timothy to show him the importance of preaching the Word? (He said, "I solemnly charge you.")

42. When should Timothy preach the Word? (In season and out of season)

43. What do you think Paul meant by this last phrase? (Reader's answer)

44. What five characteristics did Paul give of preaching the Word? (Reproof; rebuke; exhortation, great patience; instruction)

45. What do these five mean in practice today? (Reader's answer)

CHAPTER 11

THE TWO ORDINANCES OF THE COMMUNION SERVICE AND BAPTISM

1. THE COMMUNION SERVICE

A. DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS OF THE COMMUNION SERVICE.

1. The Passover.

Then [Jesus] said to [his disciples], With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer... (Luke 22:15)

1. What did Jesus long to do?
2. Who ate the Passover with Jesus?
3. What died at the first Passover?
4. How did Jesus fulfil this?

2. The Lord's Supper.

And supper being ended ... Jesus ... rose from supper and, laid aside his garments, took a towel and girded himself. After that, he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet. (John 13:2, 4-5)

5. What terrible thing happened at the Lord's Supper?
6. What two things did Jesus pick up after the meal?
7. What did Jesus do with them?
8. What lesson did Jesus teach his disciples?

3. The Breaking of Bread.

And the [the disciples] continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers ... So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. (Acts 2:42, 46)

9. How often did the Christians celebrate Communion?
10. Where did they **break bread**?
11. Why did they break bread?

B. HOW SHOULD THE COMMUNION BE CELEBRATED?

[Paul said], For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me. (1 Corinthians 11:23-28)

12. Who told the Christians how to celebrate the Communion?
13. When did the first Communion take place
14. Who betrayed Jesus into the hands of his enemies?
15. What did Jesus do first?
16. What did he do next?
17. What does the bread represent?

[Paul continues] - In the same manner [Jesus] also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

18. What else did Jesus do?
19. Why was the cup compared with blood?
20. What is **the New Covenant**?
21. When can the Communion take place?

ANSWERS

1. To eat the Passover
2. His disciples
3. Lambs
4. The Lamb of God who shed his blood
5. Judas betrayed him
6. A towel and water
7. Washed the disciples' feet
8. Humility
9. Daily
10. In their houses
11. To remind them of Jesus
12. Christ through Paul
13. At the Passover before Christ's death
14. Judas Iscariot
15. He took bread
16. He broke it
17. His body broken
18. He took a cup
19. Sign of his blood shed on the cross
20. New promise of salvation from God
21. Anytime

2. BAPTISM

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM

1. Jesus himself was baptised.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptised by him. And John tried to prevent him saying, I need to be baptised by you, and are you coming to me? But Jesus answered and said to him, Permit to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he allowed him. Then Jesus, when he had been baptised, came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
(Matthew 3:13-17)

1. Who baptised Jesus?
2. Where was Jesus baptised?
3. Why was he baptised?
4. What rested on Jesus after the baptism?
5. What two things did God say about his Son?

2. Jesus had his followers baptised.

After these things Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea, and there he remained with them and baptised ... (though Jesus himself did not baptise, but his disciples). (John 3:22; 4:2)

6. Did Jesus agree with the practice of baptism?
7. Did Jesus do any baptising?

8. Who baptised those who followed Jesus?

3. The Apostles demanded believer's baptism.

Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let each of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ... Then those who gladly received his word were baptised. (Acts 2:38, 41)

9. Who was preaching about baptism?

10. How were they to be baptised?

11. What is baptism a sign of?

12. Were those who heard Peter preaching baptised?

4. Jesus commanded baptism for all Christians.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son the of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.

(Matthew 28:19-20)

13. What is the task of all Christians in the world?

14. What should be done to new Christians?

15. How should it be done?

16. Did Jesus command baptism?

B. HOW SHOULD BELIEVERS BE BAPTISED?

1. Jesus was dipped in the river Jordan.

Then Jesus, when he had been baptised, came up immediately from the water. (Matthew 3:16)

17. Did the baptism of Jesus take long?

18. What does **immediately** means?

19. How do we know John dipped Jesus in the river?

2. Philip the evangelist baptised a new Christian.

As they travelled along the road, they came to some water, Philip as well as the Christian; and Philip Baptised him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord made Philip go away.

