

**A Brief History of New Testament Churches**  
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**Introduction**

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## Introduction

A New Testament Church is compared to a building, a temple building, in the Bible, Zechariah 6:9-15; Matthew 16:18-19; 1Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1Timothy 3:15; 1Peter 2:5. This temple building has 1. a foundation, 2. a building, 3. a purpose, 4. a time. This is summed up in two verses in Matthew 16:18-19.

### Matthew 16:18-19

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. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Jesus spoke these words about the church He was building. Jesus is the rock foundation of this church. His church is the building. Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to be used by this church. This is their purpose. His church will continue through time because the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the following study of this brief history we will examine these four areas in more detail.

## I. Their Foundation

A building needs a foundation to be very sturdy, most useful and long lasting. A New Testament church is like a good building. Jesus built His kind of church upon the best foundation that it might last to the second coming. It would withstand opposition of all kinds and be useful in every place in the world. It was built on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

**Jesus Christ** - In Matthew 16:18 we find these words, "upon this rock I will build my church." The foundation comes first and then the building. The "rock" is the foundation of this building and Christ is represented by the rock. The word in the Greek translated "rock" is "petra" which means a very large rock. Some contexts in the Bible reveal this. It is large enough to build a house on as seen in Matthew 7:24-25 where the word for rock is the same Greek word. This rock or "petra" is large enough to cut a cave in it to bury a body. The entrance into this cave in the rock is so large that the stone that covers the entrance to the cave can not be rolled away by some women to enter the cave in the rock, Matthew 27:59-60; Mark 16:1-4.

"Petra" is in contrast to "Petros" which means small rock in the Greek and it is also the name of the apostle Peter. In the verses preceding this statement of Jesus He was talking about Himself not Peter. He asked his disciples, plural, whom did men think He was and then He asked whom did they think He was? Peter spoke up for all the disciples and said He was the Christ, Matthew 16:13-17. Then Jesus made the contrast between one of His disciples, Peter, and Himself. Peter was like his name a small rock and Jesus was like a large rock. The small rock, Peter, was built on the large rock, Christ. And all disciples like Peter are small rocks or stones.

Peter writes about this and says that some new believers were like "living stones" and "are built up a spiritual house," 1Peter 2:2, 5. Jesus is also like a "living stone" but greater than the others because He is the "chief corner stone" in the building which unites them into their church organization, 1Peter 2:3-4, 6-8. In verse 8 Jesus is also their "petra" or large foundation rock which is an offence and rejected by the world. The words of Peter in 1Peter2 are very helpful in understanding Jesus' words in Matthew 16. He heard Jesus in Matthew 16 and wrote

1Peter by the power of the Holy Spirit. Baptized believers or disciples of Jesus are like living stones. They are organized into churches with Christ being the chief cornerstone of each church. Each church is also built on Christ, the rock. Peter also refers to the churches as flocks of sheep. Each flock would have one or more pastors or elders who would lead them. Jesus is "the chief shepherd" who leads all of the flocks of spiritual sheep. He is their foundation, 1Peter 5:1-4.

The word "petra" appears 16 times in the New Testament. It is used literally 5 times in Matthew 27:51, 60; Mark 15:46; Revelation 6:15-16. It is used in a figurative way 9 times of Jesus, Matthew 7:24-25; 16:18; Luke 6:46-48; Romans 9:33; 1Corinthians 10:4; 1Peter 2:8. This large rock pictured that Christ was a wonderful foundation in some Scriptures. In another it was the source of a river which came out of it which pictured that the teachings of Christ are like water which gives life. In another it pictures that some reject the teachings of Christ and stumble and are not saved. It is never used of Peter. This word is also used figuratively of unbelievers 2 times, Luke 8:5-6, 11, 13. The hearts of some were hard like a rock and did not receive the teachings of Christ in their hearts. They made a profession of faith but the Word of Christ did not take root in their hearts and they were not saved..

The foundation comes before the building . The foundation represents Jesus, particularly His teachings or doctrines. This is seen in Matthew 7:24-27. To be built on Jesus is to be built on His teachings. Those who reject His teachings and build on another person's teaching are not built on Jesus. When Jesus began His ministry He began teaching. After He had taught awhile He began the first New Testament church. This church didn't begin or produce the teachings of Jesus; they believed and proclaimed them. Christ's teachings came before the believers and the first church. The foundation comes before the building. Jesus has all authority. His teachings are the authority for each New Testament church.

#### **Matthew 28:18**

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them , saying,  
All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

The word "power" in this place means "authority" in the Greek. He claimed the greatest of authority. He claimed all authority in heaven and in earth. He is the final authority. His words or teachings are the final authority on every subject He addresses. His teachings cover every subject that a believer or New Testament church needs to know to be saved, to live for Him and to serve Him. To question them, to add to them or take away from them is very serious. What an individual or a group of individuals say to change His teachings are very sinful and wrong and should be rejected. Jesus taught about salvation, baptism, daily living, worship, service, the future, etc. What Jesus taught is the final authority for every New Testament church. This is what they should believe and practice. All of His teachings are a New Testament church's final authority. Jesus is "the truth;" there is no other foundation than Jesus; heaven and earth will pass away but Jesus' words won't pass away, John 14:6; 1Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 24:35. The people at Jesus' first coming recognized that Jesus taught with authority, Matthew 7:28-29. He knew what He was talking about. Today we should recognize that He is our final authority!

**The Apostles and Prophets** - Jesus is the final authority for every believer and every New Testament Church. However, Jesus did not write down His teachings but He gave that job to the apostles and prophets who wrote the New Testament inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus taught the twelve apostles during His ministry and named them, Luke 6:13-16. Because Judas Iscariot was not saved and betrayed the Lord he lost his position as an apostle and Matthias who had also been trained by Jesus replaced him. The first members of the first church

prayed that Jesus would guide them to choose whom He wanted, Acts 1:15-26. Jesus through the members of that church made His choice known and they chose Matthias. After Jesus' ministry Paul was saved and was taught and was appointed in Arabia by Jesus to be an apostle, Galatians 1:1, 11-18.

Jesus not only trained the apostles personally and appointed them but He also gave them a special gift of the Holy Spirit so that they would remember His teachings and be able to speak and write them accurately. Notice His promise concerning this.

**John 14:15-17a, 26; 16:12-14**

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; . . . 26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. . . 16:12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

God is the final authority for everyone and Jesus is God, John 1:1-3, 14. Jesus throughout His ministry taught the apostles and other believers when He was on earth. What He said was their final authority. In John 14 and 16 He made a promise to the apostles and prophets that He would give them a special power through the Holy Spirit. This was at the passover meal the night before the crucifixion of Jesus. Only the twelve apostles were present with Jesus and Judas Iscariot left before He made the promise in John 14 and 16, Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14; John 13:21-30. Jesus spoke to them as apostles and prophets because the apostles were also prophets; the promise was to those in those offices. Matthias and Paul would receive the same gift of the Spirit when they became apostles and the New Testament prophets would receive this power when they became prophets.

Jesus had come to the end of His ministry and He told the apostles and prophets to keep His commandments. Humanly speaking they could not remember all of them. Therefore, He promised that He would enable them to remember all that He taught them and all He would have taught them if He had stayed longer. The Holy Spirit who is called the Comforter would enable them to do this. The Holy Spirit would not only enable them to remember all of His teachings but He would enable them to speak and write them correctly. The ones to whom He promised this spoke and wrote all of these teachings in the New Testament. The New Testament was finished about AD 96. Since that time we have had all of these teachings from Jesus who is God in the New Testament. Since we have had all of these teachings since AD 96 then the New Testament is the final authority of every believer and every New Testament church. Christ is the foundation of every New Testament church and the New Testament is the inspired revelation of Jesus written by the apostles and prophets of the first century AD, John 14:15-17, 25-26; 16:12-14; 20:19-23; 1 Corinthians 2:4-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:12-21.

The apostles were prophets who were taught personally by Jesus and placed in this special office. But the prophets who were not apostles did not have to be taught personally by Jesus and put in the office of apostle to write part of the New Testament. The apostles and prophets were both guided by the Spirit to speak and write God's word by inspiration. Both also were given signs or miracles to prove they were prophets of God. The believers in the New Testament days knew they were prophets and accepted their writings as God's Word when written. The believers and New Testament churches received the New Testament books as God's Word and their final authority as soon as they knew the apostles and prophets had written them in the first century and early second century. Notice these Scriptures: 1Corinthians 2:4-13; 2Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 16:18; 1Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians. 2:20; 1Timothy 3:15; John 14:6; 17:17.

Jesus promised the special gift of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets the night before He was nailed to the cross. He fulfilled this promise three days later when He arose from the dead and met with His church. Some apostles and prophets were present and He gave them the gifts promised as well as other gifts of the Holy Spirit to the whole church in John 20:19-23; 1Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:11-13. Notice in particular:

**John 20:22**

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them,  
and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

The special gifts of the Holy Spirit were given by Jesus to His church to do what would need to be done now that He had finished His work and would ascend to heaven until the second coming, 1Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:11-12.

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to enable the apostles and prophets to remember all things He taught them and to know all things He would have taught them had He stayed longer. He made this promise the evening before He went to the cross. The evening of the day He arose from the dead He gave them the Holy Spirit to fulfill that promise. A few days later He met with the apostles, all of whom were also prophets, in Galilee and gave them the great commission. They were the leaders of the first New Testament church and they received the great commission in that capacity. They led the first church to carry out the great commission as is seen in Acts. They were sent to all nations to teach all the teachings of Jesus which they were now able to know perfectly by the special gift of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the special gift given to the apostles and prophets was to give all of those teachings to believers verbally and in writing.

