

The New Testament Church



“...Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it” Ephesians 5:25

Echoes of the 20th Annual
Sovereign Grace Conference
of the
Victory Baptist Church
of
Kansas City, Missouri
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INTRODUCTION

This book is a collection of the sermons preached at the 20th annual Sovereign Grace Conference of the Victory Baptist Church of Kansas City, Missouri held August 7-9, 2001. The conference is fully financed each year by the generous love offerings of the people of Victory Baptist Church. The theme of this conference was *The New Testament Church* and each message dealt with an important aspect of that theme. Such was the quality of the sermons and so great was the response to the preaching that we decided to publish the messages as a book. It is our prayerful desire that pastors and teachers and individual Christians will use the biblical materials in this book in preaching, teaching and studying the great New Testament doctrine of the church. We suggest that the book be used for sermon background, as a textbook in Sunday Schools and Bible Colleges, and as a personal study guide and reference for students of God's Word. Additional copies may be ordered by calling me at 816-761-7184, by email at justicela@juno.com or by writing to me at 9601 Blue Ridge Ext., Kansas City, MO 64134

Yours in Christ,
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The Nature of the Church

Matthew 16:18

by Dan Cozart

My assigned subject is “The Nature of the Church”. My text is Matthew 16:18. It is here that our Lord speaks of entering into a building program and He is careful to tell us what He will be building.....”I will build my church”. This implies that there was no church prior to this time. There was no church in the Old Testament. It is to be found only in the New Testament. It is also clear that it is a **church** that He is building. He did not say He would be building a Kingdom Hall....a Tabernacle....a Temple....the Salvation Army....the Promise Keepers....the Gideons....a Fellowship....a Synagogue....a Denomination....a Convention....a Chapel....the Family of God or the Kingdom. What He did say is that **He Would Build His Church!**

Historically, there are three major views of the church.

(1) The Roman Catholic View

This view states that the church is a **universal and visible assembly**. This System allows a worldwide, universal organization with headquarters in Rome where the Pope rules over this universal and visible church.

(2) The Protestant View

This view states that the church is a **universal and invisible assembly** referred to as “the body of Christ”. Protestants were forced either to accept Catholic baptism as valid or admit they made a mistake in leaving the Catholic system. So, they agreed the church was universal, but could not continue with Rome being the visible head. Therefore, they invented the term “invisible church”.

(3) The Biblical View

This view teaches the church to be a **local and visible assembly**. Baptist scholars have supported this view down through the ages with conviction.

B.H. Carroll, *Ephesians*, page 166:

“The whole of the modern Baptist idea of a now ‘universal, invisible church’ was borrowed from Pede-Baptist confessions of faith in the Reformation times, and the Pede-Baptists devised it to offset the equally erroneous idea of the Romanist ‘universal, visible church’.”

Arthur Pink, *Studies in the Scriptures*, December 1927:

“Now the kind of church which is emphasized in the New Testament is neither invisible nor universal; but instead, visible and local. The Greek word for ‘church’ is *ecclesia*, and those who know anything of that language are agreed that the word signifies ‘an assembly’. Now, an assembly is a company of people who actually assemble. If they never

assemble, then it is a misuse of language to call them ‘an assembly’. Therefore, as all of God’s people never have yet assembled together, there is today no universal church.”

Jesse B. Thomas, *The Church and the Kingdom*, page 275:

“A church universal, composed to a disintegrated, unorganized throng of members of all the churches is from the functional point of view inconceivable. How could an indistinguishable, unrecognizable company of God’s elect, the invisible church, serve either the one purpose of a church or the other?”

J.R. Graves, *Why Be A Baptist?*, page 47

“The two essential ideas in the word *ekklesia* are assembly and organization. Every illustration of a church in the New Testament, such as temple or house or body, makes the veriest nonsense if it is not assembled and organized. The etymology of the word *ekklesia* makes it of necessity a local church.”

Thomas Armitage, *History of Baptists*, pages 188-120

“In the apostolic age the church was a local body, and each church was independent of every other church. The simple term *ecclesia* designates one congregation, or organized assembly, this being its literal and primal meaning.....it follows then, that the New Testament nowhere speaks of the ‘Universal, Catholic, or Invisible Church’, as indicating a merely ideal existence, separate from a real and local body. A local church fully expresses the meaning of the word *ecclesia* wherever it is found in Holy Writ.”

S.H. Ford, *Brief Baptist History*, page 95

“It should be remembered that by church, Baptists mean what the New Testament teaches....a local, real congregation of baptized believers united together for God’s service.”

Having introduced this subject, let us proceed to the text itself.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD *CHURCH*

When Jesus said “I will build my church”, what kind of church was He referring to? Would it be invisible or visible? Would it be universal or local? It cannot be bothrather it must be either or. He did not build two kinds of churches, both visible and invisible. If it is local, then it cannot be invisible. It must be one or the other.

We must first look at its etymology. The Greek word is *ekkelesia*. It is made up of two Greek words: *ek* meaning “out of” and *klesis* meaning “called out ones”.

How was this word used? The meaning of a word is not determined by its etymology, but rather by how it is used. The Greeks used it to describe an assembly....thus, *ekklesia* means “an assembly of called out ones, or ones called out for the purpose of assembly.” If it does not assemble, it is not a church.

There were three kinds of *Ecclesias* in the New Testament. First, there was the assembly in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). Here Stephen is reviewing the history of Israel. He calls them “the church (*ecclesia*) in the wilderness”. It simply means that Israel was a congregation or assembly in the wilderness. That is what *ecclesia* means. It was not a universal, invisible group of people, but rather they were quite local and visible. They were assembled.

Next, there was the assembly of the citizens of Ephesus (Acts 19:32,39,41). When Paul preached in Ephesus, it caused a riot. The town council was called out to deal with the matter. That council was called an *ecclesia* or assembly. They were not universal nor invisible. Quite the contrary, they were local and visible. That is the meaning of the word. They were called out for the purpose of assembly.

Third, we have the Lord’s assembly given in Matthew 16:18. Our Lord said “I will build my church (*ecclesia*).” He said He would build His assembly. It would not be like the assembly in the wilderness of which Stephen spoke. Rather, it would be a different *ecclesia* and assembly. It would not be “their” assembly, but “MY” assembly.

THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD *CHURCH*

How would we properly define the meaning of the church? It would be erroneous to say that the church is all of the elect of God from all ages. This would put Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the church which was not even in existence.

It would also be erroneous to say that the church is made up of all denominations since Pentecost. Whenever would this worldwide church come together? A body that is disassembled is not a body.

The church is an assembly of voluntary, baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, assembled for the purpose of carrying out the commands of Christ. “Assembly” rules out universal and invisible. “Believers” rules out the unregenerate and all those who have not consciously and actively trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. “Baptized” rules out all of those who are unbaptized as well as those sprinkled or poured. “Voluntary” rules out all small children and babies who have not exercised a willingness. “Lord Jesus Christ” eliminates all other religions in the world. Salvation is in Christ and Christ alone. “The purpose of carrying out the commands of Christ” eliminates all not organized for the purpose carrying out the Great Commission.

HOW THE CHURCH IS PRESENTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

First, it is used in an institutional sense (Ephesians 3:10, 21). Quite often when the church is used as *the Church*, it is speaking of the church in a generic or institutional fashion. We often speak of *the Home*. We are speaking of the system of the home which is made up of all literal and local homes. In the same way when we talk of *the school*, we mean the school as a system and not any one particular school. Yet, the school institutionally is made up of all local schools. If there were not local and visible schools, there would be no school system. It is the same with the church. The first mention of the word “church” is to be found in our text in Matthew 16:18. Our Lord was not thinking of any particular assembly, whether the church at Jerusalem or anywhere else. He said the gates of Hell would not prevail against His church. The Jerusalem church is no longer with us. This could be said to thousands upon thousands of local assemblies. What He meant, however, was that His church as an institution would never pass away or be destroyed and it has not. The church of our Lord is still here today after 2000 years.

Second, the church is used as a particular, local and visible assembly (Revelation 1:4). There were seven literal and visible assemblies such as “the church at Ephesus”, “the church at Sardis”, “the church at Thyatira” and “the church at Laodicea”. Each one was an individual, independent church defined by location and membership.

Finally, the church is used in a prospective sense (Ephesians 5:25-27). Here, Christ is presented as a husband, while the church is presented as the wife or bride. In order to have a husband and wife, there must be a marriage. That marriage has not happened yet. It will one day when Christ returns the second time. At that time, the church will be presented without spot and blemish. It is called “the church of the firstborn” in Hebrews 12:23. It will involve all of the redeemed of the ages, but **only when they assemble in Glory and become the Glorified Church**. That has not happened. It will occur in the future. In that day, we will all believe the same thing. There will be no denominational differences. It is the **Prospective Church or Assembly in Glory**.

THE PREDOMINANT USE OF EKKLESIA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IS LOCAL AND VISIBLE.

Ekklesia is used 118 times in the King James Version of the New Testament. Three times it is rendered “assembly”. It is rendered “church” 115 times. Of the 115 times it is rendered church, it speaks of the Israelite congregation one time in the Old Testament; four times it speaks of the prospective church in heaven; fourteen times it is used of the church as an institution or generically; **ninety-six** times it is used without question as a **local and visible assembly**.

The Scriptural citations for such a predominant and prevalent usage are very clear:

(1) Christ used the word *ecclesia* twenty-one times. Three of these are found in Matthew 16:18 and Matthew 18:17. Eighteen times He spoke of the *ekklesia* in Revelation. With the exception of our text as used generically, He always spoke of the church as local and visible. Christ never

spoke of an invisible and universal church.

(2) The Apostle Paul wrote letters to literal and local churches: to the church at Rome, to the church at Corinth, to the church at Galatia, to the church at Ephesus, to the church at Colossae, to the church at Thessalonica and others.

(3) The historical churches in Acts were local and visible.

Acts 2:47	“The Lord added to the church daily”
Acts 5:11	“Fear came upon all the church”
Acts 8:1	“The church which was at Jerusalem”
Acts 12:1	Herod sought to “vex certain of the church”
Acts 14:23	“Ordained them elders in every church”
Acts 15:4	“They were received of the church”
Acts 16:5	“So were the churches established”
Acts 18:22	“And saluted the church”
Acts 20:17	“Called the elders of the church”

(4) The New Testament church could be disciplined (Matthew 18:17).
III John 10 “Casteth them out of the church”

METAPHORS ARE USED TO DESCRIBE THE CHURCH AS LOCAL, TANGIBLE AND A VISIBLE ASSEMBLY

The church is referred to as a flock (I Peter 5:3). This involves some sheep under a shepherd. The church is referred to as the house of God (I Timothy 3:15). This involves many parts under a builder. The church is referred to as a husbandry (I Corinthians 3:9). This involves many plants under a husbandman. The church is referred to as a body (Romans 12:4-5). This involves many members under one head. The church is referred to as God’s building (I Corinthians 3:9). This involves many pieces joined by a builder. The church is referred to as a temple (I Corinthians 3:16). This involves many worshippers coming to the one worshipped....all are local and visible.

In conclusion, what the Lord Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18 and was empowered at Pentecost was the institution of the church made up of local and visible assemblies of baptized believers. He is the builder of His church.

There are a few things in the Bible of which it is said that Christ built, but none were invisible. He built the heavens and the earth in Genesis. They were not invisible. He is building the New Jerusalem in Revelation and that will not be invisible. He started the church 2000 years ago and it too is local and visible. Never fall for the universal, invisible trap!!

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH

Matthew 4:18-22; 16:18

by Royce Smith

Only God has no beginning; being eternal, He is without beginning or end. But everything else—every creature and every institution—has a beginning or origin. The first of our texts pinpoints for us the origin of the church. The second passage defines for us what the Lord promised to do to the church He had already founded upon Himself: namely, to build it up (*oikodomeo: to build to completion*). The Lord is still building His church (I am speaking of the institution which has its existence in each local church.) He did not say He would start or institute the church, but would build it up, implying the church had already been instituted previous to the time of this statement in Matthew 16:18.

If the church were anything other than an assembly of baptized believers devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ and His teachings, we would have difficulty seeing it in our first text. In fact, we could not find it at all because it would not be there. Since, however, the church is a congregation of baptized believers, we do find it in this text. If, on the one hand, the church were composed of all the saved from the beginning of time to the time of our Lord's ministry on earth, it would have already been in existence, having been founded long before His earthly ministry. If, on the other hand, Christ had started the church on the first Pentecost following His resurrection, He would have founded it when He was bodily absent from the earth, contrary to what He said in Mark 13:34: “[For the Son of man is] as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.” (KJV) The *house* He left was the New Testament church.

But since the church is a *called-out assembly* of baptized believers under the Headship and teaching of Christ, the church clearly had its origin during His earthly ministry. He spoke of *my church* or *ekklesia* (Matthew 16:18). There were *ekklesias* other than His. There was the *ekklesia* in the wilderness. Acts 7:38, “This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and [with] our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.” (KJV), but it was not Christ's *ekklesia*. There was an *ekklesia* at Ephesus, a lawful one (Acts 19:39), but it was not His *ekklesia*. Christ's church is more than just an assembly; it is a *called-out assembly*. If it were just an assembly, it would cease to exist when not assembled, but because it is a *called-out assembly of a particular people*, it continues to exist in the individual members when not assembled. This fact refutes those who belittle a church roll. A church roll is nothing more than that which identifies those who are that *called-out assembly*. A specific people constitute any New Testament church even as a special *called-out body* of citizens constituted the lawful assembly in Ephesus.

PROPOSITION: *having defined what the church is, we can now identify the time and place of its origin together with the purpose of its origin, and most important of all, who its originator is.*

WHO FOUNDED THE CHURCH.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the *Founder* of His church. When He said, “Upon this rock, I will build my church,” it is obvious He was speaking of that which was His, not of that which was another man’s. Thus, He promised to build up that which He Himself had founded. The *building up* of the church He had already founded, then, not the *starting* of the church, is the subject of Matthew 16:18.

Therefore, the church was not founded by one of the patriarchs or prophets of the Old Testament. Neither was it started by Peter or one of the other apostles. It was not even founded by the Holy Spirit; otherwise, it would be the Holy Spirit’s church. I do not wish to beg the point, but the *fruit of the Spirit* and the *gifts of the Spirit* are rightly attributed to the Holy Spirit because they come from Him. If the Holy Spirit had started the church, as some claim, then should not the church be called the *Church of the Holy Spirit*? John 16:13-14, “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.” (KJV) The Holy Spirit has the ministry of exalting the Lord Jesus, and all He does is to that end. But He did not usurp from Christ the prerogative of starting the church. Christ’s church certainly was not founded by some other great religious leader or leaders of whom we read in history. However great they may have been, their religious societies are not the Lord’s church.

Thus, the same One who founded His church—as an institution reflected in every individual church—is the One who is still building it. Therefore, we observe that it is Christ Himself who called out the disciples who constituted the first church.

WHEN CHRIST FOUNDED THE CHURCH.

Since Christ’s church is a *called-out assembly* of baptized believers who are devoted to His Headship and teachings, we will find the origin of that church at the point in which we see Him calling out such an assembly. The account of this *calling-out* is given in both Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20. How do we know this incident records the origin of the church? We know it because these passages reveal four facts which pinpoint this occasion as the beginning of the church.

First, the men whom He called-out were believers. Having been the disciples of John the Baptist, they were looking for the coming Messiah. When John pointed-out Jesus to two of his disciples (John 1:36, 37), they immediately followed Him. One of the two was Andrew who

brought his brother, Simon, to Him (John 1:38-42). There is indication that the incident recorded in this passage occurred before the calling out of the disciples in Matthew 4:18-22 making it clear that those whom the Lord called-out knew Him. The fact that John the Baptist would not baptize unbelievers proves these men, with the exception of Judas, were believers. Luke 3:7-8, “Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to [our] father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” (KJV) John the Baptist consistently refused to baptize unbelievers, not just scribes and Pharisees. Thus, those men whom Jesus called, having first been John’s disciples, were genuine believers.

Second, the men whom Jesus called to form the church had been baptized Scripturally by John the Baptist. John’s baptism, despite statements to the contrary by some, was valid Christian baptism. John 1:33, “And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” (KJV) Note that John said God had sent him to baptize. If God sends someone to baptize, then that baptism is as valid as it can be. In fact, one of the qualifications for being an apostle was having been baptized by John the Baptist. Acts 1:21-22, “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.” (KJV) The Church at Jerusalem certainly recognized the validity of John’s baptism. So did all of the later New Testament churches. They never re-baptized anyone whom John had baptized. While Paul re-baptized those whom Apollos had baptized *unto John’s baptism* (Acts 19:1-6), nothing is said of Apollos, who had been baptized by John the Baptist, being rebaptized.

Third, these men were each *called-out* from their former manner of lives to follow Christ. He but called, and they followed Him as disciples. Thus, we have Scripturally baptized believers following Christ, acknowledging Him as their Head—they called Him *Lord* and *Master* (Luke 6:46)—and accepting His teachings. Is this not an *ekklesia*?

Fourth, these *called-out* baptized believers assembled together with Him for worship and instruction. Therefore, we conclude that they were His *ekklesia* or church. Nothing was missing which is necessary to the existence of a New Testament church. They had the gospel (Mark 1:1), observed the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19, 20), had rules concerning church discipline (Matthew 18:15-18), had a treasurer (John 12:6), and Christ Himself as their Head (John 13:13).

Some object to the fact a New Testament church existed before the Day of Pentecost. It is argued that the church could not have existed before Pentecost because it would have been without the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit did not come until then. But the fact is the church did have the Holy Spirit before the Day of Pentecost. John 20:22, “And when he had said this, he breathed on [them], and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” (KJV) The very same assembly *called-out* in Matthew 4:18-22, with the exception of Judas, received the Holy Spirit on this occasion several days before Pentecost.

Again, it has been argued that Hebrews 9:16, 17 prohibit the called-out assembly of Matthew 4:18-22 from being a New Testament church before the Day of Pentecost. Hebrews 9:16-17, “For where a testament [is], there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament [is] of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” (KJV) Not one statement in this passage prohibits the existence of the church before Pentecost! Our Lord died fifty-three days before Pentecost and was raised fifty days before this day. Everything relating to this testament was valid with this assembly at least fifty days before Pentecost. Hence, this assembly was a New Testament church. If there were no New Testament church before the death of Christ, neither was there a new covenant. But Jesus said, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Furthermore, it is not death that makes a covenant or a will; it is a person. It is that individual person’s will to make a will or a covenant which gives it existence. Death can only confirm a will or covenant which has been previously made.

WHERE CHRIST FOUNDED THE CHURCH.

The place where we locate the origin of the church is the shores of the Lake of Galilee (Matthew 4:18-22). When these first four baptized believers followed Christ, the church was born. Everything necessary to a New Testament church was present. It has been objected that Christ would never build His church on the sands of the seashore. He didn’t; He built it upon Himself, the Rock, but He called it out, and it had its beginning on the seashore of Galilee.

