

# **Basic Bible Doctrine 3**

**A Study in Basic Systematic Theology**

**The Doctrine of the Church**

**18 – 30 Minute Lessons (9 Hours)**

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## **The Doctrine of the Church**

The most important doctrine to be right about is the doctrine of Salvation. If you believe wrong about salvation, the Lake of Fire awaits you. You can believe wrong about the church and still get to Heaven. Getting to Heaven is not by belonging to a particular denomination or church. However, after salvation, one the next most important doctrines to be right about is the doctrine of the Church.

If you ask people, “What is a church?”

some would reply that a church is the building where Christians worship God.

Some people would answer that a church is a Christian denomination – the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, etc.

Some people would say that the church is comprised of all believers.

Did you know that all these definitions are contrary to the Word of God? The question we need to ask is “What does the Bible teach a church is?”

When it comes to the doctrine of the Church, Christians are divided into three groups.

The first group holds to the universal church viewpoint. They would say the church is “universal” meaning it is comprised of all believers around the world.

The second group holds to the local church viewpoint. They would say the church is a localized assembly of baptized believers.

The third group, called dual-church, combines both viewpoints and sees two kinds of churches, a universal church that all believers are a part of spiritually and a local church where you are a member.

Who is right and who is wrong? This lesson attempts to answer that question as well as other questions people have about the church. The doctrine of the Church is certainly complex. There are sections of this lesson that will be difficult to understand. The Bible student may need to rewatch these videos several times before understanding the doctrine of the church.

## **The Biblical Definition of a Church**

The New Testament was written in the Greek language. The word “church” is translated from the Greek word “ekklesia”. “Ek” means out of and “Kaleo” means to call. Together it literally means to “call out” or “assembly”. The word “ekklesia” is translated two different ways – a Christian way and a non-Christian way.

The non-Christian way is translated “assembly”.

An example of the non-Christian use of the word “ekklesia” is found in the town meeting of the citizens from the city of Ephesus (Acts 19). In this case, the word “ekklesia” is translated “assembly” (verse 39 and 41). It was clearly a group of citizens that assembled together to conduct town business.

On the other hand, the Christian’s use of the word “ekklesia” is translated “church”.

***Matthew 16:18 – “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*** Jesus Christ used the Greek word “ekklesia” when He said He will build his “church”. Jesus Christ did not change the meaning of the word “ekklesia”. Therefore, the word church has the same meaning as the word assembly.

Furthermore, Jesus said, “my church”. This means that the “assembly” of Jesus Christ is different from other assemblies of His day. Jesus Christ’s assembly is not comprised of general citizens gathered together to conduct town business, but it is an assembly of believers to conduct the business of Jesus Christ.

Both the Christian and non-Christian use of the word “ekklesia” means an assembly. There are four characteristics of the word assembly that need to be carefully considered.

### 1. An assembly must have a specific location.

After the Catholic Church was started in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catholic churches spread throughout Europe. It was impossible for every Catholic to worship at the church in Rome. So, the Catholic Church changed the meaning of the word church and added that the church is universal, meaning all over the world. They said, “It does not matter if you belong to a Catholic church in Africa, in Asia, or in the United States, if you are Catholic then you are a part of the church, because it is universal”.

As we have learned, the word “ekklesia” means an assembly. How can a “universal” assembly come about? People cannot “come together” and yet be all over the world. The word assembly does not allow for any universal concept. A universal church is contrary to the meaning of an assembly.

For example, a car is an assembly of various components in one location. It is impossible to have a “universal” car. You cannot have tires in Asia, car seats in Europe, a steering wheel in Canada, and an engine in Africa and still be called a vehicle. Impossible!

The Bible use of the word “church” agrees with this meaning of an assembly, because it is a group of people assembled in a specific location. The word “church” or “churches” is used 114 times in the Bible. Ninety-nine times, the word “church” or “churches” is said to be in a specific location. Sometimes, these churches are said to be in a specific city, for example

- \* The church in Jerusalem – Acts 8:1
- \* The church in Antioch – Acts 13:1
- \* The church in Corinth – 1 Corinthians 1:2

Sometimes, the Bible speaks of churches in a specific region, for example,

- \* Churches of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria – Acts 9:31
- \* Churches of Syria and Cilicia – Acts 15:41
- \* Churches of Galatia – Galatians 1:2

The way in which the word “church” is used clearly indicates that churches are always in a specific location. There is no such use of the word church that means a “universal” assembly of believers.

Out of the 114 times the word “church” or “churches” is used, 99 times it is said to be in a specific location. For the remaining 15 verses, the word “church” is used generically, that is, no church in particular and all churches in general.

Several verses in the book of Ephesians refer to the church this way. People who hold to the universal church viewpoint rely on a misinterpretation of these verses to support their theory. For example,

***Ephesians 5:23 – “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”***

The word “church” here is used generically, that is no church in particular and all churches in general. People who hold to the universal church viewpoint point to the phrase “Christ is the head of the church” and say that since there can only be one head, the church must be a single, universal body that it is composed of all believers all over the world.

Their reasoning “appears” logical, but the word “as” in this verse completely changes the interpretation. By using the word “as”, the verse is comparing the relationship of a husband-wife to the relationship between Jesus Christ and His church.

It would be a very serious error in Bible interpretation to interpret the first part of a verse using one method of interpretation and another method of interpretation for the second part of a verse. For the comparison to be valid, the same method of interpretation must be applied to both parts.

For example, you cannot interpret the first part of a verse generically and the second part of the verse literally. Either both parts are literal or both parts are generic. This is required for an honest and faithful interpretation of scripture.

Let us examine this verse from the perspective of those who hold to the universal church viewpoint and from the opposing group, those who hold to the local church viewpoint. We will see how each group interprets this verse and which group correctly follows the rules of interpretation by assigning the same interpretation to both parts of the verse.

Consider the phrase “Christ is the head of the church”

People who hold to the Universal/Invisible Church would interpret the phrase “Christ is the head of church” literally. They would say that since there can only be one head (Jesus Christ), the church must be a single, universal body that it is composed of all believers all over the world.

But they interpret “husband is the head of the wife” generically. They do not stay consistent in interpretation.

A literal interpretation of the first part, “For the husband is the head of wife” would mean that since there can only be one head (the husband), the wife must be a single, universal “wife” that is composed of all wives all over the world. It would mean that the “universal” husband is head over the “universal” wife. Of course, there is no such thing and it does not make any sense.

Because it makes no sense, usually, those who hold this view would interpret the first part of the verse about husbands and wives generically and the second part of the verse literally. So, those who hold this view assign two different methods of interpretation to the two parts of the verse which is an error in Bible interpretation.

However, those who hold to local church only view would say the word “church” is used in a generic sense. In other words, it refers to no church in particular and all churches in general. So, they would interpret this verse to mean that Jesus Christ is the head over every church.

In order for this group to be consistent in Bible interpretation, they need to interpret the first part of the verse also generically. In doing so, the words “husband” and “wife” would be spoken of in a general sense, meaning that they apply to no husband or wife in particular, but to all husbands and wives in general.

So they would say that just as husbands are head over their own wife, so Jesus Christ is head over all his churches. This point of view not only makes sense but stays consistent in Bible interpretation.

However, some people have a hard time understanding how Jesus Christ can be head over many churches. For those in such a situation, consider the following verse,

***1 Corinthians 11:3 – “... the head of every man is Christ; ...”***

Here we see that Jesus Christ is head over every man. If Jesus can be the head over a multitude of Christian men, so Jesus can be the head over a multitude of churches.

## 2. An assembly must be visible.

People cannot “come together” and not be seen. The word assembly does not allow for any invisible concept. When Protestants began to come out of the Catholic Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and start their own denominations, they had a problem. If the real church were only Catholic churches, then because they were not Catholic, they could not be a real church.

So, the Protestants added to the Catholic meaning of the word church and claimed the church was universal AND invisible. By doing so, the Protestant church leaders said that it does not matter what denomination you belong to, because every believer is a part of this “universal and invisible” body of believers. Does this fit the definition of an assembly? No!

A car is an assembly of various visible components. How ridiculous it would be to speak of an “invisible car”. The Roman Catholic Church declares itself to be the universal-visible church. The Protestants continued the universal concept, but to explain the many denominations they teach a universal-invisible church. Both teachings are not biblical and both teachings do not meet the definition of the word “assembly”.

A church as the Bible defines it - an assembly of believers - is something that can be seen. A church cannot operate with invisible tithes from invisible members that assemble in an invisible location with an invisible pastor.

## 3. An assembly must be organized.

People cannot “come together” disorganized and still be called an assembly.

A car is an assembly of various components. These components are not piled on the factory floor and delivered to the customer. The components are first put together according to a detailed plan and then delivered to the customer. Likewise, an assembly refers to an organized group of people meeting together. Paul told Titus to set things in order in the churches in Crete.

***Titus 1:5 – “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:”***

The churches in Crete needed to be organized properly and Paul sent Titus there to do it. Just as your city officials have organized meetings to carry out town business, so churches are organized to carry out the work of Jesus Christ.

## 4. An assembly must be properly constituted.

An assembly must be put together with the correct materials. For example, a car is an assembly of specific materials. How ridiculous it would be to assemble a car from carrots, cow skin, and flowers! A car is made from steel, plastic, and rubber in many forms such as engine blocks, pistons, doors, tires, instruments, etc.

The New Testament clearly specifies the “material” used to assemble a church. As we learned, a church is an assembly of people. The question is, “What kind of people?” The following verse reveals the kind of people that make up a church.

***Acts 2:41 – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”***

“... RECEIVED his word ...” -	Salvation
“... were BAPTIZED ...” -	Baptism
“... were ADDED ...” -	Church Membership

Not just any person can belong to a church. The first requirement is salvation. An unsaved person cannot become a member of a church. The second requirement is baptism. At baptism, the believer becomes a member of that church. Just as an assembly is put together with the correct materials, a church is made up of baptized believers.