**Matthew 28:18-20**

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The promise made and fulfilled did not mean that they would teach and write about every event in Jesus life and every word He spoke. That would require a tremendous amount of books and would not be necessary for His purpose for them, John 21:25. Jesus promised that they would know all of His teachings or doctrines by the work of the Holy Spirit. They would know perfectly the historical events associated with all these teachings and anything necessary to know

the teachings. Luke, a prophet, wrote all that was necessary to know about Jesus as a perfect man from His birth to His ascension, Luke 1:1-4. Notice verse three. Paul, an apostle and prophet, told the elders at Ephesus that he had declared "all the counsel of God" to them, Acts 20:27.

The public accreditation by the Holy Spirit of this church and their work was given on the day of Pentecost after the ascension of Christ. At that time the first New Testament church was immersed in the Holy Spirit and they received the special gift of tongues. Many unbelievers were present to see the miraculous event, Acts 2.

The apostles and prophets did not write down their teachings but the teachings of Jesus who is the final authority. Because of this fact the apostles and prophets wrote about Jesus and His teachings which is the foundation of every New Testament church. To say Jesus is the foundation and the apostles' and prophets' writings are the foundation are two ways of saying the same thing. Jesus is the source of all His teachings and the apostles and prophets are the penmen for all His teachings. The apostles and prophets are not addressed by their names but by their offices which had a miraculous purpose to give the teachings of Jesus by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Jesus through the apostles and prophets are the foundation or final authority, 1Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20.

#### **1Corinthians 3:11**

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Paul, one of the apostles, wrote to the church in Corinth that there can be no other foundation for a New Testament church than Jesus Christ.

#### **Ephesians 2:20**

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

Paul, one of the apostles, wrote to the church at Ephesus that they were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets who is "Jesus Christ himself." "Foundation" is singular and refers to Jesus who is singular. Paul wrote 1Corinthians and Ephesians and used the same word for foundation. Paul made it clear that Jesus was the only foundation that he and the other apostles and prophets laid. The purpose of the special gift of the Holy Spirit which they received was that they might speak and write the New Testament and this would be the foundation. The apostles and prophets spoke and wrote about Jesus in the New Testament. He was their main subject. What the apostles and prophets taught was what Jesus Christ taught and Paul spoke and wrote about. Jesus was also the chief corner stone which would unite them in all that they would do in each one of His churches. The same foundation will have a uniting effect.

The New Testament is the Tradition of God. Jesus who is God gave His teachings to the apostles and prophets. This is the Tradition of God. The Greek word translated tradition or ordinance in the New Testament means to hand over or hand down. Jesus handed down His teachings through the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets. The apostles and prophets spoke these traditions in the New Testament period and wrote them inspired by the Holy Spirit. The writings of the apostles and prophets in the first century AD are called the New Testament. The traditions of men are condemned in the Bible. But the traditions of God are approved by the Bible. Notice these Scriptures: Colossians 2:8; Matthew 15:2-6; 28:18-20; 2Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; 1Corinthians 11:2; Mark 7:3-13; Galatians 1:14. The Greek word usually translated "tradition" is translated "ordinances" in 1Corinthians 11:2.

The Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, is also called The Canon. The word canon comes from the Greek and refers to a measuring rod or stick which is the authority for a certain measurement. It is like our yard stick which is the authority for the measurement of a yard or three feet. It is the final authority for a measurement. The Bible is the final authority or ruler concerning the things it reveals. It reveals the truth about God, sin, salvation, the second coming, etc. The Canon was produced by God; it is His Word; it was completed about 96 AD. This word has been used by believers for the books of the Bible in Christian history. The word is used 5 times in the New Testament and is translated "rule" or "line". It refers to something that is an authority but it does not appear to refer to the books of the Bible specifically.

Notice the history of the production of the New Testament. Jesus, the Son of God, taught and did great miracles to prove He was the Messiah or Christ for three and one half years. At the end of this period He died to pay for our sins and arose from the grave and after a short time ascended back to heaven. The apostles and prophets were trained and enabled to continue to teach all of the truth He wanted taught from about 30 AD to about 100 AD when the last apostle and prophet died. During that time they wrote the New Testament so that after they were dead the same message Jesus taught and the apostles and prophets taught would continue to be taught until the second coming of Christ.

After Jesus ascended to heaven the church Jesus began was in Jerusalem and that church knew that the apostles and prophets had been enabled by Jesus to know and teach all He taught. As the apostles and prophets started new churches in the first century the believers and churches knew of the special gifts of the Spirit and the role the apostles and prophets had and they recognized their teachings about Christ and their writings about Him as the foundation for their churches and their lives as individuals. The books they wrote were received when written as God's Word and their final authority. Copies were made and distributed among the churches in a short time. By the early second century the writings of believers showed that they had the books of the New Testament in many places and they were quoting them as their authority. This has continued since then to our day.

Christians of all denominations today accept the same books of the Old Testament and New Testament as the inspired Word of God. The Roman Catholic Church officially accepted some books of the Apocrypha in addition to the other books of the Bible as God's Word in the sixteenth century. There is agreement that the 66 books of the Bible should be in the Bible. The disagreement is over when these books were received as the Bible and how. We believe the books of the New Testament were received as God's Word when written in the first century by believers. The books of the New Testament have continued to be received by believers in every century since then. Believers have received them because of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The "church councils" and the "church fathers" after the first century are not the final authority or part of the final authority. Because they have said some true things does not make them an authority. Truths they spoke about the Canon, the deity of Christ, the trinity, etc. were already written in the Bible before they were ever born. The council at Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 15 is not a precedent for church councils to be the final authority for New Testament churches or believers. The council at Jerusalem was composed mainly of apostles and prophets and they made the decisions there, 6, 22. Paul and Peter who were apostles and prophets were mentioned by name, 7, 12. James and Barnabas were prophets and they are mentioned by name, 12-13; 13:1; James 1:1. The two men sent from the church in Jerusalem to carry the decision

were prophets, 22, 27, 32. Soon after 100AD all of the apostles and prophets who were the foundation of every New Testament church were dead but their teachings about Christ which is the New Testament has continued and we don't need men in those offices any longer. They did their work well and finished all of it. The "church fathers" were not apostles and prophets and the "church councils" after Acts 15 did not have any apostles and prophets in them. The New Testament claims that the teachings which were put in writing in the New Testament by the apostles and prophets are our foundation not "church fathers" or "church councils."

**The Believers** - God produced the Bible by using men inspired by the Holy Spirit so that they wrote the thoughts of God in the words He wanted, 2Timothy 3:16; 2Peter 1:20-21. The men God used to write the Bible, the prophets and the apostles, were proved to be His apostles and prophets by miraculous signs which always came to pass 100% of the time. The believers who saw and heard these writers of the Bible understood and received it as God's Word because of the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and because of the miracles the prophets did. They received it by faith and sought to follow it. They accepted it as their final authority and foundation, Matthew 7:24-25

The believers who came after the apostles and prophets continued to believe it was God's Word on the testimony of the Bible and the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The many fulfilled prophecies of the Bible with no failures confirmed their faith that the Bible is the Word of God and the final authority, 2Timothy 3:16; 2Peter 1:20-21.

Jesus during His ministry gave His teachings and believers accepted them. The apostles and prophets after the resurrection of Christ gave out the teachings of Christ and believers accepted them. After the apostles and prophets died the writings of the apostles and prophets, the New Testament, was given out and believers accepted them. We are to continue giving out the New Testament along with the Old Testament until the second coming and some will believe and receive the Bible as their final authority.

Believers in the days of Jesus and the apostles and prophets and since then have understood and believed the Bible because of the work of the Holy Spirit. No other power or person is needed, 1Corinthians 2:14-16. They do not need the "saints" nor the "church councils."

**1Corinthians 2:14-16**

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

The word "judgeth" and "judged" in verse 15 are the same word as "discerned" in verse 14

and they mean "discerneth" and "discerned." The believer is born again by the Holy Spirit and has a new nature and the Spirit can enable him to discern or understand or perceive spiritual things. When he is born again he is a baby in Christ and needs to grow but as he grows he will discern or understand better step by step.

The Holy Spirit is in every believer and enables every believer to understand what the Bible teaches about salvation and how to receive Jesus as his Saviour by faith. The Spirit also enables him to understand and follow and serve Jesus. Every believer should and can witness

and teach others about the Bible as they learn it, Romans 8:9-10.

There is no special office of human beings which decides the correct interpretation of the Bible. The Holy Spirit is the interpreter, 1Corinthians 2:14-15; Galatians 6:1; Colossians 1:9-12. Believers still have personal responsibility to look up the meaning of words, pay attention to the grammar and the context. They should repent of sin in their life for sin will hinder understanding. Their attitude should be one of humility, study, wanting to know and faith in Christ, 1Corinthians 8:1-3; 1Peter 2:1-3; 5:5-6; 2Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 11:3. With this attitude any believer can grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord, 1Peter 2:1-3; 2Peter 3:18. The teachings of Jesus Christ are the truth, the apostles and prophets wrote the truth and believers receive the truth. The truth of Christ is the foundation for every believer and every New Testament church.

## II. Their Building

The building Jesus used to picture a New Testament church was a building of stones. The stones were assembled together and organized to be a building. The stones represented believers who followed the Lord in baptism and were organized into a New Testament church. Notice this in more detail.

**Meaning** - Jesus built the first New Testament Church which was to be the pattern for all the churches which would follow, Acts 1:15, 21-22; Matthew 16:18. The word "church" in our English New Testament in Matthew 16:18 is a translation of the Greek word "ekklesia" which means assembly or congregation. This was its meaning prior to New Testament times and during New Testament times. The Greek lexicons for these times confirm this. This was its only meaning during those times as far as the records show. Its etymology probably means "called out" but this is not its meaning. This word is translated "assembly" in Acts 19:32, 39, 41.

The English word "church" comes from a Greek word meaning "the Lord's," 1Corinthians 11:20; Revelation 1:10. An assembly which claimed to follow the Lord Jesus Christ was called a "church" or "the Lord's" in seventeenth century England. It belonged to Him. But "ekklesia" does not mean "the Lord's" and should not be translated that way. The word "church" in 1611 in England could mean assembly but it also had a number of other meanings and was not a good translation for "ekklesia" because of that. Some readers have been confused because of the etymology and the many meanings of "church." They have not understood the meaning of the word "ekklesia" and the teaching of the Bible concerning a New Testament church.