Some older Baptists contended the church originated on the mountain when Christ chose twelve of His disciples to be apostles after He had prayed all night (Luke 6:12-16). Sometimes no distinction was made between the *origin* and *organization* of the church. If they took this incident to be the *organization* of the church, I concur. One can have a house in existence before he has it organized. But this incident does not record the *origin* of the church. The church existed before the apostles were chosen, but the Lord gave it organization on the mountain, setting in it first the apostles. 1 Corinthians 12:28, “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” (KJV) Whether we take His setting some in the church to relate to a priority of office or a sequence of time, the bottom line is the same. The church had to have been in existence before the apostles could be set in it. A man must first build a house before he can set his furniture in it. Christ first established the church; then He organized it, taught it, and commissioned it, all in good time and order.

HOW CHRIST FOUNDED THE CHURCH

Christ founded the church the same way in which He formed the heavens and the earth. “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:9). He said to certain baptized believers, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Because He commanded, and His word is always effectual, it was done. These baptized believers immediately followed Christ, and the New Testament *ekklesia* was formed.

In this same manner every succeeding New Testament church has come into existence. The Lord speaks to Scripturally baptized believers, giving them the desire to form a church according to the teachings of the New Testament. For example, a baptized believer moves into a new area and finds no New Testament church. He first begins to have a desire for a church. Finding other baptized believers, he shares his burden with them. Then they also begin to long for a New Testament church. From whence comes that longing? “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13) Do we not call such desires the leadership of the Holy Spirit? God but speaks, and that word is effectual, leading them to enter into a covenant relationship with one another, and another New Testament church is born after the pattern of the first *ekklesia*.

Notice I did not say that just any group of believers or baptized believers, but a group of *Scripturally baptized believers* have a desire to form a church. This qualification itself necessitates a prior church relationship, but the starting of the new church is initiated by the Lord Himself, not a so-called mother church. No church can take the place of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor should it ever want to attempt to do so. We are offended when the Catholic Pope claims to be the *vicar* of Christ. Why are we not equally offended when any preacher or church would claim to be the *vicar* of the Lord Jesus Christ? Certainly a sponsoring church should assist in forming a new church, but only as Scripturally baptized believers enter into a covenant relationship with one another under the Headship of Christ to execute the commission He gave can a new church be founded. Bethel Baptist Church has helped organize two churches in the last ten years. The church gave guidance and consent to those who desired to start a new church, but not one vote of Bethel Baptist Church brought either of these two churches into existence; the new churches were formed when the baptized believers who constituted them voted to enter into covenant with one another under the Headship of Christ. Does this not sound very much like what we have read in Matthew 4:18-22? The Lord is indeed the *Founder* of His church!

WHY CHRIST FOUNDED THE CHURCH.

Christ founded the church to represent Him on the earth, to propagate His teachings, to proclaim His gospel throughout the world, to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them to observe all the things He had commanded. The church is His body; it is one with Him as the head and body are one in all living creatures. It is an *executive* body, not a *legislative* body, entrusted with ordinances and a commission. It is distinct from all other bodies, having been charged to do a sacred work. It is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). To be what He intended it to be and to do the works He has given it to do are the chief reasons Christ founded the church during His earthly ministry.

THE PERPETUITY OF TRUE CHURCHES OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

by Wayne Camp

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

In this message I will confine myself to the last clause of this text that I have read. ***“The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*** Of course, any who take the time to analyze this verse will know that ***“it”*** refers to the church which Jesus would and will continue to dome up as this age continues.

I assume now would be as good a time as any to make some disclaimers about the matter of chain-link succession and my position. I have declared the perpetuity of true Baptist churches throughout the 44 years that I have been preaching. I have never wavered from that glorious biblical doctrine.

I believe that during his personal ministry our Lord established a local, visible church. I believe that Christ gave to that church and its successors the infallible promise of a perpetual existence. ***“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”*** (Mat. 16:18). I hold with firm conviction that the promise of Jesus has not failed and that the gates of hell have not prevailed. Therefore, I can firmly declare that there has never been a time in history since the origin of that first local, visible congregation when there has not been a true New Testament Church in existence.

In this message I want to consider first ***What The Scriptures Teach On Church Perpetuity***. I then want to consider ***What the Prominent Baptist Historians Say on Church Perpetuity Versus Chain-Link Succession***. Finally, I want to show ***What Our Forefathers and Their Enemies Declared That Proves the Perpetuity of True Baptist Churches***.

Before I begin to deal with these three points let me say emphatically that if I could not produce one historical statement that supported our claim to the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches, I would still believe in that perpetuity because it is taught in God’s word. That is not blind faith. That is established in the word of God. That is where we will begin. Baptists are a people of the Book and first and foremost we want to know what it says on this subject.

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH ON CHURCH PERPETUITY

The promise of Jesus assures the perpetuity of his churches. Let us consider the promise found in our text. Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The builder of the church assures that it will be perpetuated. All his counsels shall stand and they will stand forever. Psalm 33:11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

He will do all his pleasure. Isaiah 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. That which he has purposed cannot be altered by men or angels in any way. Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. The builder of the church is the God-man, Christ Jesus and he has built the church to endure through all ages world without end, as we will see in a moment.

The foundation upon which the church is being domed up assures its perpetuity. That foundation stone is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. Jesus is the chief cornerstone of his churches. Ephesians 2:20-21 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

There are those who claim that their church is built on the Apostle Peter and of their foundation I can safely say, Deuteronomy 32:31 For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

There are some who look to Martin Luther as their founder and foundation and I say of them, For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

There are others who look to John Wesley as their founder and foundation and I say of them, For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

Let men start their churches and name their founders and set forth their foundations and whatever they may be, I say of them, For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

The promise that the gates of hell will never prevail assures perpetuity of the Lord's true churches. Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, has promised, rather, has unequivocally declared that the gates of hell cannot prevail against his churches. They may assail but they cannot prevail. Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The instructions concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper assures perpetuity. It is evident from the instructions concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper that it is to be observed until Christ comes again. 1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. If you believe the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance then, in the light of the verse just read, you should have no trouble believing in church perpetuity.

It seems obvious that the institution to which the supper was delivered is a perpetual institution and there are only two God-established institutions that have persevered since their origin—the family and the church—unless you want to call the nation of Israel an institution.

The Lord's Supper was not given to the *nation of Israel* to observe. That is certain for that nation was in unbelief for the most part when the Supper was instituted.

The Lord's Supper was not given to the *family* to observe. If the Supper had been given to the family you would have the Lord's Supper being observed by many ungodly families.

The obvious conclusion is that the Lord's Supper was given to his churches to observe and show his death until he comes again. 1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Commenting on this expression "**till he come**" John Gill wrote, ". . . 'till he come'; which shows the continuance of this ordinance, which is to last till Christ's second coming, where the carnal ordinances of the former dispensation were shaken and removed; and also the continuance of Gospel ministers to the end of the world, to administer it, and of churches to whom it is to be administered: this assures of the certainty of Christ's second coming; as it leads back to his coming in the flesh, suffering and dying in our stead, and thereby obtaining redemption for us; it leads forward to expect and believe he will come again, to put us into the full possession of the salvation he is the author of; when there will be no more occasion for this ordinance, nor any other, but all will cease."

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be composed of born-again, baptized believers and the whole analogy of faith set forth in the New Testament points to the church as the institution to which the keeping of the supper could be entrusted till Jesus comes again. His true churches have been showing forth his death in this supper for nigh on to 2000 years and will be preserved to do so until he comes in the clouds of glory to receive his saints unto himself.

Consider also the great commission with its promise of age-long duration of the organization to which it was given. To whomever, and to whatever institution the great commission was given there was with it the assurance of endurance to the end of the age. Matthew 28:18-20 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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Most, but not all Baptists, hold that the great commission was given to the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. I plead guilty to holding that position myself. In this commission Jesus Christ made a promise. Matthew 28:20 Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Commenting on Mat. 28:20 John Gill wrote, ". . . not that the apostles should live to the end of it; but that whereas Christ would have a church and people to the end of the world, and the Gospel and the ordinances of it should be administered so long, and there should be Gospel ministers till that time; Christ's sense is, that he would grant his presence to them, his immediate disciples, and to all that should succeed them in future generations, to the end of time."

Commenting on Mat. 28:20 Matthew Henry wrote,

“There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, that day, that hour, they were undone.” Henry says again, “They shall have his perpetual presence, even to *the end of the world.*”

The plan that the Lord has for his church assures its perpetuity. The Lord does have a plan for his church and his plan and purpose will be fulfilled. Ephesians 5:23, 27 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Christ is the head of his church and will not allow it to perish from the earth. Christ is the Saviour of the church and it would be a reflection on his *saviourship* if the church were to perish from the earth. Christ plans to present the church to himself one day without spot, wrinkle or any such thing and he can only do that if he perpetuates his churches on earth.

That God is to be glorified in his churches throughout all ages, even eternally proves the perpetuity of his churches. Christ established his church for an eternal existence. It is to bring him glory now and throughout all eternity. Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

As I said before, if I could produce no historical statements that prove perpetuity, I would believe it on the grounds of these Scriptures. But, we shall see later that history does verify that what the Scriptures assured would happen, did happen, and is happening.

WHAT THE PROMINENT BAPTIST HISTORIANS SAY ON CHURCH PERPETUITY VERSUS CHAIN-LINK SUCCESSION

In his book, *Baptist Succession*, D. B. Ray has a chapter called “*The Nature of Succession*”. In that chapter he clearly shows that when Baptists of his day spoke of succession of churches, they did not have in mind a linked-chain succession such as many hold today. They believed in what I call *Perpetuity*.

Of Succession, Ray wrote,

“But while some agree that the Baptist succession does exist, or that a succession of Baptists has continued from the time of Christ to the present, yet they, at the same time deny that the succession can be proved. This is wholly inconsistent; for no one has the right to believe that which can not be proved. There can be no intelligent faith without evidence. If we have no evidence to prove a succession, it is out of the question to affirm that we believe in the existence of such succession.” (*Baptist Succession*, D. B. Ray, P. 85).

It is not my purpose to try to prove a linked-chain succession in this message. Those who claim to believe in a linked-chain succession perpetuated by church vote by church vote, admit they cannot prove their linked-chain all the way back to Christ. Does anyone have a right to believe what he cannot prove? Since the bible is silent on a linked-chain succession, and a linked-chain succession such as is proclaimed and promulgated by many cannot be proved from history, it

must be accepted upon *blind* faith.

The Bible assures perpetuity of the Lord's churches and history proves the perpetuity of the Lord's churches but the Bible does not promise a linked-chain succession of churches and history does not prove it.

Dr. I. K. Cross is a student and teacher of church history. He wrote a booklet called *Spotlight on Landmarkism* in which he writes, "Opponents of Landmarkism speak much of a 'Linked-chain' succession of churches and propose to pin it on 'Landmark' Baptist churches. This is defined as meaning that every church, in order to establish its validity, must be able to trace its individual history back to the first church in Jerusalem. Let me say at once that I do not know of a reputable "Landmark" Baptist student of church history who claims that every congregation must trace its individual history link by link back to Christ and the apostles. If this were true there would be few, if any, churches that could validate themselves. This is not the claim of true Baptist church perpetuity" (pp. 18, 19).

Bro. Buel H. Kazee is well known to Sovereign Grace Baptists. His book, *The Church and The Ordinances* is widely read and recommended. In this book, Bro. Kazee writes, "To some of us, the course of history clear back to the apostles reveals groups of people all along the way who contended 'for the faith once delivered to the saints:' *whether or not our baptism is successive all the way back, no one can prove*" (p. 98). He adds: "On the other hand, no one can prove that such succession does not exist." A little later he writes: "One thing we can be sure of, there has been made available enough reliable historical proof about the people called Baptists to identify them in their beliefs with some religious groups in every age back to the apostles." Again he wrote, "*While history does not make out an ironclad case for successive Baptism, it does give a good case for the perpetuity of churches which can be identified with the kind of church specifically recognized as a church in the New Testament*" (P. 99). (Emp. in these two statements mine, RWC).

Let us consider this statement of J. W. Porter, recorded in *The Baptist Examiner*.

"Our contention is not for apostolic succession, or church succession, but for the perpetuity of Baptist churches, from the organization of the First Baptist Church of Jerusalem to the present time, and to the end of all time." (J. W. Porter *The Baptist Examiner*, March 9, 1957, P. 1).

In his *New Directory of Baptist Churches*, Dr. E. T. Hiscox discusses and defines what Baptists have historically held on the matter of church perpetuity. Of perpetuity, he wrote, "This has reference, not to a continuance of official administration . . . but to visible and corporate church life. And strange to say, some Baptists have been courageous enough, and indiscrete enough to assert that an unbroken succession of visible, organized congregations of believers similar to their own, and therefore substantially like the primitive churches, can be proven to have existed from the apostles until now."

Bro. Jarrel Huffman, writing on the perpetuity of Baptist churches wrote, "John T. Christian , in his two-volume set entitled, *The History of the Baptists*, ably defends church perpetuity. He says, 'The first church was organized by Jesus and the apostles; and after the form of this one all other churches should be modeled. The churches so organized are to continue in the world until the

kingdoms of this earth shall become the kingdom of our Lord, even Christ. Prophecy was full of the enduring character of the kingdom of Christ (Daniel 2:44,45). Jesus maintained a like view of his church and extended the promise to all the ages. He said, ‘Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’ (Matt. 16:18).”

Bro. Huffman writes again, “J. B. Moody, writing in his masterful book, *My Church*, defends Baptist Church Perpetuity. In his address, Moody categorizes the subject under these headings: ‘(1) Church Perpetuity is Scriptural; (2) Church Perpetuity is Reasonable; (3) Church Perpetuity is Credible; (4) Church Perpetuity is Historical.’ See pp. 132-325.”

That many historians, when discussing the succession and perpetuity of Baptist churches did not have in mind a formal, church vote by church vote linked-chain succession is evident by reading their books. The following statement by Bro. Huffman reinforces that position. He wrote, “In summation, let the following be said about CHURCH PERPETUITY: (1) Perpetuity is guaranteed by Jesus Himself (Matthew 16:18). If no historical records were available, the promise of Jesus would be sufficient; however, volumes are in print which support this forceful declaration by Jesus. Books both by Baptists and non-Baptists prove a definite SUCCESSION OF CHURCHES from the time of Christ to the present; (2) Perpetuity regards the ORGANIZATION THAT JESUS BUILT; individual churches can and do apostatize, but some, in all ages, have remained true to the pattern that Jesus established; (3) Chain-link succession on paper cannot be proved, but this fact does not discount SCRIPTURAL SUCCESSION. Enemies of truth destroyed many of the books of Baptists, but enough information, given by the enemies themselves, proves that a PEOPLE DID EXIST IN ALL AGES SINCE CHRIST, under various names, who perpetuated truth; (4) True succession and perpetuity are valid because God has seen fit to perpetuate truth in all ages since Christ. This has been done in spite of the attempts of enemies to destroy truth; (5) The KIND OF CHURCH that Jesus built is found in all ages, even to the present. This is not proved by “name” alone, but by DOCTRINE. That TRUE BAPTIST CHURCHES, under a variety of names, have existed in every age since Christ is an undeniable fact to the unbiased historian. Statements are etched in stone which support this allegation—by Campbell, Luther, Hosius, and a host of other non-Baptist historians.”

W. A. Jarrel, another renowned Baptist historian wrote, “The scholarly S. H. Ford, LL.D., says: ‘Succession among Baptists is not a linked chain of churches or ministers, uninterrupted and traceable at this distant day . . . The true and defensible doctrine is, that baptized believers have existed in every age since John baptized in Jordan, and have met as a baptized congregation in covenant, and fellowship where an opportunity permitted.’ To this explanation of Church Succession by Drs. Graves and Ford, all believers in Baptist ‘Church Succession’ fully agree.”

On page two Dr. Jarrel adds: “Every Baptist Church being, in organization, a church complete in itself and in no way organically connected with any other church, such a thing as one church succeeding another, as the second link of a chain is added to and succeeds the first, or, as one Romish or Episcopal Church succeeds another, is utterly foreign to and incompatible with Baptist Church polity. Therefore, the talk about every link jingling in the succession chain from the banks of the Jordan to the present,’ is ignorance or dust-throwing.”

Bro. Forrest Keener, in an article on church perpetuity had this to say about a linked-chain succession. “Secondly, there is the approach of Neo-Landmarkism, which seeks to prove the perpetuity of the Lord’s church by a pedigree, preserved through human history. While history will surely give witness to the perpetuity of the Lord’s church, the pedigree route tends to discredit it rather than to corroborate it. While there are good records, which point in the direction of church lineage, it is likely, if not certain, that no one today has a church by church, step by step, pedigree. I have never seen one, even set fourth, at this point in my ministry, though some mistakenly assume that is what they have. Even if such a record could be offered, and if it were accurate, it could not be proved. Thus, this approach to the teaching of perpetuity harms the cause rather than to help it.”

Dr. John T. Christian was professor of Christian History in Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana, and is another well-known scholar on Baptist history. Of the matter of chain-link succession Bro. Christian wrote, “The footsteps of the Baptists of the ages can more easily be traced by blood than by baptism. It is a lineage of suffering rather than a succession of bishops; a martyrdom for principle, rather than a dogmatic decree of councils; a golden chord of love, rather than an iron chain of succession, which, while attempting to rattle its links back to the apostles, has been of more service in chaining some protesting Baptists to the stake than in proclaiming the truth of the New Testament” (*A History of The Baptists*, Vol. I, p. 22).

Dr. Thomas Armitage, another well-known recorder of Baptist history, wrote, “The very attempt to trace an unbroken line of persons duly baptized upon their personal trust in Christ, or of ministers ordained by lineal descent from the apostles, or of churches organized upon these principles, and adhering to the New Testament in all things, is in itself an attempt to erect a bulwark of error” (*History of The Baptists*, p. 2).

Robert Robinson is quoted by Dr. Armitage as having written, “Uninterrupted succession is a specious lure, a snare set by sophistry, into which all parties have fallen and it has happened to spiritual genealogists as it has to others who have traced natural descents, both have woven together twigs of every kind to fill up remote chasms. The doctrine is necessary only to such churches as regulate their faith and practice by traditions, and for their use it was first invented” (Ibid. p.2)

Let me take just a moment to prove the validity of Robinson’s charge. Consider this quote from an alleged chain-link succession of Baptist Churches that is used to show their heritage by several Sovereign Grace Baptist Churches. “From 1751 on, the Opekon Baptist Church was connected with the Philadelphia Baptist Association of churches and was officially received into the association October 8, 1754. (Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association From 1707 to 1807 p. 71) Elder Abel Morgan was one of the messengers at the annual meeting when Opekon was received into the Association. Morgan came from the Welsh Tract Baptist Church in Newcastle county, Delaware (p.15) which was organized with 16 members at Pembrokeshire, South Wales in June of 1701 and sailed together to Philadelphia arriving September 8, 1701.”

In paragraph eight, the paragraph just quoted, we are told that Elder Abel Morgan was one of the messengers at the annual meeting when the Opekon Baptist Church was officially received into the Philadelphia Association. Note that *not one shred of evidence* is given that Elder Abel

Morgan had any connection with the Opekon church other than he was present and a messenger when she was received. Morgan, we are told, came from the Welsh Tract Baptist Church in Newcastle County, Delaware, which was organized in Pembrokeshire, South Wales. Is chain-link succession established here? Can chain-link succession be maintained by some messenger being present when a church is received into the Association because the messenger was a member of a church that came to the US from South Wales? There is absolutely no chain-link succession maintained or proven here. And, by the way, since when do independent Landmark Baptist Churches appeal to messenger meetings of associations to establish links in their chain of succession?