The four aspects to the definition of the word assembly are:

1. An assembly must be in a specific location.
2. An assembly must be visible.
3. An assembly must be organized.
4. An assembly must be properly constituted.

As previously stated, there are three viewpoints of the church. First, there is the universal church viewpoint. The Catholic Church teaches a universal-visible church. The Protestant denominations teach a universal-invisible church.

Both of these views do not meet all four aspects of the definition of an assembly. Both are contrary to the Bible by relying on a misinterpretation of the Scriptures.

Then there is the local church viewpoint. This viewpoint meets all four aspects of the definition of an assembly. Each church assembles in a specific location. Every assembly is visible, organized and properly made up of baptized believers.

Third, there is the dual-church viewpoint.

This viewpoint teaches that there are two kinds of churches. The first would be the universal-invisible church that every believer belongs to. The second would be the local-visible church that each believer would be a member of.

Does the Bible teach two kinds of churches?

***Ephesians 4:4 – “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;”*** The church represents the body of Jesus Christ. This verse states that there is only “one body”.

Those who hold to the universal-invisible church viewpoint would say this refers to one body, in quantity, and therefore supports their viewpoint that the church is a universal-invisible body made up

of all believers. However, is the interpretation of “one body” in quantity the correct interpretation of the phrase “There is one body”?

The N.T. was written in the Greek language. The word “body” is translated from the Greek word “soma”

which means to cast a shadow. An object must be visible for it to cast a shadow. The student does not need to know Greek to interpret the word body correctly.

Every “body” is visible and able to cast a shadow. There is no such thing as an invisible body. When the Bible compares the church to a body, it must be a visible body. Therefore, the phrase “one body” cannot refer to an invisible church.

It also means that the phrase “one body” cannot be interpreted as “one body” in quantity. So, how is the phrase “one body” to be understood?

The church is not “one body” in quantity, but “one body” in **TYPE** – a local, visible church. The only type of church that you will find in the Bible is a local, visible, organized assembly of baptized believers. There is NO other type of church. Putting all the pieces together, the Bible definition of a church is:

**Definition:** “A New Testament Church is an assembly of baptized believers, organized to carry out the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Within this definition are the following key facts:

1. “Assembly” – meaning a visible group of people meeting in a specific location.
2. “Baptized Believers” – meaning the group is made up of specific people, people who are saved and baptized.
3. “Organized” – meaning it is put together according to the pattern in the New Testament.

## **The Family of God - The Kingdom of God - The Church of God**

The universal church viewpoint developed when false Bible teachers began to teach that the Church of God and the Kingdom of God are the same. The failure to understand the difference between the “Church of God”, the “Kingdom of God”, and the “Family of God” has created a lot of confusion and false doctrine. There is a big difference between all three.

### **1. Family of God.**

The Family of God is comprised of all saved people in heaven and on the earth. Every saved person from Adam to the present time belongs to the Family of God. In the doctrine of Salvation, we learned that at the moment of salvation, God adopts the believer into His family. So, the Family of God is comprised of all believers on earth and in heaven.

***Ephesians 3:14-15 – “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”***

### **2. Kingdom of God (Heaven).**

The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are the same. A kingdom is the domain over which a king rules. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom where God rules and reigns in the hearts of believers on earth. Therefore, the Kingdom of God is comprised of all the saved people currently alive on the earth. It does not include believers already with God in Heaven. The difference between the Family of God and the Kingdom of God, is that the Family of God is comprised of all believers in heaven and earth, whereas, the Kingdom of God is comprised of all believers currently on the earth.

### 3. The Church of God.

The Church of God is composed of believers on the earth that have been baptized into a true church of Jesus Christ. As the red “x” shows, it is possible to be in the Kingdom of God, but not in the Church of God. In order to become a part of the Church of God, a person first enters the Kingdom of God at salvation, and then by means of baptism, the believer becomes a part of the Church of God. Pastor McFarland went from Church/Kingdom of God to Family of God the moment he died in a car crash.

At salvation, the believer enters the Family of God and the Kingdom of God at the same time. However, the believer cannot become a part of the Church of God until he receives baptism. The following chart and the explanation below it show the differences between the Kingdom of God and the Church of God.

<b><u>The Kingdom of God</u></b>	<b><u>The Church of God</u></b>
Universal	Local
One	Many
Invisible	Visible
Entered through salvation	Entered through baptism
All members saved	Some members may be unsaved
Members permanent	Membership may be moved
Theocracy	Democracy
No officers	Pastors & Deacons
No ordinances	Baptism & Lord’s Supper
No discipline	Discipline exercised

1. The Kingdom of God is universal. It is the rule of God in the hearts of all believers on the earth. The Church of God is found in specific locations.
2. There is only one Kingdom of God, but there are many churches of God.
3. The Kingdom of God is invisible in the spiritual realm. The Church of God is visible in the physical realm. When church members assemble themselves together, it is something that can be seen.
4. The believer enters the Kingdom of God at salvation, whereas the believer enters the Church of God at baptism.
5. Every person in the Kingdom of God is saved. An unsaved person may profess to be a Christian, but if they are not a true believer, they are not a part of the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, it is



very possible for churches to have unsaved church members. They are people who think they are saved and were baptized, but were never truly born again.

6. Membership in the Kingdom of God is permanent. The membership in the Church of God can be moved from one church to another church.

7. There are no officers in the Kingdom of God, but the Church of God has two: the pastor and the deacon.

8. The Kingdom of God has no ordinances, but Church of God has two: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

9. The believer can never be removed from the Kingdom of God meaning that a believer cannot lose his salvation. However, the Church of God has the right to discipline an erring church member and remove him from the membership of the church. Although the erring man is still saved, he is no longer a part of the Church of God. If he repents, the church can then let him back into the membership and be a part of the Church of God again.

Understanding the differences between the Kingdom of God and the Church of God will help believers see that the universal church viewpoint is not supported by Scripture.

The Bible student needs to know that Baptists do NOT agree when it comes to the doctrine of the Church. Some believe in the universal-invisible church. Some believe in a dual-church, meaning they believe in both the universal-invisible church made up of all believers and also the local-visible church made up of baptized believers in that location. Finally, there are some that believe the Bible teaches there is only one kind of church and that is the local-visible assembly of baptized believers that are organized to carry out the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every student needs to come to his own conclusion what to believe.

## **The First New Testament Church**

When did the first church begin? Was it during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ or was it on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The most common answer is the church started on the Day of Pentecost. Usually those who hold to the universal church viewpoint also hold to the view that the church started on the Day of Pentecost. As usual, we need to ask ourselves, "What does the Bible teach?" Jesus said,

***Matthew 16:18 – "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."***

Jesus clearly taught His disciples that He will build His church. Those who believe the church started on the Day of Pentecost, deny what Jesus Christ said He would do. Jesus said, "**I** will build my church" in this verse and not "The Holy Spirit will build my church".

As we studied in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was sent to empower the church that Jesus started during His earthly ministry. However, those who hold to the view that the church started on the Day of Pentecost declare that there was no church before the Day of Pentecost AND it was the Holy Spirit who started the church on that day.

Did Jesus build His church during His earthly ministry as He said He would do in Matthew 16:18 or did the Holy Spirit build the church on the Day of Pentecost? Jesus Christ came to accomplish two

tasks. First and most important, He came to die for the sins of the whole world and make a way of salvation. On the cross, Jesus completed the atonement by saying, “It is finished”.

***John 19:30 – “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”***

Another task that Jesus completed was the establishment of His church during His earthly ministry. As stated in Matthew 16:18, Jesus said that He will build his church.

***Matthew 16:18 – “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”***

Shortly before going to the cross, Jesus stated that he finished this work as well.

***Jn 17:4 – “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”***

In the phrase “I have finished the work”, the word “finished” is in the past tense meaning that it is already completed. Jesus had not yet been arrested and nailed to the cross. So, He is not referring to the work of redemption on the cross, but rather to another work.

That work was the establishment of His church. He said in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church”. The word “will” is future tense.

As of Matthew 16:18, Jesus had not yet established His church. However, by John 17:4, we know Jesus established His church already, because He said, “I have finished the work”. The word finished is past tense.

The New Testament begins with John the Baptist preaching and baptizing in the Jordan River. From this group of baptized believers, Jesus Christ selected twelve men to be His disciples. For three years Jesus taught and trained them for ministry. At some point in this three year period, Jesus established His church. While no one can be 100% certain as to the moment Jesus established His church, it is my opinion that Jesus established His church during the events of Mark 3 when Jesus ordained the 12 disciples.

***Mark 3:13-14 – “And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach”***

If you are not convinced that Jesus Christ established His church during His earthly ministry, then ask yourself two questions. First, “What does a church do?” and second, “Did the disciples of Jesus do that before the Day of Pentecost?” Consider the following,

1. A church preaches the gospel.

***Mark 3:14 – “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,”***

***Mark 16:15 – “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”***

The disciples preached the gospel before Pentecost.

2. A church baptizes.

***John 4:1-2 – “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)”***

The disciples baptized before Pentecost.

3. A church observes the Lord's Supper.

***Matthew 26:26-28 – “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”***

The disciples observed the Lord's Supper before Pentecost.

4. A church has ordained men.

***Mark 3:14 – “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,”***

The disciples were ordained before Pentecost.

5. A church can discipline members.

***Matthew 18:15-17 – “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”***

Jesus was teaching his disciples the subject of church discipline and how to properly deal with an erring church member that would result in the erring member being removed from membership. Jesus told his disciples to “tell it unto the church”. If the church did not exist until Pentecost then how could the disciples obey this command of Jesus Christ?

6. Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

***Ephesians 1:22 – “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”***

The disciples had Jesus Christ as their head before Pentecost.

7. A church has members.

***Acts 1:15 – “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty),”***

The church had a membership of 120 people before Pentecost.