King James I who authorized the 1611 English translation of the Bible commanded the translators in one of his 15 rules to use "church" when referring to an assembly belonging to the Lord rather than congregation or assembly. Rule 3 says, "The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, viz., the word church not to be translated congregation, etc." [H. W. Robinson, The Bible In Its Ancient and English Versions, p. 199.] The translators obeyed and used "church" rather than "assembly" or "congregation." When the word was used of an ekklesia not belonging to the Lord they could use the meaning of the word and they did. They translated the word "ekklesia" in Acts 19:32, 39, 41 "assembly." This organization governed the city of Ephesus; it did not belong to the Lord..

The word "ekklesia" is used for three different kinds of assemblies in the New Testament. One kind was the assembly of Israel which assembled at the foot of Mt. Sinai in the days of Moses to enter into the Old Covenant with God, Exodus 19:16-19. The word "ekklesia" is used of this assembly in Acts 7:38. The second kind is the Greek political assembly at Ephesus which

is referred to in Acts 19:32, 39, 41. It is translated assembly in these three places. This assembly met from time to time to take care of the business of governing the city of Ephesus.

The third kind was the one that Jesus began. Ekklesia is used over one hundred times of this kind and is translated "church" in the KJV. The church Jesus began is referred to by other words also but the main word used was ekklesia. This kind of organization which Jesus began would assemble from time to time and so it was called ekklesia, assembly. Its membership was composed of people who professed to believe on Jesus as their Saviour and followed Him in baptism. They were governed by Him and their purpose was to make His truth known. We will go into more detail in the following pages concerning these matters. Jesus began only one kind of church. Ekklesia is used of three kinds of churches in the New Testament but Jesus began only one of those three. The three kinds were alike in each being an assembly but they were different in membership, government, purpose, etc.

Ekklesia always means assembly in the New Testament and it is used in a particular way most of the times but a few times it is used in a generic way. By particular is meant it refers to a particular assembly or assemblies. Sometimes it refers to the assembly which met in Jerusalem or Antioch or Corinth or the assemblies of Galatia, etc. By generic is meant it refers to all of that kind. For example notice the following. Ephesians 5:23b says "Christ is the head of the church" and this means He is the head of all of that kind of thing. He is the head of His churches. The same truth is taught in a particular way in Revelation 2; 3. The New Testament also teaches in a generic way that Jesus loved every New Testament church and died for them because only those who profess to believe on Christ can be members, Ephesians 5:25-27. He taught the same truth in a particular way in Acts 20:17, 28. It also teaches in a generic way that God receives glory by every New Testament church, Ephesians 3:21. It also teaches in a generic way that every New Testament church is a body of Christ or Christ's body, Colossians 1:18, 24. These are examples of how the generic way is used in the New Testament concerning this subject.

A common noun can be used in the singular with a definite article or without one to refer to all of a kind. When used that way it is equivalent to the noun being in the plural without the definite article or with it. An example is "the workman is worthy of his meat," Matthew 10:10. This means "workmen are worthy of their meat." This is a common usage in the Greek and English. Notice the following Greek Grammars for an explanation of the generic way a common noun may be used. Greek Grammar, W.W. Goodwin and C.B. Gulick, p. 207 and A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, A.T. Robertson, p. 757.

Some have overlooked this fact or ignored it and as a result have Jesus beginning two kinds of churches. One church is the kind of church that has been mentioned of which there are many. They are found in many different localities and they are visible. Another kind is a church in which all believers are members but it never assembles in this world. There is only one of this kind and it is invisible and universal or visible and universal. All believers will assemble in heaven some day but that truth is not revealed in the New Testament using the word "ekklesia." We should always notice how ekklesia is used so we will learn more about what the Bible teaches.

If we take the word ekklesia to mean assembly everytime it is mentioned in the New Testament because that meaning makes sense everytime then Jesus only began one kind of ekklesia. This is a basic principle that is followed in all languages. A person must use the common meaning of a word everytime as long as it makes sense in the context. A person cannot correctly give a word a new meaning just because it makes sense in a certain place. For

example, if I say, "the airplane can fly high," this does not mean "airplane" has a new meaning of eagle because it can also fly high. The common meaning of a word should be accepted as long as it makes sense. If the common meaning of a word won't make sense in a certain passage then the context must be examined to learn what is meant. Since the common meaning of assembly for ekklesia makes sense everytime then it must be considered the meaning everytime.

Many scholars refer to this principle. John A. Broadus is an example. See his Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I of An American Commentary on the New Testament, pp. 187-188. The kind of church Jesus began on earth during His ministry was an organization which assembled from time to time in some locality and could be seen. This is the only kind He began.

There are other words that are used to describe an assembly of angels now in heaven, Hebrews 12:22b-23a, and an assembly of believers in heaven now who worship God and will be in the future, Revelation 4:1, 10-11. But ekklesia is never used to describe these assemblies. The assembly of angels are called a general assembly, a different word.

The ekklesia in Hebrews 12:23b is on earth but its "firstborn" or saved members' names are written or enrolled in heaven. This is true of all New Testament churches on earth. Every New Testament church was composed of people who professed to be saved. The saved are called "firstborn" because of their spiritual birth. Their names are written in heaven while they are still on earth serving a the Lord in a New Testament church.

Ekklesia is the word usually used to refer to the organization begun by Jesus during His ministry at His first coming. When it is used of the church Jesus began it is used of only the one kind He began. This kind of church is to work on earth until the second coming carrying out the great commission. We should not take Scriptures speaking about these churches and interpret them to refer to another kind of church.

In the New Testament the church that Jesus began is likened to a building, a body, a flock; a wife and a lampstand, 1Corinthians 3:16; 1Timothy 3:15; Colossians 1:24; Acts 20:17, 28; Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 1:20; etc. These pictures or symbols of a New Testament church fit the basic meaning of ekklesia which means assembly. An ekklesia assembly in New Testament days had the characteristics of being organized, being local and being visible. Notice each of these pictures of a New Testament church.

A building or house where a person lives, works or worships is in some locality and can be seen. It is also organized. The materials that make up any building must be organized together in a certain way to be a building. A pile of stones or lumber is not a building. The pile must be organized together in a certain way to be called a building. A physical body is in a certain place; it is not universal. It may move around from place to place but it is always in some locality and can be seen. It is also an organization of different members which work together to achieve its purpose. A flock of sheep is an assembly that is in some locality and can be seen. It is organized so that the shepherd can lead it, protect it and feed it. A wife is a female body which is local, visible and organized. A lampstand which is translated candlestick in the New Testament is in some locality and can be seen. It is also organized in such a way or shape to best achieve its purpose. None of these five things are universal, invisible or disorganized.

A New Testament church was local, visible and organized. All of those churches whether viewed in a particular way or a generic way have these characteristics. As some churches began to change the teachings concerning the church in the second and following centuries the idea of a universal church came into being. All of the churches of a nation were part of the church of that nation. A person or a group of persons ruled this church. This church

was considered universal but visible. Later the idea of a universal invisible church developed. But in the first century the church Jesus began was local and visible and organized. Some have tried to find a universal visible church or a universal invisible church in the New Testament but to no avail. They ignored the generic way the word ekklesia was used in some passages of the New Testament and thought they found such a church. But they didn't. They just misinterpreted some passages.

In 1Corinthians 12:12-13 the physical body is likened to Christ's spiritual body, a New Testament church.

### **1Corinthians 12:12-13**

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Verse 12 begins by pointing out that the human physical body is one organization but with many members. This is true of every physical body; it is one thing and yet made up of many members such as hands, feet, eyes, ears, etc. These many members are organized together as one body. There is unity with diversity. Every human being has such a body.

This is likened to Christ at the end of the verse. Christ has a physical body but He also has a spiritual body, a New Testament church. The context here indicates that Paul is speaking about Christ's spiritual body. A New Testament church is called "His body" and a "body of Christ" in Ephesians 1:22-23 and 1Corinthians 12:27. In 1Corinthians 12:27 the definite article "the" is not in the Greek. Instead of "the" there should be "a" for the Corinthian church is said to be "a body of Christ." The body illustration is very appropriate. During Jesus' ministry He worked in His physical body to make disciples, baptize them and teach them to follow His teachings. He began an organization which is called a church which is likened to His physical body for it was to do the same work He did during His ministry. Each New Testament church is like Christ's body.

In verse 13 "we" refers to Paul, his missionary companions and the members of the Corinthian church. The one Holy Spirit led each one to follow the teaching of Christ that a believer should follow Christ in baptism. All of the "we" were baptized into one body or New Testament church, Acts 2:41. They, the "we," were not necessarily baptized into the same body or church but they were baptized into one body. Each New Testament church is "one body" having many members. The Corinthians were baptized into the Corinthian church, Paul was baptized into another church and the others were baptized into other churches. Each of the "we" were baptized into a church which was local, visible and organized. For that is the only kind taught in the New Testament. The "we" were all made to drink of the one Holy Spirit and receive gifts from Him to serve the Lord.

All of us know that we have one physical body with many members and that body is local, visible and organized. We all know that the first church which was located at Jerusalem at the time of the book of Acts was local, visible and organized. This was true of all of the churches in the first century. Knowing these facts the illustration of the physical body to being like a New Testament church makes good sense. Similar teaching is found in Romans 12:4-5.

### **Romans 12:4-5**

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all

members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Verse 4 is speaking about the human physical body. The "we" is Paul, his missionary companions and the members of the church at Rome. Each person included in the "we" had many members in one physical body. They did not have the same physical body but they each had a body composed of eyes, ears, feet, etc. all organized into one body. The members of their one body did not have the same function or office. The eyes functioned differently than the ears, etc. In verse 5 the spiritual body or church is like the physical body in some ways. Each of the "we" were like members of a physical body such as hands, eyes, etc. Each one had gifts and were part of a New Testament church with their gifts serving the Lord. Each was a part of one body but not necessarily the same body. They were members with others each serving one another. The physical body of verse 4 and the spiritual body of verse 5 were each a visible, a local and an organized body. The spiritual body was in Christ; the members professed to believe in Christ.