Those who use this to rattle the links of their chains all the way back to Christ and the Apostles have done exactly what Robinson said. They “have woven together twigs of every kind to fill up remote chasms.”

This alleged chain that goes all the way to the apostles and Christ might be of some help in establishing church perpetuity but it is a witness against chain-link succession. If time permitted, I would like to take this entire “chain” and show the counterfeit links in it, some covering 400 years.

Another eminent Baptist historian is David Benedict. His great work, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*, is a standard for any good church history library. In that book he makes the following statement concerning church succession, “I shall not attempt to trace a continuous line of churches, as we can for a few centuries past in Europe and America. This is a kind of succession to which we have never laid claim; and, of course, we make no effort to prove it. We place no kind of reliance on this sort of testimony to establish the soundness of our faith or the validity of our administrations” (*A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*, David Benedict, P. 51).

It is interesting that when this book was written in 1848, Baptists, according to Benedict, placed no reliance on church succession in the sense of a chain-link succession. Benedict did go on to show church perpetuity but said Baptists placed no kind of reliance on a linked-chain succession. Yet, today, there are those who are so adamant about succession that they charge with spiritual adultery any who do not hold linked-chain succession. Here is the problem for these people. They can in no way prove their claims from Scripture or history. They are a law unto themselves. They try to do that which is right in their own eyes because they are without inspired prophet or apostle to back up their claims.

Bro. W. R. Downing has done intensive research into church history. In his book on the church he makes the following statement, “It is one thing to prove historically that New Testament churches have existed in every age since the apostles; it is altogether different to seek to prove a linked succession of such churches! This is what distinguishes historic Baptists from those who are ardent ‘Landmarkers’.”

I like what Kenneth Good says on this matter of church perpetuity. “The authenticity of a Baptist church depends, not upon its ability to trace an unbroken line of connection to the apostles, but rather in its ability to demonstrate that it presently possesses the doctrines, principles, and

practices which the apostles had and which are evident on the pages of the New Testament. If a church were forced to demonstrate its 'kosher' pedigree in order to be recognized, this would require that organized assembly to rely upon the word of man rather than the Word of God, since the inspired genealogical tables came to the object of their existence with the birth of Christ and were not continued beyond that."

Harley Schrock wrote, "A true church is a church which is true to the teachings of the Word of God. No pedigree or succession of ancestors can make a church a true church."

Wendell Holmes Rone wrote the following very forceful and helpful statement.

"No amount of rattling of historical chains, worshipping of tradition, or loud and long claims to apostolicity can take the place of a real identity with and conformity to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in the New Testament . . . It is only as Baptists remain faithful to Jesus Christ and His Word that they can honestly claim apostolicity."

Bro. Roy Mason was a long-time writer for the Baptist examiner. He wrote,

"Baptists do not claim perpetuity upon the basis of a successive and unbroken chain of baptisms. I do not believe that it is necessary to have a linked succession of baptisms in order to have valid baptism. If such were the case, any of us would be hard pressed to establish that link, unbroken, back to apostolic times."

Many others could be quoted but I close this point with a quote from Bro. J. M. Holiday who declared, "We are not particularly interested in tracing an unbroken church succession from Christ to the present day, but rather in identifying the church to which Christ promised an eternal existence through the centuries to the present time, by what ever name it may have been identified" (*The Baptist Heritage*, p. 22).

It is evident from these quotes and others that I have not introduced that Baptists historically have **not held** to a formal linked-chain succession of churches; they have held to the perpetuity of Baptist Churches from the time of our origin during the ministry of Jesus Christ to the present day and world without end. Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE DECLARED THAT PROVES THE PERPETUITY OF TRUE BAPTIST CHURCHES

There is no testimony of men that is more forceful or weighty than the testimony of an enemy. Deuteronomy 32:31 For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

Professor Bannerman, a Presbyterian scholar and no friend of Baptists, affirms the perpetuity of the church, though he did not have in mind True Baptist churches. He wrote, "There are statements in Scripture that seem distinctly to intimate that the Christian Church shall always continue to exist in the world, notwithstanding that all is earthly and hostile around her. He has founded it upon a rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' . . . That Christ will be

with His church always, even unto the end of the world, ministering the needful support and grace for its permanent existence on earth, we cannot doubt . . . He has left us a promise that the powers of evil shall never finally prevail against or sweep it entirely away; and as belonging essentially to the due administration of that kingdom, and forming a part of it, the outward dispensation of the ordinances and worship in the church shall never fail . . . The ministry, embracing an order of men to discharge its duties, is a standing institution in the Christian Church since its first establishment until now, and Leslie, in his *Short Method with the Deists*, has fairly and justly appealed to the uninterrupted existence of the office as the standing and permanent monument of the great primary facts of Christianity, and, therefore, as demonstrative evidence of its truth” (Quoted in *Baptist Church Perpetuity*, by W. A. Jarrel, P. 23, taken from *The Church of Christ*, by Bannerman, Vol. 1, Pp. 51, 333, 439).

I call to testify to the perpetuity of true Baptist churches Drs. Ypeij and Dermout. Dr. A. Ypeij was Professor of Theology at Groningen. Along with Dr. J.J. Dermout, Chaplain to the king of Holland, he received a royal commission to prepare a history of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1819. This history, prepared with the sanction of the king of Holland, gives good testimony to the ancient origin and perpetual existence of true Baptist Churches.

These learned men of Holland wrote, “We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times, Mennonites, were the original Waldenses... *On this account, the Baptists may be considered as the only religious community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all ages.* (Emp. Mine, RWC) The perfectly correct external and internal economy of the Baptist denomination tends to confirm the truth, disputed by the Romish Church, that the Reformation brought about in the sixteenth century was in the highest degree necessary, and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics, that their denomination is the most ancient.” (*A History of the Baptists*, by John T. Christian, Vol. 1, Pp. 95-96).

As a result of this declaration by these prominent men, the Baptists were offered the patronage of the State of Holland, but, in keeping with their principle of the separation of church and state, they declined this offer.

An outstanding secular historian in his day, Dr. John Clarke Ridpath of Du Paw University, wrote to Dr. W. A. Jarrel, saying, “I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist *church* as far back as A. D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists” (*Baptist Church Perpetuity*, by W. A. Jarrel, P. 59).

Alexander Campbell, founder of the groups now variously known as “The Churches of Christ,” “The Disciples,” “The Christian Churches,” etc., in his debate with MacCalla, a Presbyterian, made this statement in support of the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches. He declared, “Clouds of witnesses attest the fact that before the reformation from Popery and from the apostolic age to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists, and the practice of baptism has had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced.” (*MacCalla-Campbell Debate on Christian Baptism*, Pp. 378-379).

In his book called *Christian Baptism*, Alexander Campbell made another statement that proves

the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches. He wrote, “The Baptist denomination in all ages and in all countries has been, as a body, the constant asserters of the rights of man and the liberty of conscience. They have often been persecuted by Pedobaptists; but they never politically persecuted, though they have had it in their power” (A. Campbell, *Christian Baptism*, p. 409, editions of 1851 and 1953). Campbell, though he had been run out of Baptist ranks for his heresy of baptismal regeneration, still dedicated *Christian Baptism* to the Baptists because they, according to him, have kept the ordinances of the gospel pure through the ages. It was my privilege to handle and read some of one of the first editions of this book and to see the dedication of the book.

In 1883, *A History of All Religions of the World* was published by Gay Brothers and Company, New York. It bore the seal of the Randolph Macon College at Ashland, Virginia. Concerning the antiquity of the Welsh Baptists I quote from this history as quoted by Bro. J. M. Holiday in *The Baptist Heritage*, P. 18. Here is what the writer had to say of the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches. “From England we pass to Wales. Baptists here lay claim to great antiquity, affirming that they date back to the first century, and holding a tradition that the Apostle Paul visited their mountains, preached among them two years, founding churches which Claudia, a Welsh princess, being at Rome, was converted under the ministry of Paul, and returning in the year 68 brought many of her people to the knowledge of Jesus, inducing them to abandon idolatry. Mosheim, the learned German Church Historian, says of the early Welsh Churches, that ‘No persons were admitted to baptism but such as had been previously instructed in the principle points of Christianity and had also given satisfactory proofs of pious dispositions and upright intentions.’ It is conceded that during the dark ages the Welsh churches remained pure and never bowed the knee in submission to the Papal power. The writer has been informed by an eminent Welsh clergyman that there is one Baptist Church in Glamorganshire claiming to have evidence of its existence for 800 years.”

Stanislaus Hosius was an official historian for the Roman Catholic Church. He was a Catholic Cardinal and the presiding officer at the Council of Trent. Concerning our forefathers, the Anabaptists, he wrote, “If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shows in suffering, the opinions and persuasions of no sect can be truer or surer than those of the Anabaptists, whence there have been none for these twelve hundred years past that have been more grievously punished, or that have more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone and even offered themselves to the most cruel sorts of punishment than these people. (*A History of the Baptists*, John T. Christian, Pp. 85-86).

The most forceful statement made by Hosius is one in which he dates the Baptists back to 354-356 AD. He wrote, “Were it not that the Anabaptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past twelve hundred years they would swarm in greater numbers than all the reformers.” (*Hosius, Letters, Apud Opera*, Pp. 112-113, quoted by Clarence Walker in the Introduction, *The Trail of Blood*, P. 3).

MOSHEIM, the well-known Lutheran historian, said in 1755, “Before the rise of Luther and Calvin there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the Dutch Baptists” (Cent. 16, Part 2, Sec. 2, Chap. 3).

In the *Edinburg Cyclopedia* that was published by the Presbyterians, it is said concerning the Baptists, “It must have already occurred to our readers that the Baptists are the same sect of Christians that were formerly described as Ana-Baptists. Indeed this seems to have been their leading principle from the time of Tertullian to the present time.” (Tertullian was born just fifty years after the death of the Apostle John. [RWC]).

This Presbyterian publication does three things worthy of note. (1) It identifies the Baptists with the Anabaptists. (2) It dates our origin back at least to the days of Tertullian who lived in the earliest of times in the church age. (3) It supports the contention that Baptists have enjoyed a perpetual existence from the time of our origin to the present day.

The sometimes-prejudiced Robert Barclay, a Quaker, testified to the legitimacy of our claim of the perpetuity of the Baptists. He wrote, “We shall afterwards show the rise of the Anabaptists took place prior to the Reformation of the Church of England, and there are also reasons for believing that on the Continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the times of the Apostles. In the sense of the direct transmission of Divine Truth, and the true nature of spiritual religion, it seems probable that these Churches have a lineage or succession more ancient than that of the Roman Church.” (*The Inner Life of the Societies of the Commonwealth*, Pp. 11-12, Quoted in *The Baptist Faith and Roman Catholicism*, Wendell Holmes Rone, P. 55).

It is evident that many of our enemies and non-friends have substantiated our claim of perpetuity of the Lords churches from their origin during the earthly ministry of Christ to this present day.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude this message I am reminded of the words of the queen of Sheba after she came to visit Solomon and investigate the things she had heard of him and his great wisdom. She remarked, *1 Kings 10:6-7* *It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.*

I assure you, I have not told half the story of the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches. Jesus promised and assured the perpetuity of his true churches. We have seen the testimony of non-Baptists in which they have affirmed our perpetual existence from the time of Christ to the days in which they wrote. Brethren and Sisters, you can believe in this doctrine of perpetuity of True Baptist Churches because you have the evidence.

1. The Bible teaches it.
2. Jesus promised it.
3. True Baptists have proclaimed it.
4. Non-Baptists have affirmed it.
5. Satan has opposed it but everywhere a Baptist has been slain by persecutors two or more have risen up in his place to carry on the fight for truth.
6. Liberal Baptists have compromised it.
7. Extremists have injured and embarrassed it by proclaiming that which cannot be proven

from Scripture or history.

But, I assure you,

1. The promise of Jesus has not failed.
2. The gates of hell have not prevailed against true Baptist Churches but they have been assailed in every century since the time of Christ.
3. Let us rejoice in Christ's kept promise and not be ashamed of it.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

By Forrest Keener

Open your Bibles to Ephesians 5:23, *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.* I want you to notice the word head and the word body here, because they are extremely important in this passage of Scripture. Then, for the sake of time, go to verse 32. We’ll make other references later. Ephesians 5:32 says, *“This is a great mystery.”* He’s talking about the relationship of the husband and the wife. And he says, *“but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* Then I want you, with that in your mind, to go to Matthew 28:18. *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”* And then notice that verses 19 and 20 are based upon verse 18. Matthew 28:19-20 says, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

You will not get the real impact of Matthew 28:19-20, unless you lay it squarely upon the foundation of verse 18. May I say just a word about this. You have often heard men relegate the word “power” in this particular case, (the Greek word “exousia”) to simply mean authority. But that is true only to an extent. The word “dunamis” means the ability to do something, but this word “exousia,” if I understand it rightly in its context, carries not only the authority to do a thing, but also the full ability. I might have the authority to get out of my car and carry it out of a mudhole. It’s my car and my mudhole, but I don’t have the ability to do it. And the Lord’s logic for this commission, is laid on the fact that He has both the authority to send you, and the power to sustain you, and give His purpose success. “Go ye therefore.” As we look at the subject, “The Head of the Church,” we realize that it is a biblical statement that Christ is the Head of the church. No one here would question that I don’t think. But often this is frustrated by a great many confusing approaches to what it means for Christ to be the Head of the church.

Please be aware of the biblical use of metaphors. When the Bible speaks of the church being the body of Christ, it is metaphorical, not literal. Please don’t declare war on me until you listen to what I have to say here. Scripture is not saying the church is His literal body. It is not to be taken as a literal statement. When He took the loaf of bread and broke it and said, “This is my body, take and eat,” He was not saying, that loaf of bread was His literal body. If you embrace the idea that He was, you have embraced the heresy of transubstantiation, claimed by the Catholics. And you will do the same thing if you literalize other metaphors of the church, such as, the vine. I believe the vine is a metaphor of the church. My Father is the Husbandman, I am the Vine, ye are the branches, it teaches a wonderful relationship. The body, in 1 Corinthians 13 speaks of the human body, “the hand cannot say,” “the eye cannot say,” it is speaking of a human body, and it is an illustration of the local churches. Those metaphors make no sense applying to any kind of church except the local church. But understand that the Lord uses those metaphors to teach us proper relationships. And this is extremely true, totally true, when it comes to this doctrine of the headship of the church. Now, when we take a metaphor and literalize it, or when we take something that is literal and we make it metaphorical, we frustrate its purpose. When you take a metaphor that the Lord has given you in the Bible, and you literalize it, you not only will teach error, as the case of transubstantiation taught by Catholicism, but you’ll rob yourself of the beauty, and the enlightenment of the metaphor itself. For instance, the metaphor of the body

shows the interdependence of members within the church. The metaphor of the headship of Christ shows us the authority, the power, and the control. The metaphor of the bride shows us the proper subjection, of the local church to Christ. God didn't just happen to throw those things into Scripture loosely. They are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and they are there to give us great pictures, and to teach us things that we would not be able to learn, if we did not have them. So take them very, very seriously. Consider then, that the body that is not connected to the head will putrefy every time. It is very important that the church has the right relationship to the Head. So let this metaphor teach us subjection. But subjection is not really what I'm going to talk about this morning, I'm going to talk chiefly about dependency. Not only subjection to the Head, but dependency upon the Head. I believe this is an extremely important issue for us today, and it is my subject this morning.

THE DEPENDENCY OF THE NATURAL BODY UPON THE HEAD

These metaphors, as I said, are not carelessly thrown into the Bible. They are not incidental thoughts that God just happened to drop in passing, as I often do. These are inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are very deliberately placed where they are, and it is extremely important that we be analytical enough in looking at them to see what they intend to teach us. For instance, He gives us the teaching of the husband and the wife, and I believe all Ephesians chapter 5 says on that subject is to be taken as fundamental truth. But notice that in verse 32 He says, "this is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and His church." So this truth concerning the husband and wife is given to us, and we are to look at that, and make application, draw a parallel and see, not only the interdependency of church members, and the proper subjection to Christ, but the absolute dependency of the church on the headship of Christ. Did you know that when the head is not in charge, that is, when the brain is not functioning, when the brain ceases to function, the rest of the body fails and will soon begin to deteriorate in some sense. Now, you can keep certain things alive. For instance, we have great machines now that will pump the blood through your body, and even make your heart beat. I have attended at least two that I can remember, perhaps more cases, where they unhooked the human body from these life support machines. These are, in many cases, instances where I have stayed in the hospital room the night before, or visited several times. Here lies a man upon the bed, in the intensive care unit, being attended constantly. I can look up at the monitors, and they indicate that he has a good, regular heartbeat. He even has good blood pressure. I'm serious! You look at him, and you see that he is breathing. He just looks pretty good. Now if you know enough about the machine, you will see a section that will show you what percentage of that activity is him, and what percentage is the machine. And as the percentage of activity generated by the man goes down, the machine percentage goes up, this man is dying. After a while they have to do something with him. Just a couple of weeks ago, a man I had known since he was a teenager, died, and his cousin, who is my sister-in-law, said to my wife, "Wayne died today." She told my wife that on Wednesday night in the church services. Lo and behold, my wife got the paper in a couple of days and it said that Wayne died on Thursday. She asked her sister-in-law, something like, did you have a premonition? You told me he died Wednesday night, the paper says that he died on Thursday. The explanation was that actually he died on Wednesday, but his wife just couldn't bring herself to have him unhooked, until they got some other family members who talked her into it. I don't know that I got all the story straight, but it is basically accurate, and it makes the illustration accurate for my purpose.

There are a lot of so-called churches today that are, in fact, like this man was on that heart machine. They are dead, as one man said, “dead, but too rich to bury.” And they are just being kept alive by an artificial means, and they are not living churches. They are like the church at Sardis, Rev.3:1, “*thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*” It can happen to us. Yes, It can. We don’t want that to be our condition, do we? It’s not what we want. Just as the brain directs the bodily functions, I’m talking about the kidneys and all of those things, so Christ directs the church. The church cannot function rightly unless Christ is the Head. And saying Christ is the Head of our church isn’t worth a spit in the wind, if Christ is not the Head of our church. We can talk about it, we can confess it, we can claim it, we can even hope that it is true, but we are dependent upon the fact that it really is true. Let me say something else. This headship of Christ over the church, like the headship of the husband over the wife is not vicarious. Do you fellows get somebody to communicate with your wife for you? Do you carry on your relationship with your wife intermediately, or immediately? I don’t mean to be gross or irreverent, but I am simply saying that this has to be a direct relationship with Christ. Separate the body from the head, or place an intermediate between them, and you will soon have a dead body.

ARTIFICIAL HEADS OF SOME SO-CALLED CHURCHES IN OUR DAY

Now, let me move on to a second thought. I want to speak to you briefly about some artificial heads of some churches, and other so-called churches, in our day. And I could talk about this for two hours. Of course, we have the pope that operates through his hierarchy. He doesn’t make any bones about it. One thing you’ve got to say for the Catholics in that area, they tell the truth about the system that they operate under. The pope is the head, under him are the cardinals. If you go to any local thing that is called a Catholic church, you will find that, no matter what anybody in that congregation thinks, what God said, or what Christ said, or anything else, I will tell you what they are going to do. They are going to do what the pope says. It’s going to come down to that, and that’s the way they are going to operate.