8. A church has business meetings and elects officers. They had a business meeting and elected officers before Pentecost (Acts 1:15-26).

9. A church has a treasurer.

***John 13:29 – “For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.”***

The disciples had a treasurer before Pentecost.

10. A church sings songs. The disciples sang in the church before Pentecost. Carefully compare the following two verses.

***Mark 14:26 – “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”***

This is the only verse where we see Jesus Christ singing and yet the following verse in the book of Hebrews is speaking about Jesus Christ.

***Hebrews 2:12 – “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”***

This verse says that Jesus Christ sang in the church. Obviously, the church must have been in existence for him to sing in it.

11. A church follows the “Great Commission”. They had the Great Commission before Pentecost (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

12. A church does missionary work. The disciples did missionary work before Pentecost (Mt. 10-11).

13. A church has prayer meetings. The disciples met for prayer before Pentecost.

***Acts 1:14 – “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”***

All these statements are observed to have taken place BEFORE the Day of Pentecost. There is not one thing that a church is supposed to do that the disciples of Jesus Christ did not do. Therefore, we believe that this supports the viewpoint that Jesus Christ established His church during His earthly ministry just as He said He would do.

On the Day of Pentecost 3,000 people were saved and baptized (Acts 2). After baptism the Bible states that these new members were “added unto them”.

***Acts 2:41 – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”***

Who are the “them” that the 3,000 were added to in this verse? It is the church that Jesus Christ already established. Since 3,000 people were added to the church on the Day of Pentecost, it must have existed before the Day of Pentecost.

Does the church that Jesus Christ established satisfy the definition of a New Testament Church?” The definition of a New Testament Church is: **“an assembly of baptized believers, organized to carry out the work of the Lord Jesus Christ”**.

Was Jesus Christ’s church a local, visible assembly? YES! Were they baptized believers? YES! Were they organized? YES! Were they doing the work of the Lord Jesus Christ (preaching, baptizing, teaching, etc.)? YES! The assembly of baptized believers that Jesus Christ established was a church AND it was in existence before the Day of Pentecost.

## True and Counterfeit Churches

This section of “True and Counterfeit Churches” as well as the section of “Who has the authority to baptize?” later in this lesson are the most difficult to understand in the doctrine of the Church. People have many questions about churches. They may ask,

1. Are all churches the same? No! Churches vary greatly in doctrine and practice. It is very important to believe and practice right doctrine.
2. With so many kinds of Christian churches, which one is the right one? Study this section diligently and you will learn how to tell a true church from a counterfeit church.
3. Does it matter what kind of a church you attend? Yes! A believer is either attending a true church of Jesus Christ or a counterfeit church founded by a human being. It makes a big difference in the life of a believer which church they attend.

The purpose of this section is to teach the Bible student how to correctly identify a true church from a counterfeit church. I want to belong to a church that Jesus Christ established. If I learned that my church was not a true church, then I would go and find one so that I could be a part of the church that Jesus Christ established.

### **Did Jesus Christ promised to preserve His church?**

***Matthew 28:18-20 – “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”***

Jesus Christ promised to preserve His church in Matthew 28:20. I’m calling these churches are called the true churches of Jesus Christ.

Some people who hold to the universal-invisible church viewpoint say the phrase “unto the end of the world” is speaking of location and means that Jesus Christ will be with believers in every part of the world. For example, Jesus Christ is with believers in Asia, in Europe, in America, in Africa, and in India all at the same time.

However, the Greek word translated “end” occurs six times in the New Testament and in every case it does not refer to a location but to time. The correct interpretation is that Jesus will be with His church until the time the world comes to an end. That would mean that Jesus Christ preserved His church from the time He established it until the end of the world.

Therefore, from the time Jesus Christ established His church until the present day, we can always find the true churches of Jesus Christ at any time in history somewhere on the earth. Throughout history, these churches were called by different names in different countries and in different time periods. At any point in time, we can point to specific groups of churches and confidently say, “These are the true churches of Jesus Christ”.

### **Why are there so many different churches and denominations?**

In our study on the doctrine of Bible, we learned how Satan attacked the Word of God in two areas and yet God preserved his Word. It is the same two areas that Satan attacks the church of Jesus Christ and yet He continues to preserve His church.

The first area God preserved His Word was in perpetuity, from generation to generation. On numerous occasions, Satan attempted to destroy the Word of God from the face of the earth. Wicked men banned and burnt the Bible, but God has miraculously preserved His Word from physical destruction. Likewise, Satan has attempted to destroy the church of Jesus Christ from the face of the earth. He used wicked men to destroy church buildings, persecute believers, and kill pastors, but Jesus Christ has miraculously preserved His church just as He promised.

The second area God preserved His Word was in purity. Satan knew he could not completely destroy the Word of God in a physical way, so he attempted a second method of corrupting the text. Yet God preserved His Word in its pure form. Likewise, Satan knows he cannot completely destroy the church of Jesus Christ in a physical way, so he attempted a second method of creating counterfeit churches that mix error with the truth.

By allowing a multitude of corrupt Bibles to come to be, Satan has made it very difficult for a believer to find a pure Bible. Likewise, by allowing a multitude of counterfeit churches to come to be, Satan has made it very difficult for a believer to find a true church of Jesus Christ. That is the reason why there are so many different churches and denominations today. It makes finding a true church that has remained faithful to the Bible much more difficult.

It is possible to hear the gospel and be saved in some counterfeit churches, but those churches are becoming harder to find. Most counterfeit churches no longer preach the gospel and many add to the gospel by mixing “faith plus good works” or “faith plus baptism”. It is enough error to keep most people from truly getting saved.

Satan is still fighting against God for the hearts of men. It is his goal to keep as many people from getting saved as he can. Rat poison is 99% edible food and 1% poison. It is the 1% poison that kills the rat. The “poison of error” promoted in counterfeit churches is enough to keep most people from truly getting saved. It keeps believers from growing spiritually and in many cases, it keeps believers from serving God. That is Satan’s goal!

### **How did so many churches and denominations come to be?**

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church”. Jesus Christ established His church during His earthly ministry. After He resurrected and returned to Heaven, the church Jesus established was located in Jerusalem. The church grew in number and started churches in other locations. The New Testament speaks of over 20 churches in Europe and Asia.

The churches of Jesus Christ continued to multiply, but were heavily persecuted by the Roman government until the 300’s A.D. About this time, Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, converted to Christianity and established a government-run church that became known as the Roman Catholic Church. At that time, some of the true churches delighted in the thought of gaining power and position in the new government and rushed to join this organization. However, it came at a great price.

Constantine embraced a great amount of doctrinal error. For example, he believed that water washes sin away. As a result, he delayed baptism until he was near death so the water would wash his sin

away. Obviously, he was not a true believer. For a church to join Constantine's organization, they had to turn away from the truth and embrace error.

Although many churches departed from the truth and joined the government church that became the Catholic Church, there were many other churches that remained true and faithful to the Bible. However, they were heavily persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church.

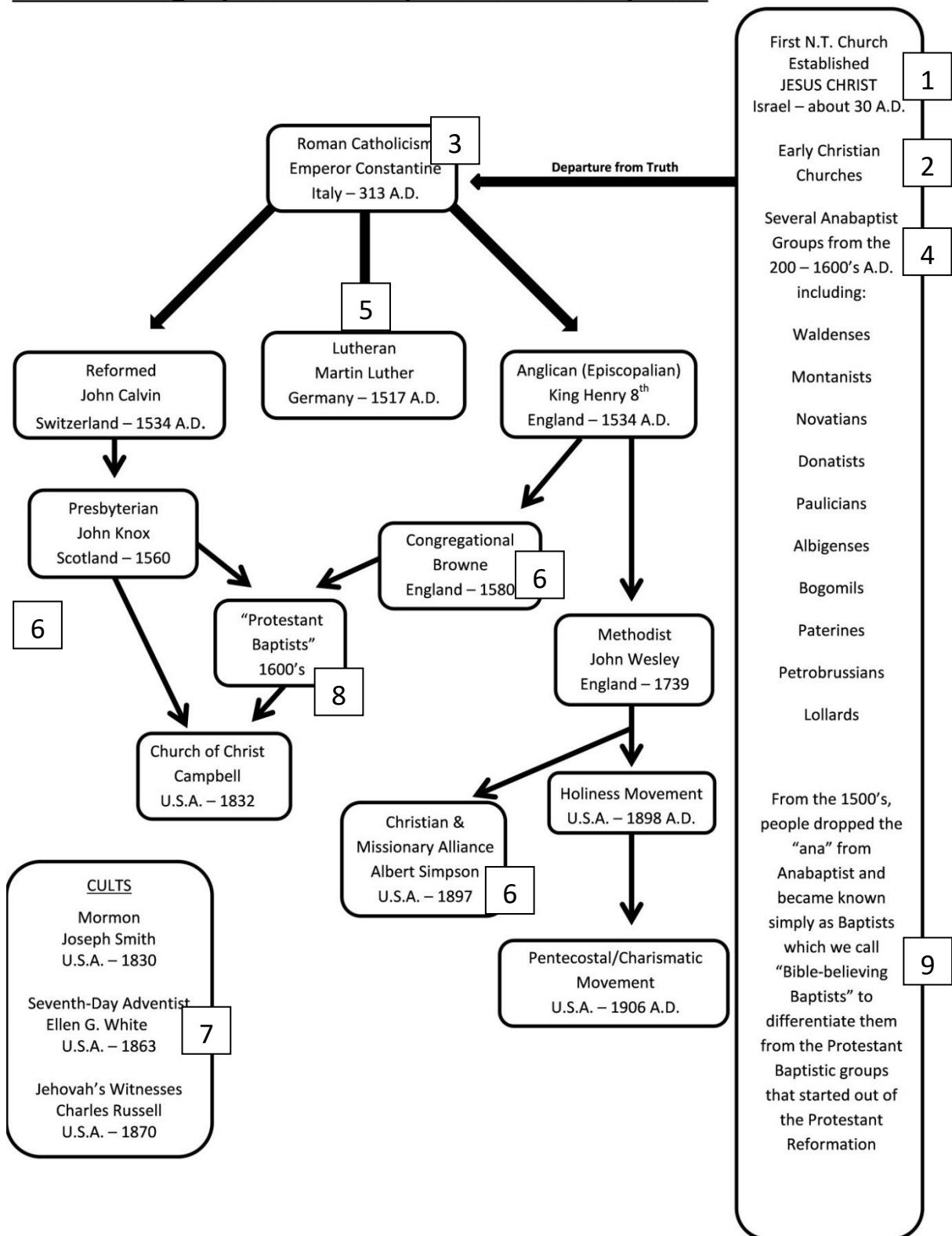
In the 1500's A.D., some leaders within the Roman Catholic Church began to protest against the many doctrinal errors of the Roman Catholic Church. These men came out of the Catholic Church and started their own church denomination. Because they "protested" against the Roman Catholic Church, the group of new denominations became known as the "Protestants".