The illustration of the physical body being like a New Testament church was given to illustrate that a New Testament church is one and yet many members. The body illustration was not given to illustrate that a New Testament church was universal and invisible for it isn't. The body illustration couldn't do that for it is local and visible. The context tells us exactly what is being illustrated. We should always pay attention to the context. The illustrations of a building, flock, wife and lampstand are local and visible and are not used to teach that a New Testament church is universal and invisible. They couldn't because they are local and visible.

The idea of a universal invisible church or a universal visible church did not come from the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament because they do not teach any such thing. These ideas came later and some have sought to justify these ideas by trying to find them in the New Testament but to no avail.

Some have sought to justify the idea of one universal church by the teaching in Ephesians 5:23a. Notice what it says.

#### **Ephesians 5:23a**

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church . . .

The husband's relationship to the wife is like Christ's relationship to the church. The husband is not the head in the wife but over the wife. The wife has a physical head of her own like her husband. But the wife has a head over her in the institution of marriage. That head over her is her husband. This illustrates Christ's relationship to the church. He is not the head in the church but the head over it. This is clearly brought out in 1 Corinthians 12:16-17. The eye and the ear are in the head and like different members in the Corinthian church. This is not illustrating Christ. Christ is not the head in that church but He is the head over it. In Revelation 2-3 Christ is the head over the seven churches not the head in each church. He tells each church what they should do. The lampstands are in a circle around Him and He instructs them. He is the head over them in this illustration; He is not the head in each one. In verse 23a husband, head, wife and church are common nouns and all are used generically. This means, "husbands are heads of wives, even as Christ is the head of the churches." This is an accurate statement of the meaning even though it sounds awkward. For the generic way is the usual way used to communicate in such cases. Because Christ is the head of each New Testament church they submit to Him and His teachings. This illustrates what the relationship should be between a

husband and wife in a literal marriage, Ephesians 5:22-24.

Christ's love for each of His churches illustrates the kind of love that each husband should have for his wife. This was the greatest love. Jesus loves each of His churches so much that He died for them to save them from their sins and in time to make them perfect in every way at the second coming. At the second coming before the rapture each person who is saved will receive his new body and his salvation will be complete and then he will be raptured to Christ and taken to heaven. All members of New Testament churches profess to be saved. We take them at their word but Jesus will look in the heart and know if they are really saved. Paul spoke by inspiration to the elders of the Ephesian church and said Jesus purchased their church with His own blood, Acts 20:17, 28. The same truth is stated concerning every New Testament church in Ephesians 5:25-27.

Each husband should love his wife as he loves his own physical body. For they are one flesh in marriage. Christ's love for each member of His churches illustrates the love a husband should have for his wife. All saved members of every New Testament church, "we," are in Christ as our substitute and He loves those in Him, His physical body. Notice verse 30. He is speaking of His physical body of flesh and bones. He loves His physical body which died on the cross and arose from the grave. The truth of substitution is a mystery but true, Ephesians 5:28-33.

In summary the Greek word ekklesia which is usually translated "church" in the New Testament meant "assembly" in the first century A.D. It was usually used in a particular way in which it always meant "assembly." It was used in a generic way about twenty times in which it always made good sense translated assembly. The word "ekklesia" always made good sense translated "assembly" in the New Testament. The characteristics of "assembly" was something which was local, visible and organized.

"Ekklesia" was never used of something which was universal. The words used as metaphors to illustrate some truth about an "ekklesia" always were local, visible and organized not the opposite.

**Membership** - "My church" in Matthew 16:18 indicates the kind of assembly that Jesus began. Jesus began an assembly which was composed of people who professed faith in Him as their Saviour and professed outwardly their faith by submitting to the kind of baptism He taught. They were disciples or learners about Christ. A disciple's learning about Christ begins when he learns he is a sinner and he wants to be rid of sin and right with God and believes on Jesus as His Saviour from sin. The membership requirement of this church was faith in Jesus as Saviour and Scriptural baptism, John 4:1; Acts 1:15, 21-22; 2:41, 47. This assembly which was started by Jesus met many different places during its early history until Jesus went to the cross and then Jerusalem became its home.

Peter was led by the Spirit to write some baptized believers in Asia Minor who were organized into churches or flocks of the Lord, 1Peter 1:1, 8-9; 3:21; 5:1-4. These assemblies of spiritual sheep are also like spiritual houses or temples composed of believers who are holy spiritual priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices, 1Peter 2:5. Each member of one of these churches was also like a living stone; he was born again and had eternal life. All of them were like Peter, small stones, built together upon Christ the rock who is also the chief corner stone in their spiritual house or church, 1Peter 1:3, 23; 2:5-8.

Paul began the church at Philippi by urging lost sinners to believe on Christ as their Saviour and then baptizing them. He organized these baptized believers into the church at Philippi, Acts 16:12-15, 25-34, 40; Philippians 4:15.

The apostles and prophets were the first missionaries after Jesus' arose from the grave. Jesus the head of the church He began sent the apostles into all the world to carry out the great commission. Their special gift of the Holy Spirit made them like walking New Testaments before it was written to the new churches they began. After they were dead their writings, the New Testament, along with all the Bible was taken by the missionaries because they didn't have the special gift of the Holy Spirit the apostles and prophets had. But they had the same message because they had the New Testament which is about Jesus written by the apostles and prophets. Since the Bible is our final authority we should continue to start the same kind of churches they began. The Bible is sufficient to do the work Jesus gave His kind of church.

Paul the apostle was sent out by the church at Antioch under the leading of the Spirit to start new churches, Acts 13:1-3. The kind of churches he and his missionary companions began are revealed by reading Acts and the Epistles. The membership of these churches were believers in Christ as their Saviour who were baptised. They were churches like the first one Jesus started. Peter, Paul and all of the apostles and prophets began the same kind of churches. We should read the New Testament and follow it; it is God's Word.

**Government** - Jesus was the head of the church He began while on earth. Each new church should still have Jesus as their head if it is to be like the one He began. What He taught should determine what each church does. Jesus is our foundation.

When Jesus was on earth the first church only had to listen to what He said to know what to do. If He hadn't said anything about something then they could ask. After Jesus, the head, ascended to heaven the members of the first church followed the same principles. The members recognized Jesus as their head. The members had a role in governing it. In the first business meeting after His ascension to heaven each member remembered what He said and ask Him in prayer as to what they should do. Then each member voted Acts 1:15-26. That should be the members roll in governing their New Testament church. Jesus is God and the Bible is God's Word. We should listen to the Bible and ask in prayer to understand it and ask for guidance in knowing His will and then vote. The first church was a kind of democracy. Each member voted.

The first church made its own decisions. Only the members of that church decided what that church should do. They didn't wait until they got an approval from some outside source to finalize their decision. The church at Jerusalem was self-governing, autonomous. That is made clear in the business meeting in Acts 1. They had leaders, the apostles, but they didn't make the final decision. They could lead in telling what they needed to do but the church, all of its members made the decision.

Several principles about the government of a New Testament church is taught in Acts 1. One, Christ is the head of each church. Two, each member has a vote. Three, each church is self-governing. Four, each church has officers to lead in the work of the church.

All of the churches in the New Testament followed these principles and this is the type of government that would continue to be in New Testament churches until our day. Notice more details concerning these principles.

One, Christ is the head of each church. Acts 1:16, 20, 24; Ephesians 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:12-20. This truth is pictured in Revelation 1. Christ is in the midst of seven churches pictured by the seven candelsticks and Christ is telling them what to do and not do.

Two, each member has a vote. Acts 1:15, 23, 26; 6:2-6; 14:23; 1Corinthians 5:1-13; 16:3; 2Corinthians 8:18-19, 23. The word "ordained" in Acts 14:23 means "to choose by raising the hand." The same Greek word appears in 2Corinthians 8:19 where it is translated "chosen."

Three, each church is self-governing. Acts 1:15-26; Matthew 18:17-18; 1Corinthians 5;

Revelation 2-3.

Four, each church has officers. When Jesus was on earth there was only one church and Jesus was its leader. After Jesus returned to heaven the apostles led at first because of the special gift given to them through the Holy Spirit. But as they continued their missionary work going into the uttermost parts of the earth pastors were chosen by the churches as taught by the apostles. The pastors were called elders, bishops or overseers, pastors or shepherds. Each name was used of the pastors because they indicated what a pastor should be. There were no grades of pastors just different responsibilities. Deacons also were chosen to serve the church in some matters. Acts 20:17-38; 1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-6; 1Timothy 3:8-13.

### III. Their Purpose

A building is made for a purpose. One is made for a home, another for a business, another for a school, etc. A New Testament church was built by Jesus Christ for a purpose. The purpose of the church Jesus built was to teach the truth of Jesus Christ, that is, the Bible.

The truth tells us what will be and what won't be. An example is seen in Matthew 7:13-14. The two ways are mentioned, the broad way and the narrow way. The narrow way, Christ, leads to heaven. But the broad way which is taught by the world does not lead to heaven but to destruction. The only way to be saved is by faith in Christ; any other way will not bring salvation, John 3:18, 36; 14:6. This is what the Bible teaches. It is the truth about what will be and what won't be. It tells us the good news and the bad news. Satan doesn't want the truth out.

The truths or truth of the Bible are like keys or a key, Matthew 16:19; Luke 11:52. Keys lock and unlock or bind and loose. It tells us what doesn't please God and what does please Him. Jesus asked His disciples whom did they think He was and Peter spoke up for all of them and said that Jesus was the Christ. Jesus replied that He would build His church on Himself. Then Jesus said that He would give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter. Since Peter was speaking for all the disciples, all the disciples in His church would receive the keys to use for Him, Matthew 16:13-16, 19-20; 18:17-18; John 20:22-23.