And then there are those inter-church boards, like the Methodists, and I don’t have time to get into how all of them operate. There are bishops over the Methodists, and of course, you have the cardinals under the pope, in the Catholic church. And all of these things work out to be the head or heads of the church, whatever they are called. All authority comes down through these men. And then you have fellowships and mission boards which operate subtly, very subtly. I pulled out of a fellowship in 1961, a fellowship of good men. Let me tell you something, I am not mad at anybody. And I am not here to pick on any group, not the Southern Baptist Convention, not the North American Baptist Association, not the South Wide Baptists, not the GARB. I am going to stand before God a whole lot too soon to spend my time picking on other men’s mistakes. And I believe that, in general, the men who started these groups, whether it is the WBF, the BBF, or whatever it is, were decent men with very, very few exceptions. They were men who felt that what they were doing was beneficial to the Lord’s work. And I wouldn’t walk around the block to hear you tell me what is wrong within the ABA, the BMA, or any of those other things because what is wrong within them is not the problem. It never has been. Oh, they have a lot of problems, but their problems are not the problem. What is wrong about them is their existence because in every instance the very existence of those groups, at the best men can do, becomes an

interference between the church and a direct ability to follow Christ without pressure. Brother Wayne Camp and I agree on most things. So let's say that Bro. Wayne and I decide that we are going to start a cooperative school between our churches. Now we don't disagree on much, but what do we do with those few things upon which we disagree? Well, if we fight about them, obviously we're not going to have school. So we're going to decide, necessarily, that we must at least go easy on those areas, two or three, one or two, it doesn't matter. So let's now enlarge this just a little, we will just grow a little, and Brother Ron joins us. And lo and behold, something else is different. It is just a small disagreement, but we must ignore another issue. And let's bring in Brother Royce over here, who agrees with me on almost everything. The only places we disagree are just a couple of places where he is wrong. But we will bring him in. Now, we have a little problem, and it is growing every day. We brought in the second man, and doubled the issues that must become "non-issues." We brought in Bro. Royce. Now we've increased those non-issues. We bring in Bro. Laurence Justice, and we increase it even more. My point is this, all our organization has to do is to grow, in order for it to come to the point that we cannot be emphatic about anything. Dr. Frank Godsoe, who has been with the Lord now for many years, was an old friend of mine. He used to tell the story of when he was a farm boy. He started to preach when he drove a horse and buggy. He could tell you some stories that would thrill your heart. But he said that when he was a boy they would go out to the fields, and they always went in a wagon. That was before very many people had automobiles. And he said that they had a little dog that always was their fearless leader. He said this little dog would get out in front of the wagon and trot along, just the proudest little dog you ever saw. He was leading the caravan, and everyone had to follow him. They come to a fork in the road, and the little dog would go the wrong way. The team and wagon, would go the way the driver chose, and the little dog would run back to the right road, get in front of them, and there he would go again, trotting along with great pride. He's leading the group. He went wherever he wanted to go, but where he wanted to go was in front of the wagon. He was probably afraid to go anywhere else. I will tell you something else, that little dog wagged his tail, because that is what little dogs do. And that is what preachers do, and churches do, a lot of times, they wag their tongues like a dog wags his tail. They talk about how independent they are, how surely they do their own thing, how they do as they please. And, like the little dog, they wag their tails any way they want to wag them. It doesn't make a dime's worth of difference about the wag in their tongue or tail, because the tail goes with the dog, and the dog goes with the wagon. It is our nature to follow bigness. And as this happens, the headship of Christ becomes strangely lost in that fear of men and the dependency upon numbers. And again, I don't care what group it is, the necessary dependency upon the approval and the cooperation, and the help of those brethren becomes a snare. It doesn't make any difference whether it is a dependency upon the support of your missionary, or whether it is a retirement fund within the group, it will still put a measure of pressure upon you, and you can't help it. It's going to happen. We can't get away from it, if we are part of such an ecclesiastical machine. Again, I'm not mad at any of these people. I feel sorry for people who are having those problems.

Well, let me say something else. I'm not going to just pick on those folks on the outside. They probably won't hear this tape or read the book anyhow. Let's pick on ourselves a little. Let us see some things we can and should change. Among a lot of independent Baptists churches, I see some internal ruling presbyteries. Now I do not know of any church, represented here this morning, unless you are something other than an independent Baptist, who would immediately

admit to a Presbyterian form of government in your church. By that I mean a rule of elders within your church. I wouldn't and I don't think anybody else in this assembly would. But I want to tell you something, you don't have to call them elders. We don't refer to our deacons by the title "deacon" in our church. We voted not to refer to them that way some years ago. We decided that we would refer to them by the particular office they fill. That's our right, it's not unbiblical because they are called something else a lot more in Scripture, than they are called deacons. Sure, we have deacons. Every church has them. You can't help it. Wherever, whatever office of service in the church, you have elected a man to, you've actually made him a deacon. The reason we don't call them deacons is because the name has been perverted. We don't call this man over here, Bishop Smith. He is a bishop, but we don't call him that. Why not? Well, it's because of the mess that has been made out of the name by some other groups. You don't have to call him a bishop, it would be all right if you did, and it's all right if you do not. It's all right if you call men deacons, it's all right if you don't. I want to tell you something. In many churches, men are made deacons, and in a little while become self-destructive, and hurtful to their church. With good understanding and leadership, they will not. But in many cases they make the church unpastorable. I have seen good pastors almost crucified, by decent people, in decent churches, because they allowed an internal headship to arise. Most pastors know that it is a lot easier to control seven men than seventy. Isn't that true? So get those seven men together and call them deacons, make friends out of them, take them out to eat, entertain them, make them your bosom buddies, and they will follow you like a pack of fox hounds, and do your bidding until you displease them, and you have trouble. And those men often act destructively, listen now, believing, truly believing, that they are protecting, and directing, the Lord's church. Listen now, this is a thing they have no right or commission to do, as a deacon, not ever! The problem is not that they are bad men, or insurrectionists, or that they have sinister plots to destroy. No, no. It is that they have been put into a position that should never have existed, as far as they are concerned. Many Churches and pastors, by practice of an unbiblical tradition, have built this evil machine, and it robs Christ of the headship. No, I think it more accurate to say it robs the church of the headship of Christ. They become the head of the church. And I will tell you this, they become a presbytery over that church. It doesn't make any difference if you call them deacons or donkeys, they still are ruling the church, which the whole congregation should rule, and it is wrong. Such practice is always destructive to the church.

And then there are pastors, who by their charisma, become dictators of the church. In the eyes of the congregation, it's right because the pastor says it is right. They do what they do because the pastor said do it, not because he showed them that the Bible taught them to do it. "If you don't do this," says he, "you are not following pastoral leadership." Such pastors become the head of the church. If the pastor acts that way in the church, if he conducts himself that way, don't expect that you will not have people within the church trying to shoot you off that pedestal and climb on. That's what you're teaching them to do. Don't do that, it's a mistake. Let the Lord be the head of the church. Don't try to rule by cliques, or by boards, or by groups. Let Scripture be your scepter, and always use it to point the church to Christ. There is nothing wrong with the office of a deacon. It is scriptural. But if you have a board of deacons that makes policy decisions, now listen, that the church is not part of, you have moved in the direction of letting men become the head of the church. And you have made trouble for yourself, and for the flock over which God has made you overseer. It may not come back to bite you tomorrow, but it will appear if you stay in that church long enough. And if you don't, some other pastor will be bitten later on.

A PROPER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Now I want to move, finally, to briefly address a proper relationship between the head, which is Christ, and the church. First of all, what is the body? Now I believe the body, as we see it in 1 Corinthians 12, is a metaphor for the local church, and that exclusively. I believe that the baptism there, as you are baptized by one Spirit, is water baptism. It is by the leadership of the Holy Spirit that we are baptized into the local body. You can get a copy of my tract on “Baptized by one Spirit in one Body” if you want to, and you will get what I believe to be simple and biblical information on that. You can read a clear exposition of 1 Cor. 12:13. I believe it is accurate. It has been used all across the country. It shows that the baptism of 1Cor. 12:13 is not the Holy Spirit baptizing anybody. He has never baptized anybody yet. The Bible never says He did, no not ever. But anyhow, you can take a look at that. But when I look at this metaphor of the body, it seems so important in the Scripture, that I say we need to know what this is talking about. It is talking about the local church, and as far as I am able to tell, nothing else. I’m not going to throw rocks at everyone who may disagree with me, all it proves, if you disagree with me, is that I’m right and you’re wrong. Of course, I’m teasing. I don’t believe that, and I don’t mean that. But I believe that passage is talking about the local church and nothing else, no not ever. Now here is what I am saying. Look to your Bible, not to men, to discern the truth in this area. Bro. Cozart did a tremendous job on the nature of the church last night. He brought out the fact that the church is an ecclesia, and that truth is so fundamentally important. All churches are assemblies, but not all assemblies are churches. I hope you understand what I am saying. All churches are assemblies. You cannot have any other kind of a church. It is a called out and covenanted assembly, and that principle holds true even when it is not assembled. That was a good point you made on the church roll, Bro. Royce, if you’re the one that brought that out. If you consult your Bible, you will find that there are 112 references to this word “ecclesia” where it’s talking about the Lord’s church. I believe there are 115 appearances of the word “ecclesia” altogether, but if you take away those that Bro. Cozart mentioned last night, which do not refer to the Lord’s New Testament Church, if my memory serves me accurately, you have 112 references to this word church, where it comes from this Greek word ecclesia. Then, if you will take all of the places where it is obviously referring to a local congregation, again if my memory serves me right, you have only seven left. Only seven! I’m talking about taking those places where it says the church at Corinth, when you come together in the church, tell it to the church, or where the word is used in the plural, for those are, obviously, all local church references. You’re going to have seven references left, such as “on this rock I will build my church.” If you didn’t know what that word “ecclesia” meant, and if that were the only reference you had in your Bible, you wouldn’t know what he was talking about, when He says on this rock I will build my church. But as you go to these others, you will clearly know what He is talking about. And it seems to me that if you have, granting that I’m right on my memory of words, 105 references to this word church, and we see that they are talking about a local congregation like Victory Baptist Church, in Kansas City Missouri, this congregation that meets here on Blue Ridge Extension, we have a simple conclusion to which we are clearly pointed. In those cases a local congregation is what Scripture is talking about, and you clearly see that 105 of those usages are speaking of a local congregation, is it not logical and reasonable then, to assume that the other seven are talking about the same thing, unless there is something in the text that forbids you to give the word that meaning? And friend, you just won’t find such an indication in the text. Now, I know that those

other usages are generic usages. For instance, when you come together in the church, that is a generic usage. What church? Well, he is writing to the church at Corinth, but it would be equally applicable to any church and there are many, many generic usages, but the generic usages are not talking about something that is different from the local congregation. They are talking about local congregations, in general, and that precisely. So when we say, in church context, the body of Christ, we are talking about a local church, and absolutely nothing else.

There are different members and capacities within each church. Now listen carefully to this, there are different members within each local body but none of them are priests. None of them are intermediaries between you and Christ. They are not. Every one of them have a direct access to Christ. Now let me say this, our jobs and responsibilities are not all the same. There are sovereign appointments. God calls preachers. God calls pastors. God sovereignly appoints us to jobs, responsibilities, and positions of oversight in the church. That's not merely an invention of Baptists. God tells us that in the Scripture. He speaks of the elders taking the oversight, that is, the pastors in the churches taking the oversight. That is their appointed business. These are sovereign appointments, and I could not emphasize sovereignty in that area too much. Remember what Peter said to Simon the sorcerer? You have neither part nor lot in this matter. Why? Because you're such a wicked fellow? It had nothing to do with that. It just was not a gift or an assignment that God had given to Simon the sorcerer, or Wayne Camp, or Laurence Justice, or to Forrest Keener. It was given to the apostles and then I believe to the other seventy, and finally to Paul. I don't believe it goes any further than that. The gifts of healing, didn't go any further than that. God made those appointments, and men can't volunteer for them. Now understand this, good people hurt good churches by trying to be pastors. When I hear somebody in the church say "Me and sister so-and-so got together, and prayed about this," I think, oh Lord help me. Lord help us. I'm serious about that folks. I surely believe that we ought to pray, but I'm telling you something folks, and I say this to all of you folk here, who are not pastors, all of you, don't try to be the pastor of your fellow church members. Pastors' wives, never, never, never be presumptions enough to try to pastor the women of the church. God did not call you to do that. And you will make a mess of it one hundred percent of the time. One hundred percent of the time, either directly or indirectly, you will make a mess. God called your husband to be the pastor. Leave that to him. Pray for fellow members, but don't do too much praying with individual members. Especially, don't let them confess their sins to you. Leave that alone. God has placed particular people in church oversight and you are not one of them. But the point is this, God placed pastors there. They are overseers of the flock, but they are not appointed dictators, and they are not owners.

There are two important metaphors here that we need to see, in respect to Christ's headship over the church. They are the body and the wife. The one has to do with our relationship to each other, our interdependency upon each other as members of the body. That is, of course, with the head being the authority, and the power, and the director, over the body, and over the wife. And incidentally brethren, I've heard some Baptists make an application here, which I am fully persuaded is a mistake. Do not take this word "espoused," anywhere in your Bible, and define it as meaning an engagement. It is no such thing. It is not an engagement. It is a marriage. Ask anyone who is familiar with Spanish languages about the word *Espouse*. Does it mean I am engaged? "This is my spouse, we are engaged." That is pure foolishness, it speaks of a wife. When Paul says "I have espoused you to one husband," that word espoused means joined,

jointed, it means married, not engaged. A woman is not a bride until she gets married. A bride is a wife. If we use this word wife we'll see some truth that we often miss with today's traditional, ecclesiastical use of the word bride. There is a relationship there. It is a relationship not only of subjection, but of dependency. Time fails me to be able to say too much about this, but let me say it in these words. Scripture says, "And He is the saviour of the body." Paul is talking about the husband and the wife, The husband is the head of the wife, and He is the saviour of the body. Wives, you need your husband. You are dependent upon him. The greatest curse upon women today is they're being taught, they're being raised, they're being educated, not to be dependent upon a man. I am afraid that is a terrible indictment against the character, and maturity of men. I mean, I understand why, as sorry as a lot of men are today, nobody would want their daughter to be dependent upon one of these critters. I can understand that. But it is contrary to God's Word of instruction for the relationship. God uses instructors, and preachers, but they are not daysmen, they are not mediators. Christ is the Mediator between men and God. We are not. The head has authority and He rightly controls every member.

There is often an impropriety here in member's conduct. For instance, the church will plan a business meeting, and some members will get together and decide what to do. Their format of reasoning is, "Hey, brother, what do you think about this? What do you think we ought to do tomorrow night? We're going to have this business meeting, we're going to make a decision on this matter, what is your opinion?" That's an ungodly thing to do at worst, and a serious mistake at best. If we go back to the Acts 15:22, we read these words. "Then it pleased the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas..." When they got there, they listened to the account, they listened to what was said, and then they sought the Lord for the basis of their decision. It was not a consensus of human opinion, but rather a seeking of the headship of Christ. If you look in the first chapter of Acts, where they met together to choose a replacement for Judas, they said, "Lord, thou knowest the hearts of all men, shew us whom thou hast chosen." That ought to be the desire of every member. Listen, we practice congregational rule, but that does not mean that the church is a democratic society. That's not what it means. We're supposed to be very deliberately under Christ, our Head, carefully seeking Him.

Let me close, with an illustration. When I was a little boy, we used order chickens by mail. Did you ever do that? We would order three or four hundred little chickens by mail. Most of them would drown, the first or second time a rainstorm came. Some of them would die from the heat on a hot day. And we would finally end up with 50 or 60 fryers which wouldn't last long, if momma turned us loose on them, because there were 9 children in our family. And there were several boys, including myself, who could eat a whole fried chicken if that much were prepared. I expect I still could, and I would probably enjoy every bite of it. I would probably weigh 400 pounds if I ate so foolishly, but I love fried chicken. My wife could vouch for that. As boys, we would go out and catch some chickens for Mom to clean and fry. Sometimes we used the chicken hook, and sometimes we would throw out a little corn and just reach down and catch one. When we had caught the unfortunate creature we would dispatch it for the purpose of the preparation. You could dispatch him two or three ways. You could ring his neck, or you could just pop his head off, and there were other methods. It didn't make too much difference how you got his head off. When that chicken was separated from his head, he could jump higher than he had ever been able to jump any time in his life. He was more lively than you'd ever seen him be

before. We used to have the little kids, running and screaming over the antics of those headless chickens. But let me tell you some things about that chicken. It wasn't going to lay any more eggs, if it ever had laid any. If it was a rooster, it wasn't going to crow any more. The chicken wouldn't grow up to produce anything else. That chicken didn't know what it was doing. It was as likely to jump one way as another. And that is exactly the way any church is going to be, if Christ is not the Head. Now listen, it doesn't make a dime's worth of difference, if you've got seven of the best men in the world running that church as deacons, or if you have the best pastor in the world, or the wisest man you could find anywhere in this world running that church, it's still going to be like a chicken with his head off, unless we are all walking in the fear of God, and in humility, pleading that Christ would be the Head of the church. We are as dependent upon Him being our head, as my human body is dependent upon its head. The church just can't continue to live any other way. Though it may be jumping higher than ever before, growing in attendance, and it may be the city's centerpiece of conversation, if Christ is not the head, it is no longer a church, in any biblical sense. Let us plead for, and bow to, the headship of Christ over our churches. Let us plead that we may know how to look to Him as our head.

The Ordinances of the Church

Matthew 28:19-20

Matthew 26:26-28

by **Dan Cozart**

My assigned subject is “**The Ordinances of the Church**”. There are two texts I would like to read for your hearing. The first one is Matthew 28:19-20, and the other is Matthew 26:26-28.

There are but two ordinances of the New Testament Church. One is the ordinance of Baptism, and the second is the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. There are some Baptist groups which would say there are three ordinances, and the third one is the ordinance of Footwashing. There is, however, no evidence that the early New Testament church practiced this. They practiced Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but not Footwashing as a church ordinance.

Before studying more carefully these two ordinances, I would point out two things by way of introduction. First, they are to be called ordinances and not sacraments. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism call them sacraments, but they do so in error. There is no saving efficacy in either Baptism or the Lord’s Supper, and neither do the participants of them indicate grace has been bestowed. They are ordinances and not sacraments.

Also, it is most important to know that they are Church Ordinances and not individual Christian ordinances. They were given to the church, and only the church has the authority to dispense them. No preacher has a right to independantly go out and baptize new converts. It must be done by the authority of a local New Testament Church.

Neither is the Lord’s Supper to be independently administered at weddings, in hospitals, in Rest Homes, or any other place. It is to be observed by the church when the church comes together.

Let us study them in their Scriptural order. First, Baptism, and then the Lord’s Supper.

THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

MATTHEW 28:19-20

In this text our Lord is giving to His church the Great commission. It is not given to twelve individual disciples, but is given to them collectively as the nucleus of the First New Testament Church. He commissions them to do three things. They were to **Evangelize, Baptize and Catechize**. What did He mean by “baptizing them”?