By definition, a Protestant church is a denomination that either came directly out of the Roman Catholic Church OR came out of a denomination that can trace its lineage to the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, the Catholic Church and all Protestant denominations have a human founder, whereas, Jesus Christ is the founder of a true church.

This diagram helps us understand how so many different churches came to be. Throughout history, there were true churches that did not join the Catholic Church or a Protestant denomination, but remained faithful to the Bible. The column on the right shows the true churches of Jesus Christ. The left side of the diagram shows how the Catholic Church and the many Protestant churches came to be.

There are many more denominations that could be added to the diagram, but we wanted to keep it simple to help the student understand how so many denominations came to be AND why Bible-believing Baptists are NOT Protestants AND definitely NOT Catholics.

## Bible-believing Baptist vs Catholic/Protestant “Family Tree”



1. The first church. Jesus established his church around 30 A.D. He gave His church the authority to baptize and start new churches. No other church has that authority. Any believer can lead people to salvation, but only a true church of Jesus Christ has the authority to baptize and start new churches.

2. The early Christian churches. Over the next 300 years, the number churches multiplied and spread throughout Europe and Asia. The authority to baptize and start new churches was passed on from the “mother” church to the “daughter” church. These churches had the authority to baptize and start new churches that could be traced back to the church Jesus Christ established.



3. Roman Catholic Church. In 313 A.D., the Roman Emperor Constantine made “Christianity” the official government religion. Many churches departed from the truth and joined themselves to the government church that became known as the Roman Catholic Church. The churches that departed from the truth to join the Roman Catholic Church forfeited the authority given to them to baptize and start new churches. The Roman Catholic Church NEVER had “church authority” from Jesus Christ to baptize and start new churches.

4. Anabaptist churches. From 200 – 1,600’s A.D. there were several groups of churches that remained faithful and true to the Bible. These groups were called by different names in different countries and in different time periods. Generally, these groups were called “Anabaptist” churches. Why? Anabaptist churches did not accept the baptism of those coming from the Catholic Church. They insisted everyone coming to them for membership, first be baptized again, but this time by a church that had the authority to baptize. The Catholic Church claimed these churches were “re-baptizing” and called them “Anabaptist”. The word “ana” means “re”. The authority to baptize and start new churches followed these Anabaptist churches that remained faithful and true to the Bible.

5. In the 1500’s, people began to drop the first syllable “ana” from Anabaptist. These groups of churches became simply known as Baptist. We call this group “Bible-believing Baptists” to differentiate them from the “Protestant Baptists”. Because “Bible-believing Baptists” remained faithful to the Bible, they are the true churches of Jesus Christ and have “church authority” to baptize and start new churches.

6. The Protestant Reformation. In the early 1500’s, some Catholic Church leaders left the Catholic Church and started their own denomination. For example, Martin Luther came out of the Catholic Church and started the Lutheran Church in 1517 A.D. John Calvin came out of the Catholic Church and started the Reformed Church in 1534 A.D. In the same year, King Henry the 8<sup>th</sup> of England left the Catholic Church and started the Anglican Church. Because the Roman Catholic Church did not have “church authority” to baptize and start new churches, the churches that came out from the Catholic Church did not have “church authority” to baptize and start new churches either.

7. In time, some men left a Protestant denomination and started their own denomination. For example, John Knox came out of the Reformed Church started by John Calvin and started the Presbyterian Church in 1560. The Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) was started by Albert Simpson in 1897. He came out of the Methodist Church that was started by John Wesley in 1739. John Wesley came out of the Anglican Church started by King Henry the 8<sup>th</sup> of England in 1534. Because the first generation Protestant churches did not have “church authority” to baptize and start new churches, the denominations that came out them did not have “church authority” to baptize and start new churches either.

8. In the 1600’s some people left the Presbyterian and Congregational churches and started another denomination. They attached the name Baptist to it. We call this group the “Protestant Baptists” to differentiate it from the true Baptist churches of Jesus Christ. Because the “Protestant Baptists” are Protestants that can trace its lineage to the Roman Catholic Church, they never had “church authority” to baptize and start new churches.

9. There are several groups like the Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and Seventh-Day Adventists that came to be on their own without coming out of an existing denomination. For example, Ellen White, a woman, started the Seventh-Day Adventists in 1863. She did not come out from a Protestant church.

As a result, most Protestant churches believe that Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists are not real Christians. Bible-believing Baptists would agree on this issue with the Protestant churches.

It is very important to understand that there are two groups of churches that call themselves Baptists. Just because someone says they are a Baptist, it does not mean that they came from a true church of Jesus Christ. One group of Baptists has “church authority” to baptize and start churches. The other group of Baptists does not have “church authority”.

The group of Baptists that have “church authority” came from Anabaptist churches and is called Bible-believing Baptist churches. They remained faithful to the Bible and can trace their lineage back to the church Jesus Christ established. The “church authority” to baptize and start new churches passed down to this group. They are the group of churches that are on the right side of the diagram above.

The group of Baptists that do not have “church authority” came out of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches and is called “Protestant Baptists”. These churches do not have “church authority” to baptize and start new churches because they came out of Protestant denominations that did not have “church authority”.

A Protestant church is the name given to all the different denominations that “protested” against the Roman Catholic Church. They either came directly out of the Catholic Church like the Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church, and the Reformed Church OR they came out of denominations that can trace its lineage to the Catholic Church like the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA), the Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church. A Protestant Church is a general term that is comprised of all the denominations underneath the Roman Catholic Church in the diagram above.

Most people in this world would say there are two types of Christian churches – Catholic and Protestant. Both groups do not have “church authority” to baptize and start new churches. However, there is a third group called the Bible-believing Baptists. Over the last 2,000 years, these churches have remained faithful and true to the Bible AND are the only churches to have “church authority” to baptize and start new churches.

## **The Government of a New Testament Church**

There are three kinds of church government used in churches today, the rule of one, the rule of a few, and the rule of many. The question is, which form of church government does the Bible teach?

### **1. The Rule of One.**

The Roman Catholic Church uses this form of church government. The Pope is the one ruler of the 600 million Catholics around the world.

### **2. The Rule of a Few.**

Presbyterian churches use this form of church government. A small group of elders run the church. In this type of church government, a few people control everyone in the church or denomination.

### **3. The Rule of Many.**

It is a democracy. Bible-believing Baptist churches use this form of church government. It is a form of church government that we see throughout the New Testament. For example,

1. The Church decides all issues.

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

This Scripture does not say, “tell it to the Council” or “tell it to the Pope”, but to the church. This makes each church the highest authority in all church matters.

2. The church at Jerusalem chose its own pastors (see Acts 1:15-26).

3. The church at Jerusalem chose its own deacons (see Acts 6:1-5).

4. The church at Antioch sent its own missionaries (see Acts 13:1-3).

5. The church at Corinth disciplined its own members (see 1 Corinthians 5:1-13).

It is interesting to notice that since Paul was not a member of the church in Corinth, he could only give his advice in the matter of church discipline. The “power” to actually discipline a church member resided within the membership of that church.

In this type of church government, the power resides within the membership. Although many unfaithful pastors act like a dictator, the church members have the power to remove pastors from their church if they feel he is no longer fit or qualified to be their pastor. They then have the right to find and chose a new pastor.

The first church business meeting recorded in the New Testament was when a new apostle was to be chosen to replace Judas in Acts 1:15-26. The second church business meeting was when deacons were chosen in Acts 6:1-7. We learn 3 things from these two passages about a church’s business meeting.

1. Church business meetings are called by the pastor (Acts 1:15; Acts 6:2).

2. Church business meetings are directed by the pastor (Acts 1:22; Acts 6:3).

In Acts 1:22, Peter clearly set forth the necessary qualifications of any man chosen to take the Judas’ position. He did not tell the church who to vote for, but he did tell them what to vote for. This is pastoral leadership. In Acts 6:3, the pastor did not tell the multitude who to vote for, but instructed them as to what to vote for. Again, this is pastoral leadership.

3. Church business meetings are pure democracy.

***Acts 1:26 – “And they gave forth their lots...”***

***Acts 6:5 – “... and they chose ...”***

Every member present had the opportunity to cast their vote to decide the issue.

An Independent Baptist church is not controlled by any outside church or council of men. It is an independent self-governing body of baptized believers. There is no example in the New Testament where any church, council, or man runs the affairs of another church.

This is the major problem in Protestant denominations today. When a church belongs to a Protestant denomination, their finances are controlled by the “Headquarters” and they are told by how to conduct their own affairs. If a denomination departs from the Bible, then all the churches in that denomination

will depart from the Bible. However, if an independent church departs from the Bible, then other churches are not affected.

## **The Officers of a Church**

According to Philippians 1:1, the church has two offices – bishops and deacons.

***Philippians 1:1 – “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:”***

The New Testament sets forth the qualifications and duties of both offices.