Jesus built His church on His teachings; that was its foundation. The church would profess to believe His teachings, His truths. And, His church was to teach the same truths to others that they might believe His teachings. This is the purpose of a New Testament church. Whatever they taught of Christ's teachings about what is true and not true is what God the Father, Son and Spirit had already determined in heaven. The Greek in this place indicates that what they taught on earth with the keys already was the truth in heaven. "Shall be bound in heaven" can be translated "shall have been bound in heaven" and "shall be loosed in heaven" can be translated "shall have been loosed in heaven." When they used the keys they were proclaiming God's truth, Matthew 16:13-19; 18:17-18; John 20:21-23. Notice the following verse.

#### **Matthew 16:19**

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

A New Testament church which teaches that a person will not be saved by trusting his own good works is teaching what God says in His Word. That church is locking that door with the key from Jesus. That is true on earth when taught and has already been declared to be true in heaven because God said so. The tense of the Greek word indicates that. If a church teaches that

a person who believes on Christ alone for salvation has his sins forgiven and will go to heaven, that is true on earth and it has already been declared as true in heaven. The Greek tense indicates that. That truth is the key which unlocks heaven for the believer. What the Bible teaches on all subjects as to what is true and what is false is what a church should teach. It was given the keys, God's Word, declaring what is true and false.

Notice the purpose of a New Testament church in the following verse.

**1Timothy 3:15**

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Paul was taking time to explain how the members of a New Testament church should behave or conduct themselves in their church. The church was built on the truth of Christ and they needed to follow it. The church was not only built on the truth of Christ they were to hold up that truth to the world that people in the world might believe it and be built on the truth. This was the purpose of a church. The church was like a pillar and ground or foundation for the purpose of holding up the truth to the world that people might see it and believe..

When Jesus was on earth He began the first church and was constantly building it up. Before He went to the cross He went throughout the land of Israel from the north to the south and from the east to the west for three and a half years. He was making disciples, baptizing them and then teaching them to observe all of His teachings, John 4:1-2; Mark 9:28-29, 31; etc. After His resurrection Jesus sent His church into all the world to make disciples, baptize them and to teach them to observe all things He taught, Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8. The command in Matthew 28:18-20 is called the Great Commission. Notice the following.

**Matthew 28:18-20**

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth, 18. This shows the great importance of what follows. The word power here means authority. Some of that authority was given to the people mentioned, His church, in the following verses to teach God's word that people might believe it and practice it. When the great commission was given only the leaders of the first church were present, the apostles. The commission was given to them as leaders and apostles of the first church. Soon after this time in the book of Acts we see them leading the first church in carrying out this commission.

The goals of teaching the truth about Jesus Christ and all that He taught was that the hearers might respond to it so that they believe on Jesus as their Saviour to be saved from sin, be baptized as a public confession of their salvation and follow Him in all aspects of their life. This is the kind of observance that the Jesus wants and the witnesses desire from witnessing about Jesus, Matthew 28:18-20. The believers who were teaching the truth to accomplish these goals had already believed on Jesus, been baptized and were following Jesus. These believers had been organized together to work together to carry out Matthew 28:18-20. This organization is

called the New Testament church. He was particularly speaking to the apostles and prophets, the leaders of this church and the writers of the foundation of every New Testament church. The first of these churches which was founded by Jesus was to be a pattern for all future churches. They had already received and were practicing what Jesus taught them to teach others. This church practiced what they preached. All New Testament churches should do the same. Let us notice these three goals in more detail.

**The Truth of Salvation** - In Matthew 28:19 to "teach all nations" means to make learners or disciples of all nations. Learning about Christ begins when one understands that he needs Him to save him from his sins and he believes on Christ as his Saviour from sin. To believe on Jesus for salvation is to trust Him, to depend on Him, etc. This is a response of the heart in the soul not the body. This believing is the beginning of new life by being born again. It is also a change of mind or repentance from what he had thought about his sin and Jesus as the Saviour to what Jesus teaches. It is also a calling on Jesus to save. You can not call on Christ to save unless you believe He can and will, Romans 10:11-15. As soon as a sinner believes he calls on Christ in his heart to save him and also perhaps outwardly with his voice. This brings forgiveness of all sins, Christ's righteousness is charged to him, a new nature that desires to live for Jesus, sonship in God's family, everlasting life, a home in heaven at the death of the body, a sure hope of a new perfect body at the second coming of Jesus and a part in a new perfect earth.

Notice the following Scripture: Acts 10:43 teaches that all of the prophets teach that a believer's sins are taken away when he believes on Jesus. All of prophets refer to the prophets of God who spoke and wrote the Old Testament and who spoke and would write the New Testament.

#### **Acts 10:43**

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

In Genesis 1-11 the history from Creation to Abraham is covered briefly. Many people are referred to but not a lot is said about any of them. In Genesis 11:26 Abram is referred to the first time. His name was later changed to Abraham, Genesis 17:5. Because he was very important in history much was written about him from Genesis 11:26 to 25:10. He is referred to often throughout the rest of the Bible. He is so important because he was to be the father of Israel and of all believers, Romans 4:1, 11-18. Even though people were saved by faith from the days of Adam to the days of Abram as the Bible makes clear, the first one that much is said about is Abraham. Because of this he is called the father of the believers. Abraham's salvation is briefly stated in Genesis 15:6. He believed in Christ, who was to come someday to die for the believer's sins and arise from the dead, that he might be saved and be righteous in God's sight.

Abraham's salvation is used in the New Testament as an example for all of the salvation received from Christ when a person believes in Christ to save him. Abraham believed before he was circumcised and the Bible says he was righteous before God when he believed, Genesis 15:6; 17:26. Baptism was not given until 2000 years later. Abraham believed in the Christ to come to be righteous and God counted that faith in Christ to Abraham for righteousness. What would Christ do to cause God to count Abraham to be righteous. Christ would live a perfectly righteous life as a substitute for Abraham and would take all of Abraham's sins and as his substitute pay the penalty for those sins by His sufferings and death on the cross. If the believer has a perfectly righteous life which would be lived for him and all his sins would be paid for in full then the believer is righteous in God's sight, Romans 4; Galatians 3:6-29. Because of

Abraham's faith in Christ to save and make him to be righteous before God, the Bible says that God justified him, that is, to count him or declare him to be righteous before God.

After Abraham believed on Christ to be saved, he began to do the kind of works that salvation was designed to produce and He was justified in the eyes of man. Because the believer does the kind of works that God wants produced then the believer is justified or proved to be saved by his works in the eyes of man by his good works. God justified him when He saw the faith in his heart. Man justified him as a saved man when he saw the works of the believer. See Romans 4, Galatians 3:6; James 2:17-26; Ephesians 2:10.

David teaches that he who trusteth in the Lord is forgiven of his sins, Psalm 32. Notice particularly verses 5 and 10. Habakkuk 2:4 says that the just will live by faith. New life begins with faith in the Lord and will continue forever. From the beginning of the Old Testament to its end salvation is by faith in Christ.

The animal sacrifices were given by God after Adam and Eve sinned and continued to be offered until the first coming of Christ when He fulfilled them. These sacrifices taught how the sinner is saved by faith in Christ. The animal sacrifice represented Christ who would come. It was to be without spot or blemish to teach that Christ would be perfect. The sinner was to lay his sins on the sacrifice and lean on it picturing that he was depending on or believing on Jesus Christ to take away his sins. The sacrifice was killed and the blood shed to show that Jesus would have to suffer and shed His blood to save those who believe on Him.

Matthew 3:2 teaches that John the Baptist taught the people to repent. Repent means "to change your mind." This is a change on the inside. John preached that all were sinners and needed the Saviour who would soon come. The people who heard him needed to change their mind and accept the truth that they were sinners and needed to believe on Jesus as their Saviour. See Matthew 3:1-12; John 1:29-34; Acts 2:1-6; 11:15-18; 19:3-5.

In Acts 19:3 "unto" is used twice and is better translated "because of." The question was, because of what or why were ye baptized? This is answered, because of John's baptism. John taught that they must repent or change their mind to faith in Christ first and then be baptized. That was the reason for their baptism. In verses 4-5 John's reason for baptizing people is explained. He preached for them to repent and believe and then the people would be baptized.

Jesus taught sinners that they needed to repent and believe on Him to be saved, Mark 1:14-15. Jesus taught that a person must be born again by the Holy Spirit to be saved. The dead sinner cannot believe on Jesus unless the Spirit brings new life to him and then he will believe on Jesus and be saved. John 3:5 speaks of the Holy Spirit. Water is used to symbolize the Holy Spirit at times as it does here, see also John 7:37-39. The word translated "and" can mean "and", "also" or "even." Here it means "even." A person must be born of "water even of the Spirit" to have new life and believe on Jesus.

Later in John 3 it makes it clear that believing in Christ is the result which follows the work of the Spirit, John 3:14-18,36. Notice two of these verses.

**John 3:16, 36**

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. . . .36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Faith in Christ cannot come out of the sinful nature of man which is spiritually dead; it

can only come from new life produced by the Spirit, Ephesians 2:1-10; Galatians 5:19-23. Water is not baptism. Water is a substance; baptism is an action meaning immersion. Faith comes by giving out the Word of God, that is, preaching, teaching, witnessing, Romans 10:17. The Spirit uses the Word and gives new life and the person believes on Jesus. The moment the person receives new life the person believes.