What does the word *baptize* mean? Our English word is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*. The *o* was dropped, an *e* was added coming across as *baptize*. “Baptize” is never translated sprinkle or pour. It means to dip or immerse. The Greek word for sprinkle is *rantizo*. The Greek word for sprinkle is *echeo*. The word for dip is *baptizo*. You cannot baptize without dipping or immersing. The Greeks consistently used it meaning to dip or immerse. When engaged in a sea battle sinking another ship, they would report “that ship was baptized”. The ship was immersed!

The requirements for *baptizo* are clearly set forth in Scripture. (1) It must be done in water (Mark 1:5). (2) It must be done in much water (John 3:23). (3) It involves going down into the water (Acts 8:38). (4) It involves burial in water (Colossians 2:12). (5) It involves coming up out of the water (Mark 1:10).

What, then, does the act of baptism mean? Baptism is a requirement for church membership according to Acts 2:42, 47. The 3000 heard the preaching of the Gospel by Simon Peter and they received Christ as Saviour and Lord. They were saved, but they were not in the church. It was not until they were baptized that they were added to the church. Thus, baptism becomes the badge of church membership.

Baptism serves as a picture. It gives us a picture of the Gospel. In it we see the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It also gives us a picture of a sinner coming to Christ. He comes as a dead man needing to be buried. Not only buried, but raised to serve a risen Lord. Furthermore, it pictures the believer's union and identification with Christ. The Lord provided the example and the believer follows it.

There are four qualifications for Scriptural baptism. **(1) There must be a Proper Subject.** That subject is a professed believer in the Lord Jesus. We do not baptize believers, but rather professed believers. Infants and babies do not meet this qualification. The unsaved do not qualify to be baptized. **(2) There must be a Proper Authority.** That authority is the local New Testament Church. This exempts individual baptizings along with religious organizations and orders. **(3) There must be a Proper Purpose.** That purpose is to show salvation, not procure it. Baptismal regeneration is nowhere taught in the Bible. Baptists have always placed the blood before the water. This would disqualify a Campbellite baptism. I was put under the water at age 12 when I went forward in a church. I was not converted until several years later. At that time I requested to be baptized scripturally. Baptism must come after salvation, never before. **(4) There must be a Proper Mode.** That mode is immersion only. Anything less is not baptism. God does not give us a choice between sprinkling, pouring or immersion. It cannot be baptism without immersion!

Baptism is exemplified in the New Testament. Observe the baptism of our Lord in Matthew 3:13-17. The importance of this act is evident because our Lord walked some 12 - 15 miles to be immersed. He was not baptized *with* Jordan. He was baptized *in* Jordan. John the Baptist went with our Lord down into the river. This would have been useless if only he was going to sprinkle water over the head of the Saviour. Christ went down into the water. He was placed under the water, and He came up out of the water.

Another example is that of the eunuch in Acts 8:29-39. Phillip preached the gospel to the eunuch but had to wait until they came to a body of water before he could be baptized. The eunuch had water in his canteen, but it was not enough. It was sufficient enough to sprinkle, but not sufficient enough to bury.

Finally, the Philippian Jailor submitted to believer's baptism in Acts 16:30-33. He did not have to wait for an examination committee to give approval. He did not want to wait for a more convenient season. He agreed to be baptized in the middle of the night.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Matthew 26:26-28

The bread and the cup have been the subject of much controversy. Again, we must keep in mind that it, like baptism, is an ordinance and not a sacrament. There is no saving efficacy in the Lord's Supper.

There are three major approaches to the meaning of the Lord's Supper: (1) The Roman Catholic view is called Transubstantiation. This view holds that the elements of the supper, namely the bread and the wine are transformed into the literal flesh and blood of Christ. (2) The Lutheran View is called Consubstantiation. Though Martin Luther decried the Catholic position of transubstantiation, he still believed that the presence of Christ was some how present with the ordinance. (3) The Representative View is held by most Protestants and all Baptists. The bread and wine are both symbols in *this* view. The bread represents the body of Christ, while the wine represents His blood. There is no holiness in the elements themselves. Nor does one acquire righteousness by eating the bread and drinking the cup. The purpose is to show forth the death of Christ until He comes again.

R.J. George, in his *Lectures in Pastoral Theology* submits five theories of Church Communion. (1) There is the **Latitudinarian Theory** which has no restrictions. It would admit anyone, whether saved or unsaved, to freely come to the table. No one is denied. (2) There is the **Visible Disciple Theory** which extends the supper to all believers, whether they are members of the church or not. Unbelievers are excluded. (3) The **Restricted Communion** theory would be given to all denominational churches with Unitarians, Catholics and Universalist excluded. Church membership is a requirement. (4) The **Occasional Communion Theory** which is extended on occasions to believing members of other churches who are providentially separated from their church home. This would also include vacations. (5) **The Close Communion Theory** which is extended only to those of the same local church, and none else.

Among Baptists, and for practical reasons, these views could be reduced to three: (1) Open Communion which is for all who claim to be Christians. (2) Restricted Communion which is offered to Baptists of other Baptist churches. (3) Close Communion which is only for the membership of the local Baptist church.

Concerning Open Communion, Strong in his *Systematic Theology*, page 552, says that this view of Communion logically leads to open church membership, and is virtually an identification of the church with the world, and without protest from Scripturally constituted bodies, would finally result in its actual extinction.

Mr. Strong furthermore states concerning Restricted Communion: "Since baptism is a command of Christ, it follows that we cannot properly commune with the unbaptized. To admit such to the Lord's Supper is to give the symbol of Church fellowship to those who, in spite of the fact

that they are Christian brethren, are, though perhaps unconsciously, violating the fundamental law of the church.”

J.R. Graves states in *The Lord's Supper*, pages 9-19, concerning Close Communion: “(1) That each church under Christ is absolutely independent. (2) To each local church is committed the sole administration and guardianship of the ordinances. (3) It symbolizes church relation, that is, all who jointly partake are members of the one and self-same church. (4) It was instituted by Christ to be observed as a church ordinance. (5) The Lord's Supper was observed by the apostolic churches (A.D. 100) as a church ordinance...”

In the understanding of this preacher, the only Scriptural view is Close Communion. Christ Jesus established it in the local body of baptized believers, and that is where it should stay. There are several reasons for this: (1) It is a Table of Fellowship. “How can two walk together except they be agreed?” The established doctrine of a church is set by the pulpit of that church in accordance with the Word of God. To invite other believers, though they have been baptized, does not assure unity of doctrine around the table.

(2) It is a Table of Discipline. The local church is made up of believers who are under the subjection and discipline of that local church. Disciplinary problems may come in from another church and, if invited, sit down at the Lord's Table of a church that has no authority over them.

(3) It is a Table of Exclusion. Not even all the members of a local church should partake of the supper. To eat it unworthily is to invite judgement.

There are two tables in the church to which all, believers and unbelievers alike, are invited and welcomed: (1) There is the gospel Table. It is here the Bible is preached and truth declared. All are invited to come and listen. (2) There is the Food Table. When the church has an Agape Feast, all are invited to attend and participate.

There are three tables which should never be shared by the local church with outsiders: (1) The Baptism Table: We do not baptize converts to go to the church of their choice. They are baptized by that local church for entrance into that local church membership only. (2) The Business Table: When a church conducts a business conference, outsiders are not invited to participate. (3) The Lord's Supper Table: When a local church observes the Lord's Supper, it is designed for members only. Each local church does business with God around its own local church ordinance.

Now, let us look particularly at the Lord's Supper Observance, as is set forth in I Corinthians 11:18-34.

(1) It is an exhortation (vs. 24). “Take eat” and “this do.” To whom is this directed? The answer is found in Verse 18. The writer makes a distinction in “churches of God” in vs. 16, and “church” singular in verse 18. It is a local church setting and not a general one for believers everywhere.

(2) It is a commemoration... “in remembrance of Me.” We must remember His sinlessness

when tempted (Hebrews 4:15), His silence when tried (Isaiah 53:7), His suffering when crucified (I Peter 2:21), His sorrow when forsaken (Matthew 27:46, and His substitution when He died (Isaiah 53:6).

(3) It is a declaration (vs. 26). “You do shew” or declare...The Lord’s Supper preaches the death of Jesus Christ (John 6:53).

(4) It is a duration (vss. 25-26). It says “As oft as you eat and drink”. We are to do it often and frequently, and until the Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 26:29). It will culminate and be observed for the final time in the personal presence of our Lord when He returns and establishes the Kingdom on earth.

(5) It is an investigation (vs. 28) where it says “Let a man examine himself.” It is a time when every believer should judge himself (vs. 31). First, this investigation concerns one’s conversion and baptism. This is an ordinance for baptized believers. Second, this investigation concerns one’s catechism (vss. 18-19). We must continue in the Apostle’s doctrine as well as the breaking of bread. We must not rebel against any truth of Scripture. Thirdly, this investigation concerns the believer’s conduct (vss. 29-33), It is a time, not only for recognizing sin, but confessing and repenting of sin. “Lord, is it I?”

In conclusion, we see the New Testament church has two ordinances to be observed....that of baptism after conversion, and the Lord’s Supper after baptism. Buell H. Kazez has correctly stated in *The Church and the Ordinances*, page 94, that “Baptism guards the door to the church; the Lord’s Supper keeps the body in spiritual discipline.”

CHURCH POLITY

by Pastor Ron Crisp

Christ Jesus instituted the church and placed it over the work of His kingdom. As with any organization the church must operate under some type of polity. The founders of our nation were very careful as they chose the form of government for us to use and enjoy. Can we believe that our Lord was any less careful in giving direction and instruction to His churches? History reveals that church government is indeed a critical issue. Error in the polity of a church will lead to error in the gospel of a church.

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

True churches are unique among self-governing societies in that they operate under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is the head and only lawgiver over the assembly (Ephesians 1:22). The church is His property (Matthew 16:18). Christ is to rule supremely through His Word and through the leadership of His Holy Spirit (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 19; Revelation 3:6, 13, 22). Neither a pastor nor a people are to seek or have any intent or concern other than doing the will of Christ. He is Lord over God's house. We are but stewards and servants.

FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Christ's Lordship does not negate the need for church government nor does it lessen the importance of this study. We submit to Christ's rule by obeying His Word. Jesus is Lord; therefore, His church must govern itself according to scriptural order.

What then is the Biblical form of church government? Most Bible teachers consider it helpful to compare and contrast the forms most common in "Christendom." These are:

The Presbyterian Form

The word "presbyterian" comes from the Greek word that is translated "elder" in our English Bible. James Pendleton has described presbyterianism in this way:

Presbyterianism recognizes two classes of elders---*preaching* elders and *ruling* elders. The pastor and ruling elders of a congregation constitute what is called "the session of the church." The "session" transacts the business of the church, receives, dismisses, excludes members, etc. From the decisions of a session there is an appeal to the presbytery; from the action of the presbytery an appeal to the Synod; and from the action of the Synod an appeal to the General Assembly, whose adjudications are final and irresistible.

Presbyterianism errs from scriptural order in these three particulars:

1. Presbyterianism names two distinct orders of elder---the ruling elder and the preaching elder. Ruling elders are laymen who are part of the “session of the church.”
2. This form of church government is not democratic. The church is ruled by the “session” which handles all matters of membership, discipline, etc.
3. Presbyterianism holds that the local church is part of a larger structure. In this way the local church is not the final court of appeal and does not hold the keys of the Kingdom.

The Episcopal Form

The word “episcopal” comes from the Greek word translated “bishop” or “overseer” in our English Bible. Those who hold to this form of polity teach that there are three positions in the ministry---the deacons, the elders, and the bishops. The bishop is a man who superintends an entire district of churches. The Roman Catholic Church holds to an episcopal polity. It has also created a more extensive hierarchy that includes deacons, priests, bishops, archbishops, patriarchs, cardinals and finally, a pope.

The episcopal form of church government errs from scriptural order in these three ways:

1. Deacons are not an order of clergy.
2. Elders and bishops are not a separate order of clergy. Both elder and bishop refer to the same office. Elders are the bishops or overseers of the church (Compare Acts 20:17 with Acts 20:28). This episcopal concept of bishops developed in the second century A.D.
3. Those who hold to this form of church government believe that the local church is but only a part of a larger national or worldwide church.

The Congregational-Independent Form

The Bible teaches and Baptists believe in a congregational-independent form of church polity. The term “congregational” means that the power and/or direction of the church lie with its people. In this sense, the church is a democracy. The label “independent” means that the local church is complete and autonomous. The church is not a part of a larger entity and there is no appeal from its authority.

PROOF OF CONGREGATIONAL-INDEPENDENT POLITY

The congregational nature of church government is seen in the way that the first New Testament churches carried out their work. These early churches chose their own officers. Acts 1:15-16 tells of the selection of men as candidates to fill the place of Judas. Note that in Acts 6:3-5 the deacons were chosen by the members of the Jerusalem church.

The early churches had sole power to discipline their members. The majority inflicted the discipline of members of the Corinthian church (II Corinthians 2:6-7). Paul did not doubt that the man in that church who was involved in an incestuous relationship needed to be disciplined but Paul left the act of exclusion to that local assembly. See I Corinthians 5:4-5.

Even in situations where apostolic churches cooperated in the Lord's work, the local church retained its autonomy. Each individual church chose men to carry out particular tasks and to act as messengers. See II Corinthians 8:19, 23 and I Corinthians 16:3.

Congregational polity is also in accord with other Biblical revelations concerning the church. For example, the New Testament teaches that there should be a regenerate church membership. Membership is voluntary and is restricted to those who know and love Christ. Church members as believer priests can discern God's will. Is it really any surprise that churches which have infant and other unconverted members do reject the congregational-independent polity?

Congregational polity is also implied in the nature of the ministry. Elders are not clerical priests or spiritual lords over God's people. Elders rule by teaching truth and by setting an example of obedience to Christ. Ministers labor among brethren, not among serfs. See Matthew 20:25-27 and Matthew 23:8.

The scripture is equally clear concerning the independent nature of the church. Again, the churches described in the New Testament were local assemblies. There was never any mention of any church being a part of some larger organization or entity. Nowhere in the Bible were a group of churches in a locality or the aggregate of churches on earth referred to as "the church" (Galatians 1:2). Each assembly was a body of Christ and a house of God. One may speak of the Presbyterian or Episcopal Church of America but such a label or title cannot be applied to Baptists. The Baptist concept of the church forbids it. Baptists may use the word "church" in an institutional sense or they may use it in referring to an actual assembly.

The New Testament describes each local church as one that exercised the responsibility of having the keys of the Kingdom. Each New Testament church elected, ordained and sent out preachers. Each one also received members, disciplined, conducted business and did God's work. Matthew 18:17-18 tells us that there was not an appeal regarding the decisions of the local church.

Furthermore, each church answered for its own actions and doctrines. Christ Jesus wrote to each of the seven churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 2-3). He did not write to a regional board or bishop. Paul also wrote to individual churches such as the church at Corinth.

New Testament churches appointed "messengers" (II Corinthians 8:23). These were not "delegates." There is no scriptural evidence that any church felt at liberty to delegate its authority to any man, committee or board. These churches were truly autonomous and were themselves the instruments that God used to carry out the Great Commission.

Present day Baptists need to be cautious and to beware of losing their true independence by delegating away their power and responsibilities. Dr. D.M. Lloyd-Jones has made an insightful comment in his sermon on church government.

And then, finally, there is the view of church government which we call *congregational* or *independent*. It is rather difficult to handle this subject nowadays because not one of the descriptions which I will be giving is strictly in

correspondence with what is actually in practice today. Here I am beginning to talk about independency or congregationalism. But there is very little of such a quality to be had today. The Congregationalists---those who believe in the congregational system---affirm that every local church is an entity in itself, that it has supreme power to decide everything itself. It is a gathering of Christians who believe the Lord is present and is the Head of the Church, and who believe that, as they look to Him and wait upon Him, He, by the Spirit, will guide them and give them wisdom they need to decide about doctrine and discipline, and so on. The local church is autonomous, it governs itself, and does not look to any higher body, be it a bench of bishops, a presbytery, a general assembly or anything else.

But, I ask, how many such churches are there today? Originally, the description applied to the so-called Congregationalists and to the Baptists, for the Baptists believe in congregational church order, independency from the standpoint of government. But, in general, today both the Congregationalists and the Baptists have adopted the presbyterian idea with their sustentation funds and their control over the local church through funds. They are no longer Congregationalists but have become Presbyterian, with power given to a higher body which can influence the local church. But ideally, and originally in the seventeenth century, Congregationalism or Independency conformed to the pattern which I have just been describing.

Many boards, associations, fellowships and conventions claim to be “servants” of the churches while usurping the local church’s authority. For example, mission boards will allow churches to ordain missionaries while reserving to themselves the authority to send them. They by doing this are merely “tipping their hat” to the local church.

Some have pointed to the convocation described in Acts 15 as being in contradiction to the Baptist view of local church autonomy. However, scholars who write without bias recognize that in this passage the church at Jerusalem was only giving brotherly advice to the church at Antioch.

CONCLUSION

Church historians are amazingly unanimous in their views in regard to the congregational-independent polity of the apostolic churches. We as Baptists of the third millennia must be vigilant in adhering to the New Testament pattern for our local churches. This issue is of a more serious nature than many of us assume it to be.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

by Forrest Keener

I want you to open your Bibles to some of those verses of Scriptures which we have used over and over during this conference. But even though they have been used repeatedly, I don't know of any Scripture that will better define the subject we are dealing with tonight. Notice Matthew 16:16-18, "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee," I believe that the conjunction there ties back to what Peter said to the Lord, "Thou art the Christ," and He said, "that thou art Peter." Some of you brethren may know that there are only two times, if I remember rightly, that He ever called Peter by that name, from this point forward. Did you know that? He did not call him Peter normally. He normally called him Simon or Cephas, not Peter. He called him Peter only two times, and those times were times when He marked out the weakness of Peter. This man is not a rock at all. You will notice, in the Bible, they never throw rocks, because rocks are big bodies of stone. They throw stones, that means little pieces of rock, like Peter. And, like Peter, they are unstable, and easy to move about. And he said to Peter, "I say unto thee the cock shall not crow..." Remember where Peter was at this time. He was in the upper room claiming superior strength. Times when he was in such a condition, were the only times our Lord ever called him Peter. So as He says "upon this rock I will build my church," obviously He's speaking of Himself, and not of Peter, which name means a little piece of stone. And He goes on to say, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This has already been said. But may I repeat, right there is all the evidence you need, and the best evidence you have, of church perpetuity. It is the best! And it works. There is nothing wrong with it.