(Acts 8:36, 38-39)

20. What is essential for baptism?

21. Who did the baptising?

22. How do we know Philip dipped the Christian in the water?

3. Baptism is for believers only.

And immediately the gaoler was baptised by Paul, he and his household. And he rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household. (Acts 16:33-34)

23. Who were baptised?

24. Who did the baptising?

25. Did they enjoy being baptised?

26. What did they do before being baptised?

27. What did they do afterwards?

28. Who believed and then were baptised?

C. BAPTISM IS A PICTURE OF THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE

1. It follows saving faith.

Peter said, Repent, and let each of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:38)

- 29. What is required before baptism?
- 30. What does this mean?
- 31. Which word shows that every believer should be baptised?
- 32. In whose name were they to be baptised?

2. Baptism is a picture of the new life in Christ.

We have been buried with Christ through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

- 33. How is baptism like a burial?
- 34. From what was Jesus raised?
- 35. What will believers do after their conversion?
- 36. How is baptism a picture of this?

ANSWERS TO BELIEVERS' BAPTISM

- 1. John the Baptist
- 2. In the river Jordan
- 3. To fulfil all righteousness
- 4. Holy Spirit in the form of a dove
- 5. My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased
- 6. Yes
- 7. No
- 8. His disciples
- 9. Peter
- 10. In water
- 11. The remission of sins
- 12. Yes
- 13. Go and make disciples
- 14. Baptise them
- 15. By going to the nations
- 16. Yes
- 17. No
- 18. Straight away
- 19. They came up out of the water
- 20. Water
- 21. Philip
- 22. They came up out of the water
- 23. The gaoler and his household
- 24. Paul and Silas
- 25. They rejoiced
- 26. They believed in God
- 27. He rejoiced
- 28. His whole household
- 29. Repentance
- 30. To be sorry for sins and confess them
- 31. Each
- 32. Jesus Christ
- 33. Going into the water and under it
- 34. From the dead
- 35. Walk in newness of life
- 36. Coming out of the water as into grace

THE CHURCH

A. TITLES FOR THE CHURCH

1. Christ's flock.

Therefore [you elders] take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

1. To whom does the Church belong?
2. How is it described here?
3. Who is the Shepherd?

2. Christ's Body

And [God] put all things under [Christ's] feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body. (Ephesians 1:22-23)

4. What great honour did God grant his Son?
5. Who is the Head of the Church?
6. What is the Church?
7. What is meant by **head**?

3. God's household.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:19-21)

8. Who belongs to God's household?
9. What is the foundation?
10. Who is the corner-stone?
11. What else is the Church called?

4. Christ's Bride.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)

12. Where are Christians who have died?
13. What is the name of their dwelling place?
14. Who is the Bride?
15. Who is the husband?

B. WHO BELONGS TO THE CHURCH?

1. Believers who confess Jesus Christ.

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him

from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

16. What must a Christian do?
17. What must every Christian believe about Christ?
18. What happens to every Christian?
19. Does this make every Christian a part of the Church?

2. Those who accept the preached Word of God.

The Lord opened [Lydia's] heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptised, and she begged us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house to stay. And she constrained us. (Acts 16:14-15)

20. Who became a Christian on this occasion?
21. What did God do for her?
22. Who baptised her?
23. Where did the Church in Philippi start?

3. Those who are born again.

Jesus answered and said to [Nicodemus], Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

24. What must be the experience of every Christian?
25. What happens next?
26. Is the Church God's kingdom?

C. WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

1. Where Christians meet locally.

(NOTE: The Church is never a building, but is the body of Christians whenever they meet together)

So it was that for a whole year they [Paul and Barnabas] assembled with the church [in Antioch], and taught a great many people. (Acts 11:26)

27. Where was the Church on this occasion?
28. Who was their Bible teacher?
29. How many came to Church?

2. All over the world.

Give no offence, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the whole church of God. (1 Corinthians 10:32)

30. Name two groups of Christians in the Church?
31. Would they be found everywhere?
32. What should **not** be done to the Church members world-wide?

3. On earth and in heaven.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are registered in heaven. (Hebrews 12:22-23)

33. What does **general assembly** mean?
34. Where is our church membership written down?

ANSWERS TO THE CHURCH

1. God
2. The flock
3. God
4. Put all things under his feet
5. Christ
6. The body of Christ
7. Chief
8. Fellow citizens with the saints
9. The apostles and prophets
10. Jesus Christ
11. A Holy Temple
12. In heaven
13. New Jerusalem
14. The Church
15. Christ
16. Confess the Lord Jesus
17. God raised him from the dead
18. Saved
19. Yes
20. Lydia
21. Opened her heart
22. Paul
23. In Lydia's house
24. To be born again
25. See the kingdom of God
26. Yes
27. In Antioch
28. Paul and Barnabas
29. A great many people
30. Jews and Greeks
31. Yes
32. Not give offence
33. All met together
34. In heaven