Acts 2:38 teaches lost sinners to repent, that is, change their mind to believing in Jesus that they might have their sins taken away. Peter had preached that they were sinners and they asked what shall we do in verse 37. John the Baptist and Jesus preached the same thing as we have noticed earlier. After they repent they should as new believers be baptized. Why should they be baptized? The answer is given "for the remission of sins." "For" can have several possible meanings depending on the context. Two of those meanings are "in order to" and "because of." Examples of this: Bill went to school for an education, that is, in order to receive an education. John went to prison for stealing, that is, because of his stealing. The Greek preposition translated "for" in Acts 2:38 is "eis" which can have several possible meanings depending on the context. Two of those meanings are the same as I have pointed out for the English word "for." In Acts 2:38 the one who repents and believes has remission of sins the moment he believes as Acts 10:43 points out. Because he has remission of sins he should be baptized to picture how Jesus took away his sins.

In the next chapter in Acts 3:19 repentance is said to cause the blotting out of sins showing that our explanation is the correct interpretation for Acts 2:38. The blotting out of sin comes after believing not after being baptized. For the possible meanings of "eis" see A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament by Dana and Mantey, pp. 103-105, The Macmillan Company, 1957. Notice two examples which illustrate my point about the preposition "eis." In Matthew 12:41 we are told that the men of Nineveh repented "at the preaching of Jonas." "At" translates "eis" in the KJV. The men of Nineveh repented because of the preaching of Jonah not in order to get him to preach to them, Jonah 3:1-5. Luke 11:32 is another example where "eis" is translated "at" and is better translated "because of."

Acts 15:6-11 reminds us that the Gentiles are purified from their sins by faith in Christ just like the Jewish believers are, 9, 11. Faith in Christ and His blood shed to pay the penalty for our sins cleanses not faith and circumcision or faith and baptism. Baptism pictures the cleansing or purifying but faith in Christ receives the cleansing.

Acts 22:16 indicates to us that Paul was saved on the road to Damascus before Ananias met with him and told him to be baptized to wash away his sins. The words "calling on the name of the Lord" indicates that Paul had called upon Christ to save him before Ananias spoke these words. The verb "call upon" in the Greek in this place is in the aorist tense and indicates that he did the calling before he was told to be baptized. The Bible is very clear that a person cannot call upon the Lord to be saved

unless he believes in his heart first, Rom. 10:13-14. The verb call upon in this passage in the Greek is the same as the verb in Acts 22:16. When a person believes in Christ his sins are washed away as indicated in Acts 10:43. Baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ which takes away our sins. Paul believed when he called upon the name of the Lord and his sins were washed away by the blood of Christ. After that he was baptized to picture or give a likeness of what he already had as a testimony to others, Romans 6:3-5.

Mark 16:16 says that the person who believes and is baptized shall be saved. Believing takes place on the inside but being baptized takes place on the outside. Believing receives Jesus as Saviour; being baptized confesses and pictures to the world that he has received Jesus as

Saviour. Believing is necessary to be saved, being baptized is necessary to be faithful as a new Christian. The following is also a true statement: "Believe on Jesus, be baptized, study your Bible, pray and go to church on Sunday and you will be saved." But only the believing is necessary to be saved. The other things are important in the Christian's life to be faithful to God but they do not save but follow as a result of salvation. The jailor at Philippi asked what must I do to be saved? Must in the Greek means necessary and the question can be translated, "Sirs, what is necessary for me to do that I may be saved?" See Acts 16:30-31. And the answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The latter part of Mark 16:16 shows what is necessary and that is believing on Jesus as Saviour. The one who doesn't believe, regardless what else he does, will be unsaved and condemned to hell. See also: Ephesians 2:8-10; Galatians 2:20; Romans 3:28; 4:1-3; etc.

All of the prophets from Genesis written by Moses to Revelation written by John teach that our sins are forgiven by believing on Jesus Christ as Saviour. The examples presented make this clear. There is only one way to be saved, Genesis 15:6; John 3:36; 14:6, Acts 10:43; Romans 10:9-10.

**The Truth of Baptism** - This is to take place after a person has believed on Christ as his Saviour, Matthew 28:19. Baptism is an immersion in water. This is an action which happens to the body not the soul. It is only for believers. This is a public confession to picture what a person believes Jesus did to save him. Baptism is to come after a person believes on Jesus as his Saviour from sin. It pictures that Jesus died for the believer's sin, was buried and arose from the grave. It pictures that Jesus did this as the believer's substitute and the believer died, was buried and arose in Jesus as his substitute. Because of what Jesus did to save the believer the only reasonable result in the believer's life after salvation is to die daily to sin and arise to a new life that is righteous. Baptism is not necessary to salvation; it does not save us. It pictures what saves us. It is an act of obedience to Jesus' command because of love for Him. It is the work given to a New Testament church. This church is authorized by Jesus to do it. The members of this church have already observed this in their own life. They trusted Christ alone for salvation and became a disciple of Christ and then followed Him in the kind of baptism taught in the Bible. People who haven't already done this themselves were not authorized to carry out the great commission..

Notice these Scriptures: In Matt. 3:11, baptized "unto repentance" means because of repentance. The word "unto" is a translation of the Greek word "eis" which can mean "because of." John the Baptist baptized people because they had already repented. Peter told those who heard the word of salvation to repent and then be baptized, Acts 2:37-38; 10:43-48. Philip baptized people after they believed Acts 8:12, 35-38. Paul baptized people after they were saved, Acts 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8.

It never says that a baby was baptized. Only people who professed to believe on Christ were baptized. It mentions that sometimes all in a house were baptized but the context is clear that all in the house believed or the context is silent. To interpret silence to mean that unbelieving babies were baptized is contrary to what the known practice was of the believers of the first century AD. The context and the practice of the early believers is clear that they only baptized professed believers in Jesus Christ. When there is complete silence in the context we should not interpret it to mean that they contradicted what they believed and practiced. The Bible does not contradict itself, Isaiah 8:20; John 10:35; 2Timothy 2:15. Notice that all the house of Cornelius feared the Lord, gathered to hear the Word, the Holy Spirit came on them and all spake in tongues. There were no infants present, Acts 10:2, 33, 44-48. The context is silent

concerning Lydia's household, Acts 16:14-15. The house of the jailor at Philippi had no infants for all believed, Acts 16:32, 34. Crispus had no infants in his house for they all believed, Acts 18:8.

Baptism does not save or help save as taught in the section: Believe on Jesus. Baptism is a picture of salvation and a public confession of what the believer believes. In Romans 6:3-5 baptism is called a likeness. A likeness is not the real thing but is like the real thing in some ways. A picture is a likeness. Baptism is a likeness of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection; it is not the real thing. Jesus' death, burial and resurrection saves believers; baptism does not; but it pictures it and the believer's relationship to it.

Baptism is referred to as a like figure or a picture in 1Peter 3:21. Jesus died and arose from the dead to save us, 1Peter 3:18. Noah in the ark went through the water of the flood like Jesus went through death, 1Peter 3:20. The words "by water" mean through water. Water came down from above and water came from below while Noah was in the ark but he went through it and came out on dry land. Baptism also is a like figure of Christ going through death to save the believer and then He arises from the dead.

The word "baptize" is the Greek word put in English letters. It is not a translation but a transliteration of the Greek word. This word was treated like this in the King James Version of the Bible because of the instructions of King James in 1611 and followed by other translators in later English translations. The common meaning of the Greek word in the first century AD meant to immerse or dip. The Greek preposition "en" which commonly means "in" was used with the word water in the New Testament. But since they didn't translate the word "baptize," they translated the Greek preposition "en" with the English word "with." Matthew 3:11a should be translated, "I indeed immerse you in water because of repentance."

Baptism is said to picture a burial and resurrection; an immersion fits that context. Sprinkling or pouring does not, Romans 6:4-5. To baptize they went into the water and came out of the water and to immerse fits that context but sprinkling or pouring doesn't, Acts 8:35-39. John baptized in a certain place because there was much water there. Much water is needed for immersion but only a little water is needed for sprinkling or pouring, John 3:23. The Bible is clear that "baptize" means immerse.

The person is to be Scripturally baptized one time not two or three or more. All contexts where baptism is mentioned indicates only one immersion of the person. What baptism pictures only happened once. Jesus died, was buried and arose only once. The person is to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Name is singular and the name that applies to all three persons of the trinity is God, Matthew 28:19.

**The Truth of Following Jesus** - The new believer in Jesus who has been baptized should be taught to observe all things that Jesus taught, Matthew 28:20. This is to follow the Bible particularly the New Testament in all areas of his life. This should be done in love for Jesus according to what the New Testament teaches. This is living by faith. This should begin as soon as a believer is saved by faith in Jesus, John 14:15; 2Timothy 2:14-16; 2Peter 3:17-18. Even though the new believer's life is like a baby in spiritual growth and has little knowledge of the Bible, he can begin to follow Jesus in all areas of his life. As he grows in grace and knowledge of Jesus his following will be with more understanding and greater spiritual ability. These areas are divided into four which are worshipping God, living a Christ-like life, serving the Lord in a New Testament church and looking for the second coming of Jesus. Let us notice these areas and the Scriptures concerning them.

Worshipping God. Believers were to worship God as individuals and as churches. They were to do this by prayer, songs, preaching. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were to be worshipped. We are to thank others for their service, kindness, etc. We should show appreciation to our parents, teachers etc. But in the churches the Lord should receive the glory in our prayers, songs, etc. not any human being. We are not to worship human beings or pray to them in or out of church. Notice: John 4:24; 3:30; Matthew 4:10; Acts 14:8-18; Revelation 19:10; 22:9.

Mary is not the mother of God; she is the mother of the humanity of Christ only. The Greek word translated "blessed" in Luke 1:48 is the verb form of the word used in the beatitudes in Matthew 5 and is translated "blessed." This word means to declare a person to be happy. All believers teach that she was a happy lady because of the privilege she had to be the mother of Jesus's humanity. We also praise her for being a good mother and a good example as we do all good mothers and should. Another Greek word is used in Luke 1:28 which is translated "blessed." This word means to speak well of. It is used of God, Mary, believers and unbelievers. The praise or blessing we speak to God is very different than all the others. Notice these Scriptures: Luke 1:28; 6:28; James 3:9; Matthew 25:34; etc. In the New Testament the churches blest God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a special way. They did not single out Mary or "saints" in some special way. God received all the glory.