### **1. The Pastor**

A church is an organized body of baptized believers. According to Titus 1:5, the one thing that is necessary for order is leadership, and this comes through the pastor. Three words are used in the New Testament for the office of the Pastor: bishop, elder, and pastor. The word bishop means overseer and refers to the administration of the Office of Pastor. The word elder means ruler and refers to the dignity of the Office of Pastor. The word pastor means shepherd and refers to the design of the Office of Pastor. Often these terms are used interchangeably for the same office. For example,

***Titus 1:5-7 – “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;”***

***Acts 20:17, 28 – “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church... Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers [bishop], to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”***

***1 Peter 5:1-2 – “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [bishop] thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;”***

In the three passages above, the words “elder” and “bishop” are used interchangeably. Pastors are given to churches as a gift to bring the members into spiritual maturity.

***Ephesians 4:11-12 – “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”***

God calls men into the ministry, the church ordains (appoints, chooses, elects) them to the position of pastor, and the Holy Spirit sets them into the position of pastor. The spiritual qualifications required in a pastor are found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

1. Blameless (1 Tim. 3:2). He has a good testimony before the saved and unsaved.
2. Husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2). He is not to have more than one wife. Furthermore, a divorced and remarried man is disqualified from the position of pastor. A man in this situation would best work in a supporting ministry or as a team member in church planting.

3. Vigilant and sober (1 Tim. 3:2). He is to be watching like a shepherd on all sides to defend the flock from the thieves and predators. A sober mind implies a serious mind that is not under the influence of anything that could distract or distort judgment.
4. Good behavior (1 Tim. 3:2).
5. Hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2). He receives and entertains strangers with kindness without asking for payment.
6. Apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). It is essential that a pastor be a teacher. It is a skill that can be learned. A pastor teaches by what he says, what he does, and what he is.
7. Not given to wine (1 Tim. 3:3). The use of alcoholic drinks is strictly prohibited.
8. No striker (1 Tim. 3:3). A striker is someone who uses physical force to impress his will on others. He must never retaliate physically against another person. However, self-defense, the defense of one's family, and the defense of innocent people in danger of physical harm is permitted.
9. Not greedy of filthy lucre (1 Tim. 3:3). The motive of a pastor must never be for money. A pastor is paid so he can preach. He is not paid in order to preach. In other words, congregations pay their pastor a salary so the pastor can give himself to prayer and ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). A real pastor will serve whether paid or not. Some pastors receive very little from their church and must work a job to support their family.
10. Patient (1 Tim. 3:3). Patience is needed to endure hardness in the ministry.
11. Not a brawler (1 Tim. 3:3). This does not refer to physical violence, but rather someone who is argumentative. The pastor is to defend the faith, but not to do it in an arguing manner.
12. Not covetous (1 Tim. 3:3). Covetousness is the desire to have that which one does not possess. The pastor is not to be materialistic. In most churches, the church members will have more money and more "things" than the pastor and his family.
13. Ruling his house well (1 Tim. 3:4). This means the pastor is to love his wife and be the proper leader of the home. His children must be respectful to the authority of their father.
14. Not a novice (1 Tim. 3:6). A pastor is not to be a new Christian or one that has little Bible knowledge. In this situation, a novice needs to be trained and disciplined by an older, more experienced pastor until he is properly equipped for the ministry.
15. Good report of them that are without (1 Tim. 3:7). The pastor needs to have a good reputation with the community. The community may not like him, but he will be respected.

### **The Duties of a Pastor to the church**

1. A Pastor is to lead the church. This is the duty of an elder.
2. A Pastor is to feed the church the Word of God. This is the duty of a shepherd.
3. A Pastor is to protect the church. This is the duty of a bishop. He is the "protective umbrella" under which a church is kept safe from danger. A pastor needs to be observant in watching out for Satan's attacks upon members and from false teachers.

## **The Church's Responsibility to its Pastor**

1. The Church is to submit to the pastor's leadership.

***Hebrews 13:17 – “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”***

2. The Church is to pray for the pastor.

***Hebrews 13:7 – “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”***

3. The Church is to provide for the pastor's needs. It is biblically right for a church to support its pastor financially, and support him well.

***1 Corinthians 9:14 – “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”***

***1 Timothy 5:17-18 – “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.”***

4. The Church is to honor and respect the pastor.

Can a church have more than one pastor? The New Testament give examples of more than one pastor in a church (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; James 5:14).

Yes, but one pastor must be the head pastor and is often called the “Senior Pastor”. A large church may need several pastors to properly care for the spiritual needs of the church.

## **2. Deacon**

The word deacon means servant. The pastor is the leader of the church whereas the deacon is the servant of the church. The pastor ministers in spiritual things whereas the deacon ministers in physical things. A deacon is not to be the pastor's assistant. If there is a need for more pastors to meet the spiritual needs of the church, then the church can choose additional pastors. A deacon is used to help meet the physical needs of the church members.

There are 10 qualifications of a deacon given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Grave – honorable, dignified

Not double-tongued – hypocritical, insincere

Not given to much wine

Not greedy of filthy lucre – greedy (a good name is to be chosen than great riches)

Pure conscience – clear conscience

Be proved – be tested

Blameless – unprovable, above reproach, unaccusable

Wives – grave, not slanderers (gossip), sober (temperate, not given to extremes), and faithful

Husbands of one wife

Ruling children and the home well

After the church in Jerusalem grew to several thousand people (Acts 2-5) there was too much work for the 12 apostles to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the people. In Acts 6:1-7, the apostles instructed the church to choose 7 men, called deacons, to serve and meet the physical needs of the church while the apostles could focus on the spiritual needs of the church. An examination of this passage teaches the following about deacons.

1. Deacons are to be elected only when required. According to verse 2 there was a definite need for men to serve tables, thus relieving the pastors of this duty. Churches should not have deacons just to have them, but to elect them when there is a need.
2. Deacons are to be elected only when called for by the pastor. In verse 3, it was the pastors of the church in Jerusalem that decided to call for deacons, not the church members. A wise pastor will know when he needs help.
3. Deacons are to be elected based on the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They are not to be chosen because of their position in society, wealth, or influence.
4. Deacons are to be elected by the church members. In this case, the pastors directed the church to choose deacons, but it was the church that did the choosing.
5. Deacons are to be under the direction of the pastor. The office of the deacon has no authority in the church.

## **Scriptural Baptism**

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances of a church. The doctrine of Baptism is at the center of our Baptist faith. Baptism is the one issue in which over 50 million of our Baptist ancestors suffered cruel tortures and deaths. Possibly no other New Testament doctrine has been so twisted and perverted over the last 2,000 years as has the doctrine of Baptism. There are four basic requirements for baptism given in the New Testament. Each requirement must be met for the baptism to be valid. These four requirements are a proper candidate, a proper method, a proper motive, and proper authority.

### **1. A Proper Candidate**

The New Testament makes it very clear that baptism is for believers only. It is only for those who have been born again. Infants cannot receive baptism, because they cannot be born again. The following verses clearly teach that only believers were baptized and not infants.

1. *Matthew 3:6 – “And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”*

Those baptized were “confessing” their sins. Infants cannot do this.

**2. Matthew 3:8 – “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:”**

John the Baptist required evidence of true conversion. Infants are unable to do this.

**3. Luke 3:8 – “Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”**

John the Baptist did not baptize people based on who they were related to or what family they’re from.

**4. Acts 8:36-38 – “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”**

The Ethiopian clearly expressed his personal faith in Christ before he was baptized. An infant is unable to do this.

**5. Acts 9:6, 18 – “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do... And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”**

Paul was saved first, then baptized in verse 18.

**6. Acts 10:47 – “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”**

Cornelius gave clear evidence of salvation before he was baptized. An infant cannot do this.

**7. Acts 16:14-15 – “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”**

Lydia was saved and then was baptized.

**8. Acts 16:30-34 – “And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”**

The word “straightway” in verse 33 indicates the Jailer and his household were baptized immediately after they “believed on the Lord Jesus Christ”.

**9. Acts 18:8 – “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”**

Crispus was baptized after believing.



Not only do these verses show that only believers were baptized, but the place where the New Testament puts baptism teaches only believer's baptism.

1. ***Matthew 28:19 – “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”***

The Great Commission places baptism after “teach all nations” (salvation).

2. ***John 4:1 – “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,”***

The order in this verse is disciples were “made” first and “baptized” second.

3. ***Acts 2:38 – “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”***

The order is “repent” first, and “be baptized” second. An infant is unable to repent.

4. ***Acts 2:41 – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”***

The order is received first and baptized second. In infant is unable to receive the Word of God.

5. ***Acts 8:12 – “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”***

The Samaritans believed Philip, and then were baptized. This verse also tells us who was baptized. The end of the verse says, “both men and women”. They were adults. There were no infants baptized.

6. ***Acts 8:13 – “Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”***

Simon believed and then was baptized.

Infants cannot be baptized because they cannot repent of their sin and believe on Jesus Christ. Some people who believe infants should be baptized point to three examples in the book of Acts where believing adults are baptized along with their “households” or family.

They wrongly assume that infants were in these families even though there is no evidence of it. Let us look at each example and see if there are any clues that help us know whether or not there were infants in any of these families.

1. Household of Lydia.

***Acts 16:15 – “And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”***

People who believe infants should be baptized say that Lydia had infants in her household. If this was true, it would support their view of infant baptism. However, this example does not mention infants were present or even hint that infants were in her household. All this verse teaches is that those people in her household were saved and baptized. Lydia's situation would make it very doubtful that she had infants in her household at this time. She was a business woman about 500 miles (800 km) from her

home. It is unlikely she traveled that far with an infant. Most likely, Lydia was not married and her household consisted of praying Jews, possibly servants or employees, we read about in Acts 16:3.