Now, Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth..." As I pointed out this morning, that involves both authority and ability. That's the only reason they could go into all nations, and succeed. He had the right to send them. He had the ability to sustain them. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations," now listen to this, "go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." And then notice Mark 16:15, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

A few years ago my wife said, I am going to have a garage sale, and I wish you would look out in the garage on those shelves, go through some of that stuff, and if you have items that you don't need, maybe you can put some of them on a table and sell them. So I started opening boxes, and I found a brand new fuel pump. It had never been installed. I purchased that fuel pump, I believe, in Clayton, New Mexico, some years ago, while driving across country in a motor home. I found very soon that the fuel pump was not what I needed. I had a filter that I had not been able to find up to that point, it was up in the front part of the carburetor, and I just could not find it. The filter was the problem, not the fuel pump. But I didn't want to drive back to return it and when I came back through there, it was the middle of the night. So I had forgotten that right in my garage, was a fuel pump for a four hundred Chevrolet engine. Now, how many

of you folks know what a four hundred engine is? They are in one ton trucks, and that's about all they were used for. I knew that unless somebody happened to have a four hundred Chevrolet engine, this treasure was a dud. I didn't even know what else this pump might fit. It might fit other engines, but I don't think so. I would be very surprised if it would fit very much except a four hundred Chevrolet engine. So, I priced it at a couple of bucks, hoping that somebody would come along who could use it, or think they could use it. I may have taken \$2.00 or maybe 50 cents for it, I can't remember. The point is this, that a fuel pump for a four hundred Chevrolet engine is not worth very much, unless you have a four hundred Chevrolet engine to put it on. That is to say, it is made for a particular purpose, and unless you are using it for the right purpose, it's basically worthless. It's not even a good book end. It's too clumsy for a fishing weight, and it's not heavy enough. It's too ugly for a conversation piece in the middle of your coffee table. It just isn't any good for anything, unless you can use it for the purpose to which it was designed. That's all it is good for. Things with limited purpose are essentially worthless when they lose that purpose.

Many people, for this very reason, have found the church to be worthless. A lady called me a few months back and said, could you help me out with a plane ticket? Now I get about 20 or 30 calls like that every week, not all for plane tickets, but they are frequent enough. I am asked for rent, and about everything you could imagine. And I said, "No we don't," and she used an expletive, and said, then what are you good for? She was quite sincere. As far as she was concerned, unless our church has cash for her, we are not good for anything. There is no reason for us to exist. She would probably prefer that we did not, unless she felt she could get some money the next time. May I say something else? If ministers and members of a church do not remember what the church is established for, if they forget what the purpose of it is, it will soon become worthless to them. Brother Dan Cozart brought an outstanding message in Oklahoma City, last month, on the churches trying to provide for the people, what they want, what they are looking for. They seek amusement, entertainment, anything that will make them feel good. I believe that is because of a totally wrong philosophy that the average church today has and conveys about their ministry. I've said this over and over again, and I repeat, it is because they have become success oriented, and not commission oriented. In other words, their question is what can be done to bring in more people. "What can we do to please more people?" One brother said of his church and of his pastor, we just love our pastor, the church is growing. And that's all he had to say. Now, it's wonderful when a church is growing for the right reasons, but I have news for you, that's no reason to love a pastor. Cancer grows! And I don't mean to be nasty. I'm just saying that the vision of what the church is about has been lost. That's the very reason why churches today are so prostituted that they are becoming, "faith-based" organizations for the government. I'm not out to step on anybody's toes, but I want to tell you something, if you're messing around with garbage like that, be ashamed of yourself, and get right with God. That's not what we are for. That is not our purpose, and that is prostitution of the Lord's church.

My statement in this message is, that outside of the purpose for which the Lord ordained it, what we refer to as the church today, is as worthless as it can be. It is not worthy of our time. You are a thief, preacher, to take an offering, if you are not involved in the purpose to which the Lord has called and appointed you. You have no business taking people's money, to do something that is not the fulfillment of this commission that I have read to you tonight, that is going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature. But on the other hand, the church which is

dedicated to this purpose is just as valuable as it ever was. And believe it or not, just as successful as it ever was. That may be hard for us to grasp at first, I hope I can persuade you of that.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

First of all, let's be sure that we get straight in our mind what the purpose of the church is. Now listen, there are a lot of good side effects from churches. For instance, it may well be that a Christian lady in a particular church influences her unsaved husband morally, and he may be a better worker on the job, a better neighbor, and other good things. There are multitudes of social benefits of good churches in neighborhoods around this nation, but that's not the purpose of the church. There is nothing wrong with that, but it's just a side effect. If you were to go throughout Kansas City, Missouri, or St. Louis, Missouri, or Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, or Lawton, Oklahoma, or anywhere else you want to go, and take a door to door poll of the people, as to what the church's purpose is, you would get all kinds of perplexing and varying answers. But, if we go to the Scripture, we won't have any trouble knowing what the purpose is. It's clear, it is consistent, and it is really quite simple. Believe it or not. It is very simple. The purpose of the church, as Brother Cozart said this morning, is to evangelize. What does evangelizing mean? Does that mean to get everybody saved? Of course not. That's not what that's talking about. It is to preach the gospel to every creature. That's what evangelism is. It's preaching the gospel to every creature. It's wonderful if multitudes are saved, but if no one is saved but you preach the gospel to every creature, that is basic evangelism. Now, that's not going to happen, but theoretically, if that were to happen, you're still carrying out that first leg of the purpose of the church. Brother Bill Lee said that the purpose is to glorify the Lord. Amen. Let me tell you something, preachers, I haven't got there yet, but we ought to be gratified in preaching the gospel if we never see any outward results. Now, I like results. But it is a wonderful thing to be able to proclaim Christ's gospel, for the sake of proclaiming Christ's gospel, because it glorifies God. And we are to be commission oriented. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. We must not be so much response oriented, as commission oriented. Let us do what He told us, because the moment we begin to say, we have to find a method that people will relate to, then we become like John Wesley. You know John Wesley was not a Methodist. In case you don't know it, he died as an Episcopalian. As far as I know, he never was a Methodist, but he started the Methodist movement. Well, they didn't call it Methodism because they drew that name out of a hat. They called it that because they felt they had to invent methods. Charles Finney was the same way. Now he was a Presbyterian lawyer, if I remember rightly. And he had all of these methods, plans, tricks, etc. But these men were result oriented. And I want to tell you something, in the eyes of the average religious leader today, I am a fool, because I say we ought not to be result oriented, but commission oriented. My question should not be am I getting the results that I would like to get, not am I competing with the world around me in that result, but am I doing what God commissioned me to do? That needs to be our direction, first and foremost.

He says go and disciple all nations. What is a disciple? Well a disciple is a follower, someone who follows, not for the loaves and fishes, not for the promise of riches, as the people follow the shysters of our day. Disciples follow for teaching. Christ's disciples are not people that like excitement or physical healing, but people who follow Christ because in their hearts they are persuaded by the grace of God, that He has the words of life. To whom else could they go? They

are persuaded that they have no real choice. They must follow Christ. We are to teach them to observe. Teach them to observe what? All things whatsoever I have commanded you. That's what we are supposed to be doing. Let me say this, discipleship without regeneration is probably the most common passageway to hell of our day. Not too long ago, I heard a Baptist missionary say, "I am really not so much involved in just going out and presenting the gospel to people, as I am discipling people." He is off the field now and I do not lament that fact. I don't mean to mean here, but I'm going to tell you something. If you are a good salesman, you can teach a certain number of people to act like Christians. But that won't help them to get to heaven one bit. Men do not get to heaven by practicing Christianity. I don't care how good it is. I don't care how biblical it is. They must be born again, they must be believers in Christ. And we are not commissioned to preach Christianity. That's not what He is talking about, when He gives us this order to go and disciple. We are commissioned to preach Christ. Now here's something else, you should remember. You will not make strong Christians by preaching Christianity. You will make strong Christians by preaching Christ. As they become more and more acquainted with Him, as beholding the face in a glass, they will be changed toward His image from glory to glory. They need Christ! Our church members need the gospel, over, and over, and over again, until our souls are thrilled with the gospel of Christ. When the gospel of Christ is preached, I don't care if it's preached to a half dozen preachers, God is glorified, Christ is glorified. I'll tell you this, I can love men just because of their preaching of the pure Gospel, even when they have all kinds of other problems. I hear a man get up and preach a good gospel message, and my soul is thrilled, and I say thank God for him. This is what we are all about. That's what we're supposed to be doing. Teaching unsaved men to act like Christians is like inoculating them against salvation. Because they will never be saved, without repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ. And if you can get them to act enough like Christians, to change their ways, they will come to think they are Christians. The Holiness used to say, I'm going to hell if I don't change my ways. Well, the world actually thinks that way. That's the basic natural Armenian thought. And if you get them to do that, you've made the mistake of all time. Preach Christ, let them be what they are until God changes their heart, and preach Christ to them as lost sinners. No other purpose rivals this. Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." He says in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom must be preached..." Now somebody says, "Well, that's not the gospel." Oh yes it is. Read the last chapter of Acts and see what Paul says. Oh yes it is. It's the same gospel. It's the same gospel John the Baptist preached. It's what Christ preached. And I know that we have unfolding revelation that is progressive in that area, I know all of that, but I am just simply saying that we are to give preeminence to the Gospel. But instead of preaching the Gospel, we have a ministry today that is result oriented. How many tracts do you suppose have been written, entitled, "The Plan of Salvation"? I don't even pretend to know. But the one thing all of them have in common is that they're full of error. The true plan of salvation is in a Man, not in a series of human instructions. All of these so-called plans of salvation, with very few exceptions, do one thing. They give you instruction as to what actions you must take in order to be saved. That is not the business God has appointed to you. That is not my business. We're not sent out to give men a formula of activity by which they are to be saved. We're sent to preach Christ. God's plan of salvation is found in 1 Cor. 15:1-4 and John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." "That He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." If you leave that out you've missed it all. "How that He was buried, and how that He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Expound that, it glorifies God! And if men are not saved by that

message, they can never be saved any other way. Don't try to relate some kind of a sales pitch, that will get people to profess Christ. We are not sent to get professions. I was talking to Brother John Kohler earlier, and I mentioned that for some years now, and I make no apology to anybody for this, I never ask for a profession. Not ever. If I go and sit down in someone's home and witness to them, and give them the gospel, I do not ask them to make a profession. You'd be surprised how many people today will not accept the Gospel, because of something they have been taught in their own dear independent Baptist Church. The gospel is mockery to them, and I seem like one that mocks, if I simply give them the gospel. After all, they already knew God had done His part, and now they expect to be told about their part. Do you understand what I am talking about? Instruction for human action for salvation is the worst offense against the Gospel ministry there is.

THIS PURPOSE IS SUPERNATURALLY BLESSED

Secondly, this simple purpose, of going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature, is supernaturally blessed of God. The worst enemy to it is the "Do something religious" evangelism. Paul said to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Do you know what this drives into the mind of the natural man? He thinks, "That is the only act that I have to perform. How easy!" That is not instructing the jailer to perform an act. Faith is not an action. It produces actions, but it is not an act. It is a state of the soul that is created by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But the transformation is performed by God. Repentance is not a natural act, or series of actions. It too, is the state of the soul that is wrought by God. It is a condition, an attitude of the soul, that is created through the work of God, and we are instrumental in these elements of salvation, by preaching the gospel. We are to do the preaching of the gospel. Plans of salvation teach men how, and they're all counter productive. This country has been raped by plans of that sort, that tend to confuse the gospel. You can go up and down the streets where I live, and only about seven or eight percent of the people of the city of Lawton, Oklahoma go to church anywhere. It is not like Oklahoma City or Tulsa, it is very different. People in Oklahoma City and Tulsa are more of a church-going people. Lawton is very non-church oriented. It doesn't seem like anybody has been able to do anything about it. You can change the church goes around from one church to another, but basically the people of the city do not go to church. But I'll tell you something, you can go up and down those same streets, and knock on the doors, and almost everyone of those people has been "won to the Lord" once or twice. I'm not joking. It's a terrible mess. And it's almost impossible to deal with people like that. But on the other hand, when the gospel goes out in its clarity, God places it here and there, and people are saved. In Iloilo City on the island of Panay, in the Philippines, I was taken at 10:30 each night to preach on the radio. We traveled during the day, preached in various places and at 10:30 each night I was taken to a radio station. And on that radio station I preach by way of cassette tape, every day, seven days a week. We now have broadcasts like that on three stations in the Philippines, where they are playing my tapes on a regular basis. I was taken there to preach the gospel, live, and I preached a simple message from Acts 8. My text was where Phillip turned to that same place in the Scriptures and preached unto him Jesus. So I went over to Isa.53, and I showed where the gospel of Christ is. And preached it from there. I just preached the message, probably not very well, tired as I was, and went on my way. In another city, three or four days later, we were getting ready to go where I would preach, in a certain church, that night. We had gone downtown, and gone through

enough red tape to move the Pentagon, just to cash a few traveler's checks. By that time, I was tired and worn out, and didn't like Filipinos. I didn't like anybody very much, right about then, except my wife. I wanted to go home to her, but I couldn't. Anyhow, when we got ready to leave the bank, Brother Jun Delfin spoke to the lady, who had been my hostess in the bank. Yes, believe it or not, she had to lead me around to the various places where I had to go to cash travelers checks. But Brother Delfin said, this is Brother Forrest Keener. He is going to be preaching tonight, in that particular church, of which I have forgotten the name. Would you please come and be our guest? And she said, "I may come." I thought, yea, right! Of course, you will. And that evening, as we were driving back from the bank, to my hotel, Brother Delfin said, Pastor Keener, I've been thinking about this, and praying about it, and he said, if it could please the Lord, would you consider preaching the message you preached the other night over in Iloilo on the Ethiopian eunuch. I thought about it, and didn't see any reason why not, so I preached that night on that same subject from the same texts. The building was so full, you couldn't really recognize anybody. The whole building would not have been more than maybe two thirds the size of this side of this auditorium. I estimate it to have been twenty by thirty feet all together. There was no aisle left. The aisles were completely filled. I don't mean you could walk up between the chairs. They were all full. There was no place to seat anyone. Even behind me, the people were sitting so close, if I had backed up two steps, I would have been standing on somebody's feet. They were just all around me. When we stood at the end of the service, some of the chairs which had filled the aisle were folded, and here came the woman from the bank, making her way to the pastor. I hadn't personally given an invitation. I just preached the message, and turned the services over to Brother Delfin. And here came this woman from the back, spontaneously making her way up the aisle. She came to the pastor and addressed him, very simply, "Sir," he recognized her, and she said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He died for my sins. She wanted to profess Christ as her Savior. She was a Roman Catholic. She had never heard that message before in her life. It didn't come because of me. It came from what God had sent me there to do.

In Zambanga City, just a few nights later, it was almost midnight. I had to preach in another radio station, late at night. I was tired. Again, I didn't like the Filipinos. I'm teasing about that, of course. I love them with all my heart, even when I am exhausted. You know what I mean. I had gone to the station to preach that night, and 17 people went with me to the radio station at 11:00 o'clock that night. And you really do love the Filipino people when it's like that. Only 14 could get inside the studio, and 3 stood outside in the little access room, and looked through the window as I spoke. And I just preached and we got up and left. I preached that night on the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. Those people need to hear that. We got up and went downstairs, ten flights I believe, and lo and behold, Pastor Delfin was not with us. He had told me just a few nights before, when I reached Zamboanga City that the people at the radio station were very angry with him. Why is that, I asked? He said, because I told them that if God were to drop all of these islands in the sea, and send all of them into hell, it would be a very good thing, because of their idolatry. You need to understand how the Filipino says things, especially if he doesn't know the English language too well. And he said they have been very mad at me for the last two or three days. I thought to myself, I hope some of them didn't decide to throw him down the stairs instead of letting him come down. But in just a couple of minutes he came down, and he was extremely excited. And he said, Pastor Keener, that engineer stopped me as I was leaving. He drew me back, and he said, sir, sir, I understood the gospel for the first time in my life. He

said, God saved that man tonight! There is no thrill like that, and he said, he wants to present himself for scriptural baptism. Do you see, just the simple gospel of Christ is what God blesses. Now listen, you may be here tonight and be thinking, but preacher, there are not as many as there ought to be. May I make an observation? I expect there are just exactly that many. Now I don't understand that, and it isn't my business to understand it. May I tell you something? I've been preaching the doctrines of sovereign grace probably as long as, or probably longer than, anyone in this congregation tonight, unless it's Brother Wayne Camp. I don't know about Brother Justice. He might have preached them all his ministerial life. But I started preaching the doctrines of grace in early 1963. And I've gone through some deep waters for preaching them. But I am not going around looking for God's elect. That's not my business. I don't know how. I have no Scripture that tells me how, or tells me to learn how. I have never been involved with that. My business is to preach the gospel to every creature, and that is the business of the church I pastor, and if I say "my church," and you are offended, please forgive me, because I expect every member in that congregation to say, my church, with the very same emphasis with which I call it my church. It is my church. It is their church. Not in the sense that we own it, but it's the church where we serve. I have been rebuked for that, and I know I don't own that church. And I can guarantee you, I don't want the responsibility of that. I've got enough as it is. But God blesses in those things. Some years ago, there was a response to a message on the same text, I had preached on "The Jesus of Isaiah." I printed it in the Baptist Watchman, and mailed it out just like I do. A lady from Montana wrote me a letter, and she said, Pastor Keener, I've been going to church for years. I was a lost church member. And as I read in the Baptist Watchman this month, the message on "The Jesus of Isaiah," God opened my eyes, and my heart, and He saved me. She had no fancy words, she just said, "God saved me through the preaching of the message." Why? Because that's what we are here for. Let us obey God. Let's trust His commission. Let's trust the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It will do the job.

THE PROBLEM WHEN WE VARY FROM THIS PURPOSE

Thirdly, let's look at the problem when we vary from this purpose. We err, if we become success oriented, as opposed to commission oriented, if we become result oriented, or try to become contemporary, or we try to make our message a little bit more appealing, to the young people's group, or to the high school crowd, or to the people on the street. You see, we're looking out at the world, and we ask, how can I relate to them? Now we are not non-progressive. We have three computers in our church offices, that are all networked together, and they're busy all the time. We have three laser printers and a color printer. We have all kinds of modern equipment, and I believe we ought to have that. I'm not one who is sitting in a corner and saying, well, God's going to do it. I know God's going to do it, but I also know that we have a job to do, and we should use all proper means. But listen, we must not, we may not, ever rightly change the message to suit the populace of the world, because if it is changed, it will not be used as an instrument of conversion. "Baptists" have to a great extent, become far too "Methodist." I'm not picking on anybody, but through men like John R. Rice and Jack Hyles, and some men who meant well, we have turned to methods, and forgotten God's method. Romans road evangelism is probably the greatest enemy to true gospel evangelism in the world today. Let me tell you a secret. The Bible says in Romans 10:13, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now I believe that. But I want to tell you, those men I'm talking about do not believe that. Say what you will, they do not really believe that, because they will interpret what "Calling

upon the Lord” means by instructing people as to how to do it, that is to bow their heads and say a prayer. And they themselves, will tell you that not everybody that does what they asked them to do is genuinely saved. Will they not? They surely will. If in your life time, you can get one single person, just one, not two, just one, to do what you instruct them to do, and they are not saved, then what you are instructing them to do is not what Romans 10:13 is talking about. Because the Bible says that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, and it means exactly that. Most of the children in this congregation understand what that means. And it means exactly that. We need to be careful, because when we begin to take methods that appeal to men, as opposed to trusting God’s method, we will do two or three counterproductive things. First of all, we will bring about the preaching of a strange or new gospel. Galatians 1:8-9 says, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” You may think I’m a little bit hard? Listen to this fellow. Listen to Paul. “Let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” What gospel is Paul insisting upon? He is talking about what he said in 1 Cor.15:1-4. Don’t frustrate it. Don’t try to hone it. Don’t try to make it contemporary. Don’t try to make it fit the people. Preach it as it is. God blesses that. And when we do not preach it just as Scripture reveals it, we are going to frustrate it. Paul said I do not frustrate, I do not dilute the gospel, for if salvation comes by works, what kind of works, any kinds of works, it doesn’t matter, if salvation comes by a formula of human activity, what kind of human activity, any kind of human activity, Christ died in vain. Faith and repentance do not constitute a combination of religious activity by which men appropriate Salvation. Faith is a state of the soul wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, and the Word of God, by which they rest in the finished work of Christ. They cease from all of their own works. They cease from any hope in anything that they have done, or ever can do. And they rest in what Jesus Christ has done for them. It is the purpose of the church to turn the eyes of men away from any hope in what they can do, and cause them to look to Christ. The religious world says pray the prayer. You’ve heard that, haven’t you? Pray the prayer. Be baptized, that’s what the Campbellites say. I want to tell you a secret, folks. You don’t have to like this, it is free. Getting people to repeat a prayer for salvation is not one bit better than, in essence, it’s not any different from, getting them to be baptized for salvation. It is the same issue. It is salvation by human activity. Oh, listen, people will pray when they come to God. When they are regenerated, they will pray. But you let them take care of that, so that they don’t think that praying is what saved them. Do you understand what I’m talking about? Don’t instruct people to do something for their salvation. The gospel is what Christ did for sinners, plus nothing, minus nothing. Men say, God did His part, now you need to do your part. That prostitutes the gospel. When you start talking about making God’s work effective by your work, you have absolutely prostituted the whole thing. What we’ve spoken of tonight, is the purpose of the church.