Living a Christ-like Life. The teachings of the New Testament urge us to observe its commandments and moral principles in our daily life at all times and from the heart. Believers should do this in their thoughts, words and actions. They should put God first in all things. They should live for the Lord at home, work and everywhere, Romans 12:1-16:27; Galatians 5:1-6:18; Ephesians 4:1-6:24; etc.

Serving the Lord. The teaching about the church Jesus began while on earth are given that all believers might become a member of a church like He began. We should give our talents, money and time to serve the Lord in that kind of church, Acts 2:41-47. We should not be a member of any other kind of church. That kind of church was to carry out the great commission and its members should have the same kind of salvation, baptism and following Christ that they seek to get the unbelievers to receive. That kind of church was promised to continue until Jesus' second coming and history gives evidence that it has, Matthew 16:18.

Each New Testament church was self-governing under Christ's headship. Their human leaders were called bishops or elders or pastors or angels, Acts 20:17, 28; 1Peter 5:1-5; Philippians 1:1; 1Tim. 3:1-2; Rev. 1:9-20; 2:1; etc. Each member of a church could vote in his church under the leadership of Christ; it was a democracy, Acts 1:15-26; 6:2-6; 14:23; 1Cor. 5:1-13; 16:3; 2Corinthians 8:18-19, 23; Titus 1:5 (appointed means arranged throughout). The way that Paul appointed elders, Titus 1:5, was by teaching each church to require certain qualifications mentioned in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and having each church to elect their elders by raising the hand. This was his way as seen in Acts 14:23. Ordained in this verse means to choose by raising the hands. The same word is used in 2Corinthians 8:19 where it is translated chosen.

The Lord's Supper was begun by Jesus the night before His death on the cross. The bread was to picture His body and the wine was to picture His blood. It was a symbolic ordinance which was to shew or teach the Lord's death till He comes, 1Corinthians 11:26. It was to help believers remember the Lord's death, 1Corinthians 11:24-25. The "to be" verb in the Greek can mean "signifies" or "represents" see Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament,

Hendrickson Publishers Inc, Peabody, Mass., 6th Printing, October 2003, p. 176. Matthew 13:38 is an example. "The field is the world" can be translated the "The field represents the world." Matthew 26:26b which says,

"this is my body" can be translated, "this (bread) represents my body." This is also true of English. In English we may point to a map and say, "This dot is New York City." And all understand that we mean, "This dot represents New York City."

Looking for the Second Coming of Jesus. The New Testament teaches us about the second coming and what will happen before it and after it. Because of this believers are urged to look or watch for His coming, Matthew 24:42-46, Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2Peter 3:9-14.

Closing Comments. The first century is emphasized in this brief history because the foundation, membership, organization and purpose of New Testament churches were established then. What was established then was not to be changed. After the first century this kind of church was to continue as established until the second coming. But from the first century until now Satan has sought to use men to change the church Jesus began from within or persecute them from without so that this kind of church would cease. From the first century until now New Testament churches have sought to carry out the great commission in spite of Satan's evil efforts.

#### **IV. Their Time**

A building is built for a time. It has a beginning and an end. A New Testament church is like a building in this way. Jesus built the first New Testament church early in His ministry and that kind of church was to last until the second coming. It would go through many difficulties but that kind of church would continue in spite of persecutions and the efforts of men to change it to something different than Jesus made it. Jesus promised that it would last and it has.

**Promise of Perpetuity** - Jesus promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" His church, Matthew 16:18. That kind of church would last until the second coming of Christ. Even though it would go through difficulties there would always be that kind of church on earth. The word "hell" in this place is the word that means "the unseen world." We are in the seen world and His church would not go out of this world into the unseen world which is to cease in this world. The time of His church would be from the day the first one began until His coming.

Matthew 28:20b promises "lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Jesus was speaking to the apostles as disciples who were members and leaders of the Jerusalem church at that time, Matthew 28:16. He was not speaking to them as individuals but as members of the first church. The word "world" is the word "age" in the Greek. That age was to come to an end at the second coming. That kind of church was to continue until the second coming. The apostles as individuals would die before that but that kind of church would continue until the second coming. This kind of church has been called by different names throughout history. The most common name given to them throughout past history has been Anabaptist. Today they are generally called Baptist. Jesus promised perpetuity to the New Testament kind of church. Perpetuity means it would continue to the second coming of Christ. Individual churches begin and end but the New Testament kind of church will continue til the coming of Christ.

Ephesians 3:21 also refers to the perpetuity promised to New Testament churches.

#### **Ephesians 3:21**

21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus

throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

"Him" refers to God the Father, Ephesians 3:14. He is to receive glory in His church until the second coming. "By" is the same preposition as "in" and is better translated "in" here. God the Father is to receive glory in the kind of church which is in Christ Jesus, that is, in His truth. The word "ages" is the word "generations" and they are the subdivisions of each age that divides up time which began at the creation of this world and goes to the second coming of Christ. The last age of the present world began with the death of Christ and will end at the second coming. The words in the Greek translated "world without end" can be translated "of the age of the ages." "The age" of all ages is the age which began with Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection from the grave that believers might be saved forever. This age will end with Christ's second coming. These are the greatest events in all of history from creation to the second coming. For these two reasons this age is "the age of the ages." Each subdivision of this "age" will bring glory to God by this kind of church teaching the truth about Him and His Son. For this kind of church to bring glory to God the Father in every generation of this age, this kind of church will have to continue in every generation. Notice what we believe is a better translation.

### **Ephesians 3:21**

21 Unto him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus  
in all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen.

God the Father is to receive glory in this kind of church in all the generations of this age which ends at the second coming and is the age of all ages. This implies that New Testament churches will be in every generation to the second coming.

Jesus began His church early in His ministry, in the first six months, before John the Baptist was put in prison. This is mentioned in Acts 1:15, 21-22. Jesus' church began to company together or assemble in the first six months of Jesus' ministry. Later He said He would build this church on Him. The words "I will build" in Matthew 16:18 can be translated "I will be building" and I believe this is the better translation in this verse. The Bible indicates that Jesus began His church shortly after He began His ministry before John the Baptist was put in prison. John had gone before and prepared for Christ's first coming. He preached and people were saved and baptized. Jesus took some of these baptized believers and organized them into His church. More were saved and baptized and were added to His church and He continued building His church. He continued building it until He was nailed to the cross, Acts 1:15, 21-22.

This church had been a traveling church. It would assemble one place and then another as Jesus and His disciples would travel. After His ascension this church was located in Jerusalem, Acts 2:1, 41, 47. It was the church Jesus personally began and was to be the pattern to follow in starting new churches. This kind of church was to continue until the second coming. His kind of church was local, visible and organized. It would assemble from time to time in some locality. It could be seen. It was organized because it had membership requirements, a way of governing and a purpose. All of the churches of Jesus in the New Testament were local, visible and organized.

Jesus sent the church He began into all the world to preach the gospel that people might be saved. That church was to baptize each convert and then teach them to observe all things He had taught. With the new converts they were to begin new churches. This work was to continue until Jesus comes again.

But what kind of a world did He send them into? It was a dangerous world of lost sinners who were at enmity toward the true God. The Bible teaches that all have sinned and are dead in

sin and would die physically and then be judged by God and put in the lake of fire which is called the second death. But because of God's love He sent His son Jesus into the world to die for the sins of all who would believe on Jesus as their Saviour. New Testament churches were to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world even though dangerous until He comes again that sinners might be saved. They were to do this because of love for Jesus and a lost world. We should not love sin but we should love the sinner and desire and seek to bring him to Christ and salvation. See: Matthew 9:35-38; 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-16; Luke 24:46-48; John 3:16-17; 4:31-38; Acts 1:8; Romans 3:9-10, 23; 6:23; 2Corinthians 5:11-15; Ephesians 2:1-5; Revelation 20:12-15.

Because of persecution by this world, destruction of documents and changing of records it has been difficult for New Testament churches to show their history. But we know that they have continued from the days of Jesus' first coming when He began the first one because He promised that they would continue, Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Ephesians 3:21. Also we do have some historical records of their existence throughout history.

We also have the testimony of some historians who are not members of a New Testament church who say that they were throughout past history. One example of this is the testimony of the Roman Catholic Cardinal Hosius in 1560 who said the Anabaptists had been in existence for the past 1,200 years from his day. This would take them back to the fourth century when the churches who had gone away from the New Testament in the way of salvation, baptism, etc. became a state religion of the Roman Empire.

Cardinal Hosius said, "If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer and surer than that of the Anabaptists since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past that have been more generally punished or that have more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone, and even offered themselves to the most cruel sorts of punishment than these people." John T. Christian, A History of the Baptists, Vol. I, pp 85-86.

Near where Cardinal Hosius was in Europe at the time, there were Swiss Anabaptists and we have their doctrinal statement, dated before 1527, which shows that they were New Testament churches in the doctrines of salvation, baptism, church, etc. Notice their doctrines. They believed that salvation was received by faith in Christ. They believed that after salvation they should be baptized to show they died and were buried and arose in Christ. Their churches were self-governing with each member voting on matters. And they sought to live for Christ. They sought to bring people to salvation by faith in Christ as they were saved then to baptism as they had been baptized and then to teach them to follow Christ in all matters that He taught. They were carrying out the great commission as commanded by Christ. See Thomas Armitage, A History of the Baptists, pp. 962-963.