## 2. The family of the Philippian jailer.

***Acts 16:32-34 – “And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”***

In verse 32, Paul spoke to everyone in the jailer’s house. An infant is unable to understand what is being spoken. In verse 34, those baptized, were “believing in God”. An infant is also unable to believe in God. Therefore, we can confidently say that there were no infants in the Jailer’s family.

## 3. Family of Crispus.

***Acts 18:8 – “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”***

The key word in verse 8 is “believed”. Infants cannot believe on Jesus Christ for salvation. So, we can confidently say that there were no infants in this family either.

To assume that the families of Lydia, the Jailer, and Crispus had infants in them is a very serious error in Bible interpretation. The youngest child in my household is 10 years old. A 10 year old is old enough to decide to be saved or not. It is a major error to teach infant baptism based on an assumption that cannot be proven. In conclusion, the Bible clearly teaches that the proper candidate to receive baptism is only a believer in Jesus Christ. That is why it is called believer’s baptism.

## **2. A Proper Mode**

There are three modes of baptizing that churches use today, but only one of them is biblical. These three modes are:

1. Sprinkling – A few drops of water are sprinkled on the candidate’s head.
2. Pouring – A small quantity of water is poured over the candidate’s head.
3. Immersion – The candidate is completely immersed in water.

As usual, we need to ask, “What does the Bible teach?”

***Matthew 3:6 – “And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”***

John baptized “in” the river Jordan. If he baptized people by sprinkling or pouring, there would be no need to go into the river, but just stand on the shore.

***Matthew 3:16 – “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:”***

Jesus Christ and John the Baptist went down into the water and came up “out of” the water. If the method of baptism was pouring or sprinkling, there would be no need to go down into the water, but just stand on the shore.

***John 3:23 – “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.”***

John the Baptist required much water, implying he was baptizing by immersion. He would not need “much water” if he baptized by pouring or sprinkling.

***Acts 8:38-39 – “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”***

Both Philip and the Ethiopian both went down “into the water” and both came “up out of the water”. If Philip baptized the Ethiopian by pouring or sprinkling, there would be no need to go into the water, but stand on the shore.

Not only do New Testament examples of baptism show that the method of baptism was immersion, but the very meaning of the word baptize means to dip, to plunge, to submerge, or to immerse. Another reason for immersion being the proper mode of baptism is that the Bible teaches baptism is a picture of a burial.

***Romans 6:4-5 – “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”***

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

When a person dies, the body is not laid on the ground and then sprinkled with dirt. It is buried! The method of pouring and sprinkling do not picture a burial. The Bible clearly shows that the proper mode of baptism is immersion in water.

### **3. A Proper Reason**

Baptism by immersion pictures the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As the person being baptized is brought under the water, it pictures the death and burial of Jesus Christ. Then, as he is brought back up, it pictures the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pouring and sprinkling do not picture a death, burial, and resurrection. Only the mode of immersion pictures the gospel – the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is also a picture of what has taken place in the life of the person being baptized. It is a public declaration that they have “died” to the old life of sin and now “raised” to a new life in Jesus Christ. Baptism is the first step of obedience in a believer’s life. It is the proper motivation for baptism. A believer submits to scriptural baptism because Jesus commanded it.

***Matthew 28:19 – “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”***

Baptism is the TEST of obedience to Jesus Christ. It presents an immediate opportunity to declare what God has done in the life of the believer. There are two viewpoints regarding the reason for baptism.

#### A. Symbolism in baptism.

#### B. Salvation in baptism.

The Baptist viewpoint is that there is symbolism in baptism.

Many churches believe baptism is a part of the salvation process.

Baptism is not for the purpose of salvation.

If a person does not receive baptism, they could not go to Heaven.

It is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

They believe that by getting baptized their sins are washed away.

Baptism is a testimony to others that you have been saved; that you have died to sin and now want to live for Jesus Christ.

People who hold to this view do not trust Jesus Christ 100% for salvation. A part of their trust is in the water!

People who embrace the error that baptism is necessary for salvation misinterpret the following four Bible verses.

1. ***Mark 16:16 – “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*”**

In this verse, baptism relates to our spiritual comfort, not salvation. For example, consider the statement: “He that boards the bus and is seated will reach his destination.” Boarding the bus is essential for reaching the destination, but being seated is not. Likewise, believing is essential for reaching Heaven, but being baptized is not. As it is a more comfortable to travel seated in a bus, it is more comfortable going to Heaven IN the will of God by being baptized than out of the will of God!

2. ***John 3:5 – “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*”**

Some have tried to twist the phrase “born of water” to mean baptism. If we follow on and read verse 6, we learn that the phrase “born of water” refers to a physical birth. In no way was Nicodemus asking for baptism. Baptism was not even discussed in his encounter with Jesus Christ that night (vs 1-21).

3. ***Acts 2:38 – “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*”**

The controversy with this verse centers on the meaning of the word “for”. The word can mean “in order to” or it can mean “because of”. If we make the statement: “He was imprisoned FOR murder” do we mean he was placed in prison in order to commit murder? NO! He was put there because he committed murder. So, Peter was either saying, “be baptized in order to have your sins forgiven” OR “be baptized because your sins have been forgiven”. Since salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ, the correct interpretation is to be baptized because your sins have been forgiven.

**4. 1 Peter 3:21 – “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”**

Many people who believe that water washes sin away read only the first part of the verse “baptism doth also now save us” and then STOP! They say, “See, baptism saves!” However, if the rest of the verse is read, it is very clear that baptism does not save anyone. The verse goes on to say, “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh”. The water in baptism does NOT wash away sin, the “filth of the flesh”.

According to this verse, what does baptism save us from? The verse says, “the answer of a good conscience toward God”. The proper motive for baptism is obedience to God. Baptism is the first step of obedience for a believer. Any believer that delays baptism is living in disobedience and unable to have a “good conscience toward God”.

#### **4. The Proper Authority.**

“Who has the authority to baptize?” is one of the most difficult to understand in the doctrine of the Church. This question divides Baptist churches into two groups.

1. “Open Baptist” – churches that accept people into membership who were baptized by immersion from non-Baptist churches.
2. “Closed Baptist” – churches that ONLY accept people into membership who were baptized by a true Bible-believing Baptist church.

Who is right and who is wrong? The issue becomes a matter of church authority. Does just any kind of church or individual have the authority to baptize new believers or does the authority to baptize reside in true Bible-believing Baptist churches?

The answer to the question, “Who has the authority to baptize?” is the same answer to the question, “Who did Jesus Christ give the Great Commission to in Matthew 28:18-20?” Why is it the same answer? It is because Jesus Christ gave the authority to baptize in the Great Commission. If you can answer the question, “Who did Jesus Christ give the Great Commission to?”, then you will have your answer to, “Who has the authority to baptize?”

***Matthew 28:18-20 – “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”***

The 11 disciples of Jesus Christ were assembled before Him on a mountain in Galilee. (The 12<sup>th</sup> disciple, Judas was dead). In verse 18, Jesus said, “All power is given unto me” and then in verse 19 said, “Go ye therefore”. This clearly shows that Jesus Christ, the one with all power, authorized the 11 disciples to do three things in verses 19 and 20.

First, they were to evangelize all nations (verse 19). Second, they were to baptize new believers (verse 19). Third, they were to disciple new believers (verse 20). In the Great Commission, Jesus Christ gave the authority to baptize and start new churches. Who did Jesus Christ give this commission to?

There are only three possible answers. Jesus Christ gave the Great Commission including the authority to baptize and start churches to:

1. Some believe the Great Commission was given to the 11 individual disciples.

If true, then no one has the authority to baptize and start churches today? Why? Because the 11 disciples died a long time ago. It is evident that Jesus did not give the Great Commission only to the individual disciples.

2. Most people believe the Great Commission was given to every Christian.

This is the most popular view today; however, if we think about it carefully, we would see that it is impossible. Most pastors and missionaries wrongly interpret the word “ye” in the phrase “Go ye therefore and teach all nations” to mean that every individual Christian is authorized to evangelize the whole world.

To be consistent in Bible interpretation, the same interpretation needs to be assigned to each part of the Great Commission. If those who hold this view say that Jesus Christ authorized every Christian to evangelize the whole world, then Jesus Christ authorized every Christian to baptize new believers. This interpretation means that individual Christians are authorized to baptize new believers without church approval or authorization. If this interpretation is correct then baptism is not a church ordinance, but an individual mandate.

If baptism is an individual mandate, then it is not difficult to see how confusing situations can become. For example, suppose you “think” that you are a Christian and lead a man to be saved. Then, believing it was your mandate to do so, you baptized him. Then, after a few years, God works on your heart and shows you that you are not a true Christian but have a false profession of faith. Then, you repent of your sins and put your faith 100% on Jesus Christ and become a true believer.

Since the Bible teaches that a valid baptism comes after salvation, you realize that since you were not saved when you originally received baptism, that now you have to be re-baptized. Then you realize that you have big problem. Because you were not a real Christian before you were truly saved, every person you baptized before you became a true Christian does not have a valid baptism, because your baptism was not valid.

Now you would have to go back to every person you baptized and say “I’m sorry, but I was not saved when I baptized you, therefore your baptism is not valid and everyone you baptized since then is not valid either. Now, I am truly saved. You will need to receive baptism from me again so your baptism can be valid. Then you will need to go and re-baptize those people you baptized before so their baptism can be valid too.” Confusing!

Many issues arise if Jesus Christ authorized every individual Christian to evangelize the whole world. For example, how do you really know that the person that baptizes you is really saved? You can never really be assured that your baptism is valid. Also, how is one individual Christian supposed to evangelize the entire world’s population?

Many pastors and missionaries wrongly interpret the word “ye” in the phrase “Go ye therefore and teach all nations” to mean that every individual Christian is authorized to evangelize the whole world. Every Bible student needs to be reminded that although there may be several applications from a verse of scripture, there can only be one interpretation.

We don't agree with the interpretation that every individual Christian is authorized to evangelize the world. However, we do agree with the application that every believer needs to be involved in evangelism and telling people how to be saved. So, how does the word "ye" in the phrase, "Go ye therefore" be correctly interpreted?