THE RESULT WHEN THIS PURPOSE IS FAITHFULLY CARRIED OUT

Just a couple of statements of exhortation and I’m through. What is the result when this is faithfully done? Isa.55:11 says, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Do you believe the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth? If you do, you can go into a home and sit down and witness to people,

you can give them the gospel, you can preach Christ to them, and get up and have prayer with them and go home. That doesn't bother me one bit. But you ask, what if they want to be saved? Hey listen, I'm not a midwife. God's not going to be absent if they look for Him. He's going to be right there. He's available to them. But, by doing what I just described, I can also go back a couple of weeks later and say, I've been praying that God would have saved you. I'm sorry, but I haven't heard anything from you yet. Are there any questions that I might answer for you? Ah, but when I get that profession, I have cut the cord of evangelism between that person and myself. Wrestling a profession from them is the most foolish thing I can do. Now, if I just want a show of results, I mean just apparent results, that's the way to get it. But when we do it according to the biblical pattern, souls will be saved, as God pleases, God's people will be taught, and new churches will arise. It is God's method and it pleases God.

I think I've got about another four or five minutes, haven't I preacher? I'd like to say something, indeed, I feel like I must. I am troubled by what I often see today in young men, and I am not just complaining about the young men, I'm talking about some of the traditional ways we do "mission work." We take a young man and send him out to a certain city, or we teach him to decide what city "God has led him to," to build a true "New Testament church." He goes there and we finance him to stay year, after year, after year, after year, and nothing happens. Now I'm not talking about being result oriented. I'm saying, have we wandered away from what God has told us to do? Do you know what I'd like to see? I would like to see some of our most experienced gospel preachers going into some of these towns, able to rent a place, and preach the gospel. You know, the old time preachers used to use a method much like that. Across Kentucky and Tennessee, many of the churches were started because some old farmer, who was a gospel preacher, when his crop was laid by, got on his horse, and he rode out into an area that was not evangelized, and he preached the gospel of Christ, and people were saved, and they constituted churches out of those who were saved. What if nobody was saved? He went somewhere else. Doesn't this seem kind of like what Paul did? What a copy cat those old preachers were, to do things like the apostles did them. I think we really ought to pray about putting the preaching of the gospel out in front, rather than being so result oriented that we say, what we have to do is to build a church. And whatever we have to do to do that, we do it. No, no, no! We preach the gospel. We baptize the believers. We teach them to observe. And when we complete that, a church has been built, because observing all things will involve that. I believe we really, really ought to pray, brethren, about getting our conduct in line with the church's purpose. God still blesses the preaching of the gospel. But whether He blesses our ministries, if we are the ones who figure out the method to use, I'm just not too sure.

THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

by Pastor Ron Crisp

The Roman general, who on the field of battle achieved victory, was honored with a triumphant march into Rome. The captives of battle were paraded and the victor made gifts of the spoils from the successful conquest. Paul uses this scenario in Ephesians 4:7-12 to reveal the nature of Christ's ascension into Glory after His victory at Calvary. Like the honored Roman general, He bestowed gifts that were won in battle upon His people (Acts 2:33).

MINISTERIAL GIFTS

Christ in the sending of the Holy Spirit has endowed each of His people with one or more abilities to be used for the edification of the church. These several abilities were referred to in scripture as "gifts of the Spirit". Christ has also placed within His churches certain offices that He intends to be filled by men with a special combination of gifts. Because Christ sent the Holy Spirit, Paul refers to these men as "gifts" from Christ. These ministerial gifts are:

Apostles

This was a foundational office and was, therefore, a temporary gift. These men were led into all truth as they authored most of the New Testament. See John 16:13. In this way the apostles laid the doctrinal foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20). Apostles had very special attributes:

1. Christ personally commissioned the apostles. (Matthew 10:1-15, I Corinthians 9:1)
2. Apostles received their message directly from Christ. (Galatians 1:11-12)
3. Apostles had seen Christ Jesus after His resurrection. (Acts 1:15-22)
4. Apostles had the power to perform apostolic signs. (Matthew 10:1, Hebrews 2:3-4, II Corinthians 12:12)

Those who would want to prove the presence of apostles in this present time will often point to scripture in which the Greek word translated "apostle" is used of men other than the twelve. They neglect to comprehend that the term can be used of an office as well as in a general sense of any messenger. Words may often be both specific and general in their meanings.

Prophets

All apostles were prophets but not all prophets were apostles. Like the apostles, this was a foundational ministry. Prophets received direct revelation from God. Keep in mind that it was more than sixty years following Christ's ascension into Heaven that the writing of the New Testament was completed. Until the New Testament scripture was completed it was necessary for the gift of prophecy to be manifest and in effect in the churches. Prophets supplied the need of the early New Testament churches for New Covenant revealed truth.

Evangelists

These men were gifted heralds of the Gospel. At this present time the designation "missionary" is used to describe these men and their calling.

Pastors and Teachers

Most Bible students will agree that this is a two-fold description of one office. The pastor is a shepherd over the spiritual concerns of the flock. He feeds the church by teaching God's word.

PERMANENT OFFICES

God's wisdom and purpose are easily seen in the three offices that are permanent or normative for the present – the offices of evangelist, pastor and deacon. Christ has given evangelists to found churches, pastors to shepherd those churches and deacons to protect pastors from distractions to their true work and responsibility. Evangelists typically move from place to place as they evangelize and establish new churches. However, the office of pastor and deacon are normative/standard positions within established assemblies. See Philippians 1:1.

THE OFFICE OF PASTOR

Titles of a Pastor

The New Testament refers to ministers over churches as bishops, elders or pastors. The title "bishop" means "overseer" and "pastor" means, "shepherd". The title "elder" undoubtedly implies that a man should possess both the maturity and leadership ability to lead his people.

Duties of a Pastor

Acts 20:17-35 speaks of Paul's exhortation to the elders of the church in Ephesus. His words paint a beautiful picture of just what pastoral labor really encompasses. Four primary responsibilities of a pastor are:

1. A pastor is to rule or oversee the church (Hebrews 13:17). This is not to be dictatorial reign but is to be a pastoral overseeing by consent of the church body. A pastor rules by teaching God's Word, by setting an example and by admonishing those who need direction and guidance.
2. A pastor is to protect the flock by pointing out error and by rebuking those who would introduce that error.
3. A pastor is to be a man especially given to prayer. See Acts 6:4.
4. A pastor is to administer the ordinances of Christ.

Qualifications of a Pastor

The qualifications of a man who desires the office of an elder are given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9. All of the specifications but one speak of the character of the man himself. Being "apt to teach" is the only job-related skill given as a requisite. A church should not call for the ordination of a man who does not meet God's requirements as set forth in the heretofore-cited scriptures. Should it attempt to do so, the presbytery should refuse to ordain him to that office. Read I Timothy 5:22.

The Proper Treatment and Care of Pastors

The members of a church should follow and profit from the teaching and exhortation of their pastor. See Hebrews 13:17. A pastor should have the maturity, knowledge and concern to helpfully guide the flock toward spiritual maturity. On the other hand, the church itself has responsibilities toward its pastor. Four of these responsibilities are:

1. A church that is financially and materially capable should provide comfortable support for its pastor. This accommodation will free that pastor from worldly entanglement. Therefore, his time may then be wholly devoted to prayer and to the study of God's Word. Scriptures regarding this counsel may be found in I Corinthians 9, I Timothy 5:17 and II Timothy 2:4.
2. A pastor is to be loved and esteemed for his work (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). No one does a greater or more noble work that does a worthy pastor. A pastor watches over souls.
3. A church should protect its pastor by refusing to hear accusations that are not supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses. The admonition from I Timothy 5:19 commands compliance. To comply is of great benefit to both a church and its pastor.
4. A church should pray for its overseer. Paul pleaded for prayer in his own behalf. A pastor needs God's power and leadership. He flies on the wings of his people's prayers.

THE OFFICE OF DEACON

Title of a Deacon

The Greek word that is translated "deacon" in our English Bible simply means "servant". For example, in Romans 16:1 the Greek word is so translated. In its general use the word "deacon" can be applied to any dedicated child of God. However, both the Greek word translated "apostle" and the Greek word translated "deacon" can designate specific offices.

Some wrongfully use Romans 16:1 to propose that a woman may fill the office of deacon. Again, the command and specific uses of the word are being confused. God's Word strongly precludes the possibility of a woman holding this office. Acts 16:1-6 and I Timothy 3:8-13 speak to this matter.

Qualifications of a Deacon

The prerequisites for those who may serve as a deacon are detailed in Acts 6:3 and again in I Timothy 3:8-12. This office must never be bestowed upon one as an honorary token. A church must never allow a man's wealth or influence to sway it to disobeying God's Word. A church must abide by God's requirements and guidelines for choosing a deacon.

Duties of a Deacon

What is the function of a deacon? Acts 6:1-6 tells us that a deacon is to shelter a pastor/elder from labor that would hinder the ministry of prayer and the preaching of God's Word. When a deacon meets his responsibility, his church is in a better position and to do God's work. See Acts 6:7.

Regrettably, in many instances, deacons have formed boards and have attempted to rule churches. The office of deacon is not a ruling office. Note Acts 6:1-5. Churches are to be governed by congregational vote. It is an elder, not a deacon, who is to provide leadership and spiritual oversight to his church. God's way is best.

The Reward of a Deacon

A deacon who faithfully fulfills his responsibilities earns respect and standing in his church. Read I Timothy 3:13. He stands as an example of Christian character. One day God will reward him for work well done.

Conclusion

It has been said that officers are not necessary for the existence of the church but for the well-being of the church. Missionaries, pastors and deacons are gifts of Christ to a church for the edification and spiritual prosperity of God's people.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH

Matthew 18:15-18; I Corinthians 5:1-13

by Elder John Kohler

Church discipline is designed by God to promote individual integrity and maturity and to preserve congregational purity and unity. There are two broad categories of church discipline. These are called *positive, formative, or preventive* church discipline, which is the edification of God's saints and their growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *negative, reformative, or corrective* church discipline, which is the rectification of God's saints and their restoration to a right relationship with God and man. If *positive, formative, or preventive* church discipline is faithfully practiced, it will greatly reduce the need for *negative, reformative, or corrective* church discipline. In this study of God's word, our major focus will be on the practice of *negative, reformative, or corrective* church discipline. This is because there is very little disagreement or controversy about the practice of *positive, formative, or preventive* church discipline.

OCCASIONS FOR NEGATIVE, REFORMATIVE, OR CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- A. Steps to be followed in the case of private or personal offenses committed against an individual church member (Mat. 18:15-18):
1. Individual Confrontation: Offender confronted by Offended (vv. 15, 21-22). If repentance occurs, the matter is to be forever dropped. If repentance does not occur, the next step is to be followed.
 2. Combinational Confrontation: Offender confronted by Offended, plus one or two other members (v. 16). If repentance occurs, the matter is to be forever dropped. If repentance does not occur, the next step is to be followed.
 3. Congregational Confrontation: Offender confronted by entire church membership (v. 17). If repentance occurs, the matter is to be forever dropped. If repentance does not occur, the next step is to be followed.
 4. Exclusion or Excommunication: Offender excluded from the membership and fellowship of the church for his failure or refusal to repent and make things right (v. 18).

This writer shares the convictions of Baptist theologian B.H. Carroll about the need for the faithful practice of Biblical corrective church discipline. He writes as follows:

“Christianity is designed to be a maker of character. If it does not make a man better than he was before, it is not worth anything; if it does not make a father a better father, a mother a better mother, a sister a better sister, a brother a better brother, a child a better child---if there is no improvement in the character of the man, then we may be sure that he has never been born again, because the Spirit does not produce that kind of fruit . . .

“Suppose in the jungles of Africa a company of people and animals were camped for the night, and they built a stickade to keep off wild beasts, and some of the animals, a cow perhaps, gets unmanageable and bellows and butts around and tries to get out. They turn her out, and let her hear the lion roar, and she wants to get back. The thought is that the one that won’t be quiet in good company should be shown that there is worse company on the outside. I heard an old Baptist preacher say, ‘If you put a wild hog in a pen and he goes to squealing, let him out, and he will strike for the woods and never come back, because he is a hog. But if a sheep is turned out it will bleat around the gate until you open the pen and let the sheep come back on good behavior.’ If a man is not converted he ought not to be in there; let the hog out and let him strike for the woods; if he is a sheep and hears the lion roar he will bleat around to get back, and he will behave himself next time” (An Interpretation of the English Bible, James, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, pp. 175, 170-171).

- B. Steps to be followed in the case of public or general offenses committed against the church as a whole or against the cause of Christ in general (I Cor. 5:1-13):
1. Immediate exclusion from church membership and fellowship for gross offenses such as persistent heresy, immorality, and disorderly conduct.

This writer wholeheartedly agrees with Baptist theologian Augustus H. Strong on this point, who writes as follows:

“Public offenses against the church as a whole are to be dealt with according to the rule in I Corinthians 5:3-5,13 and II Thessalonians 3:6. Notice here (I Corinthians 5--JK) that Paul gave the incestuous person no opportunity to repent, confess, or avert sentence. The church can have no valid evidence of repentance immediately upon discovery. At such a time the natural conscience always reacts in remorse and self-accusation, but whether the sin is hated because of its inherent wickedness, or only because of its unfortunate consequences, cannot be known at once. Only fruits meet for repentance can prove repentance real. But such fruits take time. And the church has no time to wait. Its good repute in the community and its influence over its own members are at stake. These therefore demand the instant exclusion of the wrong-doer as evidence that the church clears its skirts from all complicity with the wrong. In the case of gross public offenses, labor with the offender is to come not before, but after his excommunication (II Corinthians 2:6-8).

“The church is not a Mutual Insurance Company whose object is to protect and shield its individual members. It is a society whose end is to represent Christ in the world and to establish his truth and righteousness. Christ commits his honor to its keeping. The offender who is only anxious to escape judgment and who pleads to be forgiven without delay, often shows that he cares nothing for the cause of Christ which he has injured, but that he has at heart only his own selfish comfort and reputation. The truly penitent man will rather beg the church to exclude him in order that it may free itself from the charge of harboring iniquity. He will accept exclusion with humility, will love the church that excludes him, will continue to attend its worship, will in due time seek and receive restoration. There is always a way back into the church for those who

repent. But the Scriptural method of ensuring repentance is the method of immediate exclusion” (Systematic Theology, pp. 924-925).

2. Eventual restoration to church membership and fellowship upon genuine repentance with its evidential fruits.

OBJECTIVES IN NEGATIVE, REFORMATIVE, OR CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- A. To glorify God by obeying His word. (I Cor. 10:31).
- B. To preserve the purity and unity of the church (Mat. 5:13-16; Acts 5:11-13).
- C. To remove cancer from the church before it spreads throughout the whole body (I Cor. 5:6-7).
- D. To reclaim wayward brethren for Christ and His church. (I Cor. 5:5).
- E. To avert God’s judgment upon wayward brethren. (I Cor. 11:30-31).
- F. To maintain a godly, Biblical testimony in the community. (cf. I Tim. 3:7).

This writer is in basic agreement on this point with Willard A. Ramsey, pastor of Hallmark Baptist Church of Simpsonville, South Carolina, who writes as follows:

“The discipline by the church body, not just the pastors or deacons (see I Cor. 5:4), is the ultimate scriptural filter to screen the membership to keep it pure for the proper representation of the name of Christ. Today few churches use this filter anymore, and those who do not become cesspools of covert corruption. But it cannot be completely covered. Sooner or later undisciplined sin breaks through for the world to see! How then can this be anything but a misrepresentation of Christ and gross disobedience to the Word of God? . . .

“So then would we expect church discipline to influence evangelism? It most certainly does; the biggest cry in all the land is ‘hypocrites in the church.’ Everywhere I go, people, unbelievers, tell me, ‘I am just as good as so-and-so in the church over there.’ They will not listen to the gospel. The unbelieving world knows what its church-going neighbors do. They know of their drinking, and their adultery unrebuked by the church. And they say, ‘I’ll make it to heaven if they do,’ and they will not hear the gospel. Why? Because the Christian people of this generation have fallen down on those first principles---they do not love and long for obedience to the Word of God. If each church would consistently apply the principles taught in Matthew 18:15-18; Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 5:1-13; I Thessalonians 5:14; II Thessalonians 3:14-15; I Timothy 5:20-21; Titus 3:10, the churches would be much smaller but much more powerful in evangelism. They would be respected for their purity, and their gospel would be heard (The House of God, pp. 9,119-120).

OUTLOOK DURING CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- A. It is to be done in a spirit of meekness as we remember our own imperfection and weakness. (Gal. 6:1).
- B. It is to be done in a spirit of brotherly love. (II Thes. 3:15).
- C. It is to be done in a spirit of sorrow and grief. (I Cor. 5:2).
- D. It is to be done in a spirit of forgiveness, or with a willingness to practice true forgiveness upon real repentance. (II Cor. 2:7; Lk. 17:3-4).
- E. It is to be done in a spirit of unity, with a willingness on the part of the whole church to avoid all Christian and church fellowship with the excluded member.

OBJECTIONS TO NEGATIVE, REFORMATIVE, OR CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- A. “We are not supposed to judge others.” (“For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” ~ I Cor. 5:12-13; “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” ~ Jn. 7:24).).
- B. “It is unloving to practice corrective church discipline.” (“If ye love me, keep my commandments” ~ Jn. 14:15; “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” ~ I Jn. 5:3; “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” ~ Prov. 13:24).
- C. “We just need to be patient with people.” (“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” ~ I Cor. 5:6-7).
- D. “We should just let the Lord deal with the problem.” (The Lord deals with church problems through the Scriptural actions of the church membership; church inaction invites divine intervention.)
- E. “We should just practice forgiveness.” (“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” ~ Lk. 17:3).
- F. “We don’t deal with problems that way at our church.” (Then your church does not bow to the supreme and final authority of God’s word; corrective church discipline is not optional, but mandatory.)