**Promise of Change and Persecution** - The New Testament churches would face a world that would seek to change the teachings of Christ and His followers and take over these changed people and churches and use them for its purposes. People would slip into the churches and then seek to make changes concerning salvation, baptism, worship, church truth, etc. This began soon after Jesus ascended back to heaven and has continued to our day. The Bible warns of this, Matthew 24:11, 24; 1Timothy 4:1-3; 2Peter 2:1-3; Jude 3-4. Behind this opposition and changing was Satan. He led Adam and Eve to sin and is called the god of this world, 2Corinthians 4:3-4. He is against God and seeks to destroy all that God has done and plans to do, Genesis 3; Matthew 4; Revelation 12. Satan can use sincere believers to change the

teachings of Christ thinking they are doing a good thing. Peter is an example of this, Matthew 16:21-24; Luke 22:31-34. Notice also Matthew 4:1-11; 1Peter 5:8-9; Revelation 12:7-17. Jesus overcame the temptations of Satan to change God's Word by standing for the Word of God, our final authority. He did not follow the traditions of men and Satan. Throughout past history some followed Jesus and did not change the truth of the New Testament. He is the one we should follow today.

In the first century some came behind Paul on his missionary journeys and sought to teach people another way of salvation and other false doctrines and Paul had to warn the people, Galatians 1:6-9; 1Timothy 1:1-4. Others also warned in the New Testament of false teachers in 2Peter 2:1-3; 1John 4:1-3; etc. Churches and individual believers were affected in the first century but as far as we know none had gone so far that new kinds of churches had begun.

In the second to the fourth century we find new kinds of churches beginning. Some began to teach a new kind of salvation that taught that baptism was necessary to be saved. The doctrine of salvation and baptism began to be changed more and more and other teachings were also changed. Some churches remained faithful but in time the churches which remained true to the New Testament were in the minority.

In the fourth century the Emperor Constantine professed to being a Christian and made the churches which had gone away from the New Testament a state religion in 313. He delayed his own baptism to just before his death because he believed that all of his sins would be washed away by baptism as his state church taught. By 395 it was made the only state religion by the Emperor Theodosius. Many other changes took place over the years until the Bishop of Rome claimed to be Christ on earth. This was Pope Gelasius who came to be the Pope in 492. In 395 the Roman Empire was divided permanently into the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire. This affected the state church which became divided into the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Catholic Church. Their complete and permanent division took place in 1054.

The new kind of church which believed that baptism was necessary for salvation and had made many other changes believed that the New Testament was inspired just as the New Testament churches did but they did not believe it was the final authority. Their changes could not be justified by the New Testament. They added their tradition of interpretation to the New Testament as their final authority to justify their changes in doctrine. They claimed their interpretation was the correct interpretation and not to be questioned. The "Church Fathers" and the "Church Councils" became authoritative along with the New Testament. However, Jesus said the apostles and prophets who were taught and spoke and wrote by the power of the Holy Spirit were the final authority on all of His teachings. Their writings, the New Testament, were the foundation of Jesus' teachings for the New Testament churches.

The only council mentioned in the first century in the New Testament is the one mentioned in Acts 15. The leaders in it were the apostles and prophets who led in the decisions made just as Jesus taught it should be. Nothing is said in the New Testament about other "Church Councils" or "Church Fathers." These "Church Councils" and "Church Fathers" who came later had none of the apostles or prophets in them. The apostles and prophets had finished all of their work that Jesus gave them to do in the first century. Some may say well they taught us about the trinity and the two natures of Christ and the Canon, etc. These truths were all taught in the New Testament long before they were born. They cannot rightly take credit for these truths. Their teachings which are not taught in the New Testament would be the "traditions of men" which is condemned in the New Testament by Jesus. After the Old Testament was written

a body of traditions of men grew into existence which Jesus condemned. Since the Old Testament and New Testament was contrary to the beliefs of some men they developed their traditions to undermine what the Old Testament and New Testament taught.

The Old Testament was received as the Word of God when it was written by many in Israel. For Satan and his followers to defeat and use these believers of the inspiration of the Old Testament, they recognized that the Old Testament was God's Word but changed the interpretation by their tradition of men and convinced many to follow them. The Pharisees were the ones

following and teaching these traditions of men. They rejected Jesus as the Messiah and taught a salvation by man's works. The Sadducees were liberals and only received part of the Old Testament as their authority and denied miracles and the supernatural.

Satan used the same method to seek to undermine the New Testament. Since the churches in the first century believed that the writings of the apostles and prophets were the Word of God, Satan accepted that in order to seek to change people and churches. Satan sought to change them by getting them to accept his interpretations given by men in their writings and councils in the early centuries following the first century. These traditions of men have been handed down to the generations which followed. These traditions of men taught enough truth to deceive many and enough error to keep them from carrying out the great commission. They taught a salvation and baptism which was contrary to what was taught in the New Testament. They taught a different kind of worship, a different kind church, etc. from what was taught in the New Testament. The tradition of men, their interpretations of the New Testament, developed over the early centuries after the New Testament. These traditions of men must be followed according to the teaching of the state churches. Satan deceived them and continues to deceive many; Satan is clever and evil.

After the division of the Roman Empire the Western Roman Empire's state church with their leader in Rome who was the Pope made more claims about his authority until he claimed to be Christ on earth in 492. The office of Pope became the final authority in the Roman Catholic Church to justify their many changes from the New Testament. New Testament churches continued to follow the New Testament as their final authority and did not go along with the changes of the Roman Catholic Church and Greek Catholic Church.

In the fifth to the sixteenth centuries many changes took place and there was great corruption. This led to the beginning of the reformation which began with Martin Luther in 1517. Many of the Pope's followers broke away from him and the Roman Catholic Church. This resulted in the Lutheran Church, the Reformed churches, the Church of England, etc. The work of the reformers Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and others led to many good results. But, infant baptism and the necessity of baptism for salvation remained in most cases. Many of the reformation churches continued to keep some changes made in the second through the fourth century. But New Testament churches continued to be true to the Bible and would not accept the changes.

The New Testament churches were warned that they would face persecution from the world. This began in the first century AD and has continued to our day. Notice these Scriptures: Matthew 10:16-25; 24:9-10; Revelation 12:15-17; 13:7, 15-17; 17:6. Persecution by the Jews began soon after Jesus began His ministry. After He ascended to heaven the believers and the church Jesus began were persecuted. In the middle of the first century the gospel was taken to the world; the apostles, prophets and their helpers were persecuted by the Gentiles. The new

churches begun were also persecuted. The persecution in the second and early third century was

here and there throughout the Roman Empire. In 249 the Emperor Decius began a persecution throughout the whole empire to destroy all Christians unless they denied Christ. They destroyed all of their literature that they could find. Many were killed but the believers went underground and survived. In 305 another universal persecution was begun by the Emperor Diocletian to completely destroy Christianity and many were killed and their literature destroyed. Again believers went into hiding and many survived. Constantine soon became the Emperor and made the majority of Christianity a state religion in 313. Later in 395 it was made the only state religion of the empire by another Roman Emperor.

Some New Testament churches were faithful but in time they became the minority; they would not accept the changes which took place in the second and third centuries. In time the state church of the empire persecuted the New Testament churches and they went underground to worship and carry on their work of carrying out the great commission. This persecution over the centuries became very great and many were tortured and killed. When the reformation came in the sixteenth century the reformers although doing some good things also persecuted New Testament churches and their members. This continued until the seventeenth century when toleration and freedom began to come into England and western Europe and their colonies. Persecution has continued throughout the world in modern times in communist and Muslim countries in particular.

Even though there has been persecution in the world until our day New Testament churches have continued to spread the truth that a dying world might be saved.

**Promise of Victory** - The work of New Testament churches would come to an end at the second coming of Jesus. Until that time New Testament churches would continue in spite of change in the world and persecution. Jesus promised that He would come again. Then God's plan for this world will be completed and the work of His churches finished. A new world would begin. All believers will receive their new bodies at that time and be caught up to Christ in the air and be taken to heaven, a safe place. This world will be destroyed and out of the fire of destruction will come a new heaven and earth. After that Jesus and the believers will move to the new earth. God will judge them and reward them for faithful service in the millennium. After that the lost will be raised to receive their final judgment and punishment. Then Jesus will continue to reign with His people on the new earth forever. This summary of events describe the victory of Jesus and His people which will begin at and after His second coming. Notice some Scriptures which reveal these events, Matthew 16:27; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:6-11; 1Corinthians 15:51-58; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2Peter 3:7-14; Revelation 20:1-22:6; etc.

This victory by Jesus, the King of kings, encourages many believers and motivates them to be faithful now in spite of trials to serve their Saviour and King Jesus Christ in one of His New Testament churches.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John 14:15. See also 1John 5:1-3. He didn't say change them or revise them but keep them. Jesus commanded the first church to teach His plan of salvation and His kind of baptism and His Lord's Supper and His kind of church and His way of worship, etc. Some churches have done that during the last 2,000 years and we also should continue to do that until He comes again in spite of changes going on in the world and persecution. Believers should take the Lord's commandments very seriously.

The apostle Paul wrote that he followed Christ. Jesus Christ had taught Paul His commandments and Paul followed them and Paul taught the churches and believers in his day

those same commandments and urged them to follow those commandments. Paul commanded the church at Corinth as an apostle of Christ to keep those ordinances as he delivered them to the church at Corinth, 1Corinthians 11:1-2. The word ordinances is the word that is translated traditions in other places in the New Testament. Traditions refer to teachings handed down. The traditions handed down to Paul were the teachings Jesus taught him and the other apostles. Paul taught the Corinthian church these traditions and he commanded this church to keep them.

The apostles and prophets were guided by the Spirit to write these teachings handed down from Jesus in the New Testament. They were not to change them and we are not to change them. We are commanded to be keepers and not changers. If we love Jesus as we should we will do this. We are thankful that there were New Testament churches and individuals before us who were keepers in spite of a world that constantly wanted to change the teachings of the Bible. Some New Testament churches loved Jesus enough to keep His teachings in spite of great persecution. Some of the members of these churches gave their life rather than change His teachings. How serious are these changes? They are very serious! Some are so serious that to follow them would keep a person from being saved, others would cause us to waste our life, and all are displeasing to the Lord, Matthew 7:13-27; 16:24-27; Galatians 1:6-9; Romans 9:30-33; 10:8-11; 1Corinthians 3:9-17. **Let us be keepers not changers!!**