We know that there were many other saved and baptized believers in Israel at this time (John 4:1), but Jesus Christ did not assemble all the believers together and collectively give them the Great Commission. Jesus Christ was only speaking to His disciples.

Therefore, Jesus Christ either (1) authorized his individual disciples to evangelize the world, baptize new believers and start new churches OR (2) He spoke to the disciples collectively as a church and authorized His church to evangelize the world, baptize new believers and start new churches.

It is obvious that Jesus did not authorize his individual disciples to do this work, because they are dead. If Jesus did that, then the Great Commission is no longer valid. We should close down churches and all missionaries should go home. The only consistent interpretation is that Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples collectively as a church and authorized His church to evangelize the world, baptize new believers and start new churches.

Some people make a major mistake in Bible interpretation when they teach that although Jesus was speaking to His disciples, the Great Commission was understood to be for all believers. If true, where in the Bible does it say it went from individual disciples to all believers? How does the Bible say it went from individual disciples to all believers? When did it go from individual disciples to all believers?

No one can find a single verse of scripture that tells when, where, or how the Great Commission went from the individual disciples to all believers. You cannot take what Jesus said to His disciples and interpret that for all believers without supporting evidence from the Bible. You can certainly make an application to all believers that they should be involved in evangelism, but that is not the interpretation.

### 3. The Great Commission was given to the church Jesus started.

Those who hold this viewpoint believe when Jesus said, "Go ye therefore", He gave the authority to baptize and start new churches to the 11 disciples collectively as a church. It is called "church authority". This is the only answer that makes sense. It is impossible for an individual believer to evangelize the whole world, but it is possible for churches to spread throughout the world.

It is impossible for an individual believer to baptize new believers and start churches all over the world, but it is possible for the churches of Jesus Christ. By giving the authority to His church, it allows the work of the Lord to proceed in an orderly way. Christians can depart from the truth, but it would not affect the churches that were started.

Included in the Great Commission is the authority to baptize and start new churches. So the next question that naturally follows is, "To what kind of church did Jesus Christ give the authority to baptize?" Jesus did not start many religious denominations. He started only one church, His church. Only a true church of Jesus Christ has the authority to baptize.

We believe Jesus Christ did not authorize individual believers to evangelize, baptize, and start new churches. We believe Jesus Christ authorized His church to evangelize, baptize, and start new churches. Furthermore, we recognize that "church authority" was passed down in history through Anabaptist churches that remained faithful and true to the Bible.

Presently, “church authority” resides in Bible-believing Baptist churches. Individual believers have the responsibility to evangelize the unsaved, but it is God’s plan that all Christian service be done with proper church authority meaning it needs to be done through a ministry of the local church.

### **Authority in Baptism is very important.**

Jesus Christ knew proper authority was very important when He sought out John the Baptist to receive His baptism. He walked 100 kilometers from Galilee to the River Jordan where John was baptizing. There were plenty of rivers in Galilee, but no one in Galilee had the authority to baptize. That belonged to John the Baptist.

#### **John the Baptist baptized with God’s authority**

***John 1:6 – “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.”***

John the Baptist received the authority to baptize directly from God.

#### **Philip baptized with church authority**

Philip did not go out and baptize believers on his own without church authority. Philip was a member of the church at Jerusalem. He was a deacon in the church according to Acts 6:5. He was also an evangelist (Acts 21:8). Both the deacon and the evangelist are church functions, so it is most likely he had church authority to baptize. He was even careful to inform his church at Jerusalem of his ministry among the Samaritans (Acts 8:14).

#### **Ananias baptized with church authority**

Ananias baptized Saul in Acts 9, who later became the Apostle Paul. Ananias did not baptize Saul on his own without church authority. We know there was a church in Damascus (Acts 9:2), because Saul was going there to destroy it. Ananias was a member and probably the pastor of that church (Acts 9:10). Saul became a member of the church at Damascus (Acts 9:22-26) for a period of time before moving to Antioch.

#### **Peter baptized with church authority**

Peter did not baptize believers on his own without church authority. Some people say Peter acted on his own when he baptized Cornelius and his family, but Peter was commanded by God to go to Cornelius (Acts 10:20). When Peter reported to the church in Jerusalem what happened in Acts 11, the church leaders did not rebuke Peter for baptizing them.

#### **Paul and Barnabas were sent with church authority**

The missionaries of Acts 13 were sent forth by the church at Antioch. This is God’s way of sending missionaries – through the church with church authority.

***Acts 13:3 – “And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”***

The church at Antioch sent them to evangelize and establish other churches.

***Acts 14:23 – “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”***

They went forth with the authority of their church and started new churches.



## **Baptism is the way to church membership.**

***Acts 2:41 – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”***

These 3,000 people were ADDED to the church that already existed on the Day of Pentecost. When a believer is baptized, he becomes a member of that church.

If a believer moves to another city and desires to transfer his membership to another Bible-believing Baptist church, he does not need to be re-baptized. A believer only needs to be baptized with proper church authority one time. In most cases, the new church sends a letter to the old church informing them of the request for transfer of membership.

Sooner or later, every Baptist church will be faced with the situation of having a potential member who was baptized by immersion in a non-Baptist church apply for membership. Should the church receive the member based on being baptized by immersion or should the church insist that the person be baptized by immersion with proper church authority? This situation will test the true beliefs of any Bible-believing Baptist church.

We believe that a true Bible-believing Baptist church should not receive into membership someone who was baptized by a non-Baptist church. If someone comes from a church that did not have church authority, then their baptism is invalid. They need to receive true baptism by a church with church authority.

What makes someone a Baptist? Is it being raised in a Baptist home? No! Is it attending a Baptist church? No! The answer is baptism on the authority of a Baptist church makes one a Baptist. If a Christian coming from a Protestant denomination wants to become a member of a true Bible-believing Baptist church, he can, by receiving Baptist baptism.

Suppose a believer in a Protestant denomination realizes his church does not have the authority to baptize and that his own baptism is invalid. He understands that a Bible-believing Baptist church has the authority to baptize. He approaches the pastor of a Bible-believing Baptist church and requests to be baptized biblically. However, he does not want to leave his Protestant church, but remain a member where he is at and serve God there.

Should the church baptize this man or not? Absolutely NOT! Why? Upon receiving Baptist baptism, it makes him a member of that church whether he likes it or not. It will be confusing to other people for him to be a member of a Bible-believing Baptist church but attend a Protestant church that has no church authority. Some will say, “Why is he a member of a church that believes in salvation by faith, but serves God in a church that believes in salvation by faith plus works?”

Furthermore, if the man asking for true baptism believed his church did not have the authority to baptize, but was unwilling to leave it, then he is confused. If his church did not have the authority to baptize, then his church is a counterfeit church. Why would anyone willfully stay in a counterfeit church and try to serve God there? Why would he not rather join and serve God in a true church of Jesus Christ.

There is something not right with this man and the Bible-believing Baptist church should wait until the man is ready to leave his old church and join the Baptist church before baptizing him. If I realized my church was not a true church of Jesus Christ, then I would go and find one so I could be a part of God’s true church, even if it meant being re-baptized.

## **Conclusion**

A true Bible-believing Baptist church:

1. Has the keys of the kingdom of God (Matthew 16:19)
2. Is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15)
3. Is the storehouse for the tithes of God's people (1 Corinthians 16:2)
4. Is responsible for sending forth missionaries
5. Has church authority to baptize and start new churches
6. Is the administrator of the church ordinances – baptism and the Lord's Supper

## **The Lord's Supper**

The two ordinances given to the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a one-time event that places one in the membership of a church. However, the Lord's Supper is a continuous event that churches are to keep until Jesus Christ returns.

The Roman Catholic Church believes that the bread is literally the body of Jesus and the wine is literally the blood of Jesus Christ. Most Protestant churches, like the Lutheran Church, believe that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus once the items are consumed. Which one is right? Neither. The question, is "What does the Bible teach about the Lord's Supper?"

***1 Corinthians 11:23-28 – "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: <sup>24</sup>And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. <sup>25</sup>After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. <sup>26</sup>For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. <sup>27</sup>Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup>But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."***

The church in Corinth was not practicing the Lord's Supper correctly and Paul wrote to correct them. From this passage we learn several things regarding the Lord's Supper.

1. The Lord's Supper is an act of obedience.

In verse 24 and 25, Paul wrote "this do". The Lord's Supper is a command for churches to do.

2. The Lord's Supper is an act of remembrance.

In verse 24 and 25, Paul wrote, "in remembrance of me". The Lord's Supper is a memorial, reminding the believer of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

3. The Lord's Supper is an act of praise and thanksgiving.

In verse 24, Paul wrote, "when he had given thanks".

4. The Lord's Supper is a testimony of Jesus' death.

In verse 26, Paul wrote, "ye do shew the Lord's". The Lord's Supper is a picture of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

5. The Lord's Supper is an act of examination.

In verse 28, Paul wrote, "let a man examine himself". Our faithfulness to Christ must be examined before partaking of the Supper.

Who may partake of the Lord's Supper? The answer to this question divides Baptists into three groups.

1. Open Communion – Any church member or visitor can partake. The visitor may be a Christian or may not be a Christian. It is open to everyone in the community.

2. Close Communion – Any church member or visitor that was baptized by immersion from a Baptist church is able to partake. Some pastors will even allow someone to partake that was baptized by immersion from a non-Baptist church.

3. Closed Communion – Only church members from that church are able to partake.

Which one is the right position? When Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, did He send out invitations to the community to attend his Supper whether they were saved or not saved? No. So, we can confidently say that Jesus Christ did not practice open communion.

Did Jesus invite those people who were saved and baptized by John the Baptist to attend his Supper? No. We know that there were many believers in Jerusalem, but they were not invited to partake in the Supper. So, we can confidently say that Jesus did not practice close communion. Who did Jesus partake the Lord's Supper with?