G. “We’re not perfect, either.” (The members of the Corinthian church were not perfect, but they were still commanded to practice corrective church discipline; See Mat. 7:1-5 as well, which teaches us that we are in a position to judge others after we have practiced self-judgment).

May God help true New Testament churches everywhere to faithfully practice church discipline as it is taught in God’s holy word! Such churches show a lack of love for Christ and others when they fail or refuse to obey this clear-cut Bible doctrine.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH: REGENERATE, BAPTIZED, AND SANCTIFIED

Acts 2:41-47

by Royce Smith

INTRODUCTION: The New Testament church is not just another religious organization or society. Most of what are called churches today are nothing more than religious societies. Our Baptist brethren of the past, such as J. R. Graves, consistently referred to these kinds of churches as religious societies. For the most part, they are composed of good people, relatively speaking, some of whom are undoubtedly true believers in Christ. I would never maintain that a person had to be a Baptist to be saved (I pray that we would never make such statements.) Many in these religious societies have noble aspirations and do many good works, as far as men are concerned. In some instances, people may even hear much truth through the ministries of those associated with these societies.

But these societies are not New Testament ekklesias. They are not the Lord's churches. Just because an organization is called a church today does not mean it was started by our Lord. These religious societies are nothing more than counterfeit churches. Since there is but one body (Ephesians 4:4)—one body in kind, not in number—bodies differing from the one body of Christ which is the church cannot be the body of Christ.

As the human body is one in kind, any body differing from the human body cannot be human. Now the human body differs within itself in sex, race, height, weight, bone structure, color of skin, hair, eyes, and shape, but with all these minor differences, it is still the human body.

In the same manner, churches which are one in kind—each of which is called the body of Christ—may differ in size, points of emphasis, order of services, peculiarities of finer points of doctrine, eschatology, etc., and yet still be New Testament churches. These minor differences no more render a particular church something other than a New Testament church than differences in race render certain people something other than human. I think we all understand this fact.

If we believe in the Perpetuity of the Church, then we must recognize churches in history as New Testament churches even though they did not agree with us in every detail of doctrine and practice. Do we not accept the churches of the New Testament (Corinth, Galatia, Thyatira, and Laodicea, to name a few, which were still the Lord's churches in spite of obvious errors)? Do we not also recognize many churches existing in the world today with whom we have minor differences as the Lord's churches? Even we who fellowship together regularly do not agree in all points. I say these things to caution us against being too quick to unchurch churches which might be the Lord's!

But, while these things are true, we must also acknowledge that there are certain characteristics of a New Testament church which identify it as such, even as there are specific characteristics which declare one to be a human. In the absence of these characteristics there can be no church.

Let me enumerate a few:

1. Christ must be its *Founder* and only *Head*.
2. The Bible must be its sole *rule of faith and practice*.
3. Its members must be *regenerated* and *baptized by immersion* on the profession of their faith.
4. It must be set *apart* from the world to the work of Christ.
5. It must have a *perpetuity of existence* with an organic link to previous churches which have descended from the Jerusalem Church even as humans have all descended from Adam and Eve.

PROPOSITION: for a church to be New Testament church, it must be constituted of professedly regenerate, scripturally baptized, and biblically sanctified believers.

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH MUST BE REGENERATE.

The first church and all subsequent churches in the New Testament were composed of professedly regenerate members. John the Baptist, who prepared the members for the first church, required fruits worthy of repentance before baptizing anyone (Luke 3:7, 8). Since he was preparing the people whom the Lord would call out to constitute the first church, it is obvious that regeneration was a prerequisite to church membership.

The first church received only professing believers as members on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). No unregenerate person gladly receives such a word as Peter preached on that day. He attributed the death of Christ to their wicked hands (Acts 2:23), bringing them under conviction and causing them to cry, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Furthermore, the Lord was said to “add to this church daily such as should be saved” only (Acts 2:47).

Philip baptized only those who believed the things he preached concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 8:13). This evangelist required a profession of faith from the Ethiopian eunuch before he baptized him. Acts 8:36-37, “And as they went on [their] way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, [here is] water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” (KJV) The Apostle Peter baptized Cornelius and his household only after they had given evidence of being regenerated by receiving the Holy Spirit. The basis for his calling for their baptism was the Holy Spirit’s witness to their being born again. Acts 10:47-48, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.” (KJV) Because they did not believe he had been genuinely converted or born again, the Church at Jerusalem at first refused to permit Saul of Tarsus to unite with them. Only after Barnabas confirmed his conversion did they receive him as a member. Acts 9:26-28, “And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought [him] to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at

Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.” (KJV)

But was not Judas Iscariot, who was obviously unregenerate, a member of the first church? Yes, he was, but his case was the exception, not the rule. To betray our Lord according to prophecy, it was necessary for him to be within the elite circle of the twelve within the first church. Indeed, the Lord Himself chose him to be an apostle (Luke 6:12-16). Even John the Baptist who baptized Judas was unable to discern his hypocrisy even though he had done so among the Pharisees and Sadducees. Simon the Sorcerer passed as a regenerate believer until he exposed his unregenerate heart in seeking to buy the power to lay hands on people and bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18-23). It is one thing for a church to err in its discernment in receiving unregenerate members who deceive it by professing to be born-again, and quite another to receive members purposefully and knowingly who have never professed to be born of God as most religious societies do.

Pedobaptists have long received members into their churches without requiring a credible profession of faith in Christ, but many so-called Baptists are beginning to do the same thing. In a press release from the Baptist Press (a Southern Baptist Convention Agency) entitled Unbelievers in Baptist Churches: an “affront to God,” dated July 24, 2001, Jeff Robinson reports the following:

“Is the Baptist Faith and Message being contradicted by Baptist church rolls? That’s the question Tom Ascol posed during the 2001 Southern Baptist Founders Conference, July 17-20 at Asbury College in Wilmore, Ky.

“Ascol, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida, pointed to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message as continuing the historic Baptist commitment to regenerate church membership. In practice, however, the denomination reflects a wholesale departure from it, he said, citing a North American Mission Board study indicating trouble at this crucial point of biblical doctrine, as well as church membership rosters filled with the names of ‘inactive’ or missing members.

“The doctrine of regenerate church membership holds that only born-again persons may be members of a local church. It is a historic Baptist distinctive, championed by all the historic Baptist confessions of faith, including the 1925, 1963 and 2000 statements of the Baptist Faith and Message.

“‘Our practice doesn’t measure up to our confession,’ Ascol said. ‘The overwhelming majority of Southern Baptist church members give little or no sign of spiritual life. There are countless studies that have been done in the past 15 years that validate this.’”

“As evidence of this jettisoning of regenerate church membership, Ascol cited figures from the SBC’s 2000 church profile and a study conducted by the North American Mission Boards which showed that:

“SBC churches totaled 15.9 million members but only 5.5 million in total attendance on any given Sunday morning. ‘Only 33 percent of those who are supposed to be members care enough to come,’ Ascol said.

“The typical SBC church has 233 members but an average attendance of only 70 persons for Sunday morning worship.”

“Beyond Sunday morning, only one member in 10 takes part in further church activities.

“Less than one of every 10 persons who make decisions through the evangelistic efforts of Southern Baptist churches is active in the church one year later.”

Later, in the same press release, it is reported: “The recent departure from this biblical view [regenerate church membership] on the part of many SBC churches has pulled along with it an entire train of residual problems, Ascol said, mentioning a recent incident when two fellow pastors were fired for attempting to deal with the question of non-attenders whose names remained on the membership rolls.

“Filled with baptized, yet unregenerate members, they begin to take on the appetites, the ideals, the methods of the unregenerate in dealing with ecclesiological issues,’ Ascol said. ‘When a pastor in such a situation tries to recover long-neglected truth or practice, there is war.’

“The war commences with a business meeting and packed pews, filled with persons who have not attended the church in years, Ascol said. It ends with the pastor’s firing, largely at the hands of ‘church members’ who are members in good standing yet live worldly lives and never darken the doors of the church.

“This type of wicked venting of godless actions and attitudes that is going on across our denomination could not happen in a local church that takes seriously a commitment to regenerate church membership,’ Ascol said.”

How shall we discern whether or not those we receive into the membership of the church are regenerate? It is only by their fruits (Luke 3:7, 8; Matthew 7:20). Every church ought to look for the fruit of the Spirit in professing believers before receiving them into its membership (Galatians 5:22, 23). We would save ourselves from much trouble if we were more diligent in this area. At the same time, we must not be so strict as to preclude anyone from ever uniting with the church and violating the principle of Romans 14:1, “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.”

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH MUST BE SCRIPTURALLY BAPTIZED.

For baptism to be valid, there are at least four tests it must meet. Anything less than these four essential requirements does not constitute Scriptural baptism.

Is the one being baptized a believer in Christ? In the New Testament only such as professed faith in Christ were ever baptized. (Acts 2:41; 8:36, 37; 9:15-18; Galatians 3:26, 27). Baptism does not make the one being baptized a believer. It merely reveals that he is already a believer in Christ. For this reason, so-called infant baptism is not baptism at all, neither is the baptism of any unregenerate person valid baptism.

Is the baptism a full immersion or dipping of a believer in water? Sprinkling or pouring water on a candidate does not baptize him. Neither does the so-called baptism of the Holy Spirit sought by so many today constitute Scriptural baptism. There is but one baptism—one in kind (Ephesians 4:5)—and that one baptism is a full immersion in water. That the full immersion in water of a believer alone qualifies as Scriptural baptism is evident from three key teachings about baptism:

1. The meaning of the Greek words for baptism and baptize—*baptisma* and *baptizo*—which all reputable lexicographers have defined as meaning an immersion or dipping; and to dip, immerse, or plunge.
2. The passages which speak either of both the baptizer and the baptized as either going down into the water or coming up out of the water or both. Matthew 3:16, “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.” (KJV) Acts 8:38-39, “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” (KJV)
3. The analogy of baptism to a burial. People are buried by being immersed in dirt, not by having a little dirt sprinkled or poured on them. Romans 6:3-5, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection.” (KJV)

Is the baptism an act of identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection? For baptism to be valid, it must picture the fact of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. By being baptized, the believer identifies himself with Christ, declaring in that act that he died when Christ died, his old man was buried when Christ was buried, and he was raised to walk in newness of life when Christ was raised. If one is baptized in order to obtain the remission of sins, his baptism is null and void. Baptism can never literally wash away sins; only the blood of Christ can (Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 3:21).

Is the baptism administered by an authorized administrator? Jesus walked some sixty miles to be baptized by John the Baptist who had been sent by God to baptize (John 1:6, 33). Proper Biblical authority counted with Jesus. Obviously Jesus Himself had authority to baptize (John 3:26; 4:2). The only other duly authorized administrator of baptism mentioned in Scripture is a New Testament church (Matthew 28:18-20). Not even Paul himself claimed authority to baptize. 1 Corinthians 1:17, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom

of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” (KJV) Did not Paul baptize a number of people? 1 Corinthians 1:14-16 indicates he did. How could he baptize Scripturally if God did not send him to baptize? He baptized by the authority of the church. He acted as an agent of the church, even as insurance agents act today in behalf of their company. No preacher can administer Scriptural baptism of himself; he can do so only as an agent of the church. Even immersion administered to believers by a mere preacher or religious society, and not a New Testament church, is therefore null and void.

But someone will object that one administering the baptism is not as important as the fact a believer is baptized. Will the same one advocate that the one performing a marriage ceremony is not as important as the marriage? Of course, he will not advocate such in relation to marriage, for he knows well that a marriage performed by one not having authority to marry is null and void.

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH MUST BE SANCTIFIED.

Since the church is composed of professedly regenerate members, those members of necessity are sanctified or set apart for the Lord. This is positional or essential sanctification. 1 Corinthians 1:2, “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called [to be] saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” (KJV) 1 Corinthians 1:30, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (KJV) 1 Corinthians 6:11, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (KJV) Church people are expected to be different in their behavior after they have become members than they were before. Hebrews 10:10, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once [for all].” (KJV) Because only true believers are thus sanctified, they alone qualify for membership in a New Testament Church.

As the elect of God, they were set apart to Him from all eternity by His sovereign choice. 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” (KJV) They were further sanctified by the death of Christ. Hebrews 13:12, “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.” (KJV) They were also set apart to Him by the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and effectual calling. 1 Peter 1:2, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” (KJV) By virtue of believers’ being saints, they are thus sanctified. How we need to keep this fact before us at all times that we might truly live as sanctified ones!

But there is also a practical aspect of sanctification. Because true believers are set apart positionally, they are also to be sanctified practically. Only such as are already sanctified positionally can be set apart practically. Practical sanctification is effected first by the Lord Himself. 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and [I pray God] your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ.”(KJV) The main instrument of practical sanctification is the Word of God or truth. John 17:17, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (KJV) John 17:19, “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (KJV) Ephesians 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (KJV) The preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the attending on the preaching and teaching of the Word, and our own private reading and study of the Word are essential to our being continually set apart practically to the Lord and His work.

Practical sanctification may be said to occur when those sanctified by the Word further set themselves apart by doing the will of God as revealed in His Word. 1 Thessalonians 4:3, “For this is the will of God, [even] your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” (KJV) Here is a practical application of the truth. We have learned the truth. The Word of God has done its work in our hearts. We then do the will of God in abstaining from those sins which stain the names of Christians, churches, and above all, the Lord Jesus. To be more precise, we give evidence of having been set apart by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and of being set apart by the Word of God in so doing the will of God

THE CHURCH, THOUGH IN THE WORLD, IS CERTAINLY NOT OF THE WORLD.

The New Testament church is a unique institution which has a perpetual existence in this world and will even exist into eternity. All other institutions will end with this world. Marriage will cease when this life is over, the home will be no more, all human governments will come to an end, but the church will exist forever (Ephesians 3:21).

The very nature of the church, then, prevents it from being of the world. The church should never seek to be a friend of the world. It ought to trouble us when the world speaks well of us. Yet so many churches and preachers seem to court the approval of the world! The church does not need the acceptance of the world; it needs only to please its Lord. Having received an effectual call in regeneration, those who constitute the church are called-out from among men to serve the Lord. Their baptism sets them apart from the world, identifying them with Christ in His death to sin, His burial, and His resurrection to new life. The truths of the Word of God to which they are devoted sanctify them, setting them apart from the world by their very practices in every area of life.

Isn't it a wonderful thing to see members of the church separate themselves from the practices of the world? The church can never reach the world by being worldly. Sadly, this is a truth many professing Christians do not understand. When the church is worldly, the world will despise it as hypocritical. But when the church is separate from the world, the world will react against the church but move toward it. Is this not what happened in the early history of the church? Today, however, what is called the church is reacting against the world and moving toward it. May it not be so among the Lord's churches!

THE NEED OF THE CHURCH: REFORMATION OR REVIVAL

Revelation 2:1-7

by Wayne Camp

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

INTRODUCTION

I call your attention to these words from our text: "*Repent, and do the first works.*" The Lord's message to more than one of these churches included a call to repent. In addition to our text where he tells the church in Ephesus to "*repent, and do the first works*" he tells other churches in Asia to repent.

To the church at Pergamos he had John write, Revelation 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

To the church in Sardis his words were, Revelation 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

To the church in Laodecia he commanded, Revelation 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

It is evident from these verses, especially the message to Ephesus that what the Lord's churches need is to repent and that will lead to revival. "*Repent, and do the first works.*" This expression indicates a need of revival to me. *Do the first works.*

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SUCCESSFUL REFORMATION

In the case of an individual reforming we have a biblical lesson. Luke 11:24-26 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. 25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. 26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Churches and denominations have been no more successful at reformation that was the individual described in this passage.

The so-called Protestant Reformation was a failure. When Martin Luther tried to reform the Catholic Church he was excommunicated and the organization that resulted was not much better

than her harlot mother. He brought out with him several heresies that doomed his work such as infant baptism, the alliance of church and state, salvation that is partially achieved by baptism, and others. His movement is in worse moral condition today than the Roman Catholic Church was when he left.

John Calvin was no more successful in his reformation movement. He brought out baby baptism and persecution of those who would not bow to his doctrines. Though he taught the doctrines of grace, a careful study of some of his followers will show that they believe that baptism places one in a covenant relationship with Christ.

A little closer to home, there was a time when Southern Baptists in almost totality held to the doctrine of free and sovereign grace. The majority of Southern Baptists now are so far from that that there is little hope that the convention will ever return to its roots. There have been efforts at reform but moderates (liberals) still have the upper hand in many areas of SBC life, especially in their schools and seminaries.

I repeat what I said earlier, *“There has never been a successful reformation.”* Before passing to my next point, let me also say that the Lord’s churches have never needed to be restored. Alexander Campbell claimed to have restored the New Testament church. He claimed that from about 100 AD until about 1827, or at least sometime between 1809 and 1827, the Bible was lost in the church and the church was lost in the world. Yet, this same heretic, as I showed in the message on *The Perpetuity of the Lord’s True Churches* affirmed the perpetual existence of Baptist Churches from the time of Christ and the Apostles to the day in which he lived.

THE LORD’S CHURCHES DID NOT ORIGINATE OUT OF A REFORMATION

The first New Testament church on earth was founded during the ministry of Jesus Christ as Bro. Royce Smith has shown in his sermon on the origin of the church. 1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

The Lord’s church have never been lost in the world but have had a perpetual existence from the time of their origin until the present day, thus, there has been no need to restore them. Since the Lord’s churches did not originate out of a reformation movement and have never ceased to exist causing them to need to be restored, this eliminates the need of reformation.

THE LORD’S CHURCHES NEED REVIVAL IN SEVERAL AREAS

I must speak in general; I am not saying that every one of the Lord’s Churches needs revival in each and every one of the areas I am discussing.

There needs to be a revival of magnifying the word of God above all tradition. God has magnified his word. Psalm 138:2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for

thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. If he has magnified his word above all his name, surely we need to magnify it above tradition.

Landmark Baptists are not immune to or free from tradition. What starts out rather innocently often becomes tradition and that tradition soon supercedes God's own word in our church life. Matthew 15:6 Ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Consider the case of Uzzah and his fellows when they went after the Ark of the Covenant. When the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant away from Israel they hauled it away on a cart. When David sent Uzzah and others to fetch the Ark home, they remembered what they had seen the Philistines do and they made them a new cart on which to haul it home. God ended that newly budding tradition by killing Uzzah because of it. The word of God forbad such transporting of the Ark. Four men were to bear it on their shoulders with the two staves that went through the four rings on its corners. But, this shows how quickly and how easily a tradition can usurp the authority of the word of God!

Jesus, in a conversation with Peter, made a statement concerning the Apostle John. John 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Almost immediately a tradition took hold that was not at all what Jesus said. John 21:23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

If tradition is allowed to rule our actions in one area who is to say it should not rule our actions in another area? If tradition rules in our method of doing mission work, should it not also rule in our mode of baptism and thus we could as quickly sprinkle as immerse?

One tradition that has really invaded into Landmark Baptist life is the practice of starting missions instead of churches. At least thirty years ago I offered a \$1000 reward for a biblical example of a missionary starting what we know today as a mission. Needless to say, the reward still goes unclaimed. The practice is without mandate or example in Scripture. It is a tradition that has taken on the force of a Divine commandment.

A brother with whom I have been having some correspondence recently confessed that he could now see that there are no grounds for the practice of missionaries starting missions. But, he asked, "How can we do mission work without starting missions?" I replied, "Send out men, let them preach the gospel and when