***Luke 22:14 – "And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him."***

Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper with his 12 disciples that made up His church. There were other saved people in Jerusalem on that day, but they were not invited to partake in the Supper, because they were not members of Jesus' church. The Lord's Supper is to be observed only by the members of that particular church. The Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. Note the following verses from 1 Corinthians 11 where Paul was teaching on the subject of the Lord's Supper.

1. Verse 17 – "ye come together"
2. Verse 18 – "when ye come together in the church"
3. Verse 20 – "when ye come together therefore into one place"
4. Verse 33 – "when ye come together to eat"
5. Verse 34 – "come...together"

Clearly, the Lord's Supper is to be observed by the assembly of baptized believers only. Because the Supper is a church ordinance, only baptized members that particular church ought to partake. Therefore, "Closed Communion" is the correct position.

There are only two elements used in the Lord's Supper. These are:

1. Unleavened Bread.

The bread is broken and each member receives one piece. When the bread is broken, it is a picture of the broken body of Jesus Christ on the cross. Since yeast is a picture of sin, ONLY bread without yeast can accurately symbolize the sinless body of Jesus Christ.

## 2. Grape Juice.

Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper in Luke 22:17-20. The "fruit of the vine" that Jesus mentioned in verse 18 means grape juice. It is a picture of the sinless blood of Jesus Christ. Many churches have substituted alcoholic wine in place of grape juice. However, it takes yeast to turn grape juice into wine. Since yeast is a picture of sin, it cannot be used to represent the sinless blood of Jesus.

How often should a church observe the Lord's Supper? The Bible does not specify how often to do the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:26. It is up to each individual church as to how often they want to do it. Some churches do it every month, some twice a year, and others once a year. I would caution against observing the Lord's Supper frequently because it can become a ritual and lose the importance and meaning of it by the church members. My church observes the Lord's Supper once per year on the Jewish Passover. That is the Tuesday night before Easter Sunday as that was the very day and time of day Jesus Christ instituted it with His church.

## **Tithing and Stewardship**

The word "stewardship" means to manage the affairs of another. Joseph was an example of a steward in Egypt by managing the affairs of Potiphar (Genesis 39:1-6).

### **Biblical Principles of Stewardship**

1. Everything belongs to God.

*Exodus 19:5 – "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine."*

*Psalms 24:1 – "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."*

2. Every Christian is a steward.

*Matthew 25:14-15 – "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey."*

3. It is required of stewards to be faithful.

*1 Corinthians 4:2 – "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

Based on these verses, every Christian is to faithfully manage the affairs of God here on Earth. There are several areas of stewardship to consider.

1. Stewardship of Time.

Time is something that God gives equally to every man. A man once wrote, "Only one life will soon be past, only what is done for Christ will last". There are 168 hours in one week. Have you ever

considered tithing your time or giving 10% of your time to God each week? Ten percent would be 17 hours. Do you spend at least 17 hours per week doing something for God? If you spend 1 hour each day between praying and reading your Bible, that leaves 10 hours left over. If you spend an additional two hours every week worshipping God at church, then you have 8 hours left over? Are you doing something for God with the 8 remaining hours every week?

## 2. Stewardship of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

God gives certain abilities to every Christian. We studied the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a previous lesson. Every Christian has at least one gift to be used for God's glory and service. Christians will not be judged on the amount of ability they have, but for what they have DONE with the ability they were given.

## 3. Stewardship of Testimony.

Every Christian has an influence on others. We influence the lost either toward Christ, or toward Hell. The Disciples of Christ were called "Christians" because they reminded others of Jesus Christ. It is the Christian's duty to live a life that influences people for good. Therefore, the Christian needs to avoid all worldly practices, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, dancing, and worldly music.

## 4. Stewardship of Tithe.

The subject of tithing reveals the heart of the Christian. There are four important principles to know in tithing:

### A. Tithing involves a set amount.

God does not require rich people to give more money and poor people less money. The Bible teaches the tithe to be the same equal amount no matter what the income. The tithe is a tenth or 10% of your increase whether money, crops, livestock, etc.

For example, suppose you work at a factory and receive \$3,000 per month. Your tithe would be \$300. Suppose you planted a field of rice; your tithe would be 10% of your harvest. You could sell it and give the money to the church. Suppose you own a herd of cattle, and someone buys a cow for \$800 then your tithe would be \$80.

### B. Tithing is a Bible principle.

1. Abraham started it (Genesis 14:18-20).
2. Jacob continued it (Genesis 28:20-22).
3. Moses confirmed it (Leviticus 27:30).
4. Malachi commanded it (Malachi 3:10).
5. Jesus commended it (Matthew 23:23).
6. God commissioned it (1 Corinthians 9:13,14)

The Bible teaches it is God's plan for pastors to be paid with a portion of the tithes and offerings the church receives. It is up to the church to determine how much the pastor should receive. At the start of a new church, it may be very small and the pastor may need to supplement his income with a second

job to support his family. However, as the church grows, his salary should also grow to the point where he can serve full-time without needing to work a second job.

C. The tithe is to be given to your church.

Malachi 3:10 tells the place where tithes are stored.

***Malachi 3:10 – “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”***

In the Old Testament days, the storehouse was the Jewish Temple. In the New Testament, the storehouse is the church. It is God’s plan for the church to keep the tithes and offerings from every member. The money is used for the work of the ministry and the operational costs of the church including the pastor’s salary, building rent, electric, water, etc.

D. Tithing is NOT giving.

Tithing is not giving. Tithing is commanded by God. Giving your tithe to your church is obedience. Giving an offering, above your tithe, is giving. Tithing and offering are not the same. Suppose you receive a salary of \$3,000 per month. Your tithe would be \$300. Then at church, suppose you gave an extra \$50 – i.e. Missions. The \$300 is your tithe and the \$50 is your offering.

#### The blessings of tithing and curses of not tithing

According to Malachi 3:8, if you do not tithe then you are robbing God!

***Malachi 3:8 – “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.”***

But many people say, “I do not have the money to tithe. I cannot afford to tithe. I can barely survive on 100%. I certainly cannot survive on 90%”. Consider what God says,

***Malachi 3:10-11 – “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.”***

If you will obey God and tithe 10%, then God will bless you and you will find that you can live on the 90%. Verse 11 says that He will also “rebuke the devourer”. That means that maybe your fields will bear more fruit than usual, maybe your clothes will last longer than normal, or your motorcycle won’t break down as often. God will not allow things into your life that eat away at your possessions and money so that you can live off the remaining 90%.

However, if you do not tithe, then you will have difficulty living on the 100% because you are stealing from God. If you don’t tithe then God cannot bless you and the “devourer” will come and maybe cause your fields to bear little fruit, maybe your clothes don’t last long and need to buy more, maybe your motorcycle needs more repairs than usual, or maybe you will have more medical expenses than usual. He will allow things to come into your life that will eat away at your possessions and money. You hurt yourself, your family, and your pastor by NOT tithing.

## Church Discipline

A church is, by definition, an organized assembly of baptized believers. Organization means that there are rules to maintain membership. Church discipline is the act of a church keeping itself right with God. According to Matthew 18, the church has the authority to exercise discipline over its members. Jesus Christ gave three steps to show how to deal with sin in the church.

***Matthew 18:15-17 – “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”***

Step #1 – Go to the erring individual alone. Verse 15 says to “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone”. If the erring church member repents and gets right with God, then the situation is resolved. If the erring member does not repent, then go to step #2.

Step #2 – Go to the erring individual with one or two church members to act as witnesses. Verse 16 says to “take with thee one or two more”. If the erring church member repents and gets right with God, then the situation is resolved. However, if the erring church member does not repent, then go to the third and final step.

Step #3 – Take the issue before the whole church. Verse 18 says to “tell it unto the church”. If the erring church member repents and gets right with God, then the situation is resolved. However, if the erring church member does not repent, this verse teaches that the erring church member is to be removed from the membership of the church.

Unfortunately, there are special occasions when a church must remove members from membership to keep the church pure. While the act of discipline is unpleasant, the testimony of Jesus Christ is the more important.

The erring believer should still be allowed to attend church services. After all, the goal in disciplining a church member is to get them to repent. There is no better place than the church where an erring person can get right with God. However, the remaining church members need to be careful to separate from him and have no fellowship with him. The Bible commands us to:

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

This means that if a church member has been disciplined out of the church that you do not go over to his house for fellowship or don’t go out to eat with him. The goal of this discipline is to get the erring one to repent and return to fellowship with the church.

For example, Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians to the church in Corinth to correct many errors in the church. There was a situation in the church where a church member was living in fornication, having sexual relations, with his step-mother, his father’s wife, and the church did not take a stand against him. Of the many things he taught the church, he included the need for this church to discipline this erring church member out of the church.

In the book of 2 Corinthians, we read the result of what happened. The erring church member responded to the discipline and repented of his sin. Paul then instructed the church to forgive him and comfort him and receive him back into the church.

***2 Corinthians 2:7-8 – “So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.”***

The New Testament gives several cases where a church needs to exercise discipline over erring church members.

1. False Doctrine (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10).
2. Disregard of the authority of one's church (Matthew 18:17).
3. A contentious spirit (1 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Corinthians 11:16).
4. Backbiting and Gossip (2 Thessalonians 3:11; 1 Timothy 5:13).
5. Immoral conduct (1 Corinthians 5:1-11).
6. Disorderly conduct (2 Thessalonians 3:6).
7. A covetous spirit (1 Corinthians 5:11; Ephesians 5:3,5)
8. An arrogant behavior (3 John 9,10).
9. Taking other church members to a court of law (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).
10. Unfaithfulness to church meetings (Hebrews 10:25).

The erring believer is denied fellowship in the church, although, he is still welcomed to attend church services. The end result of church discipline is for the erring believer to repent and seek to be restored to the fellowship of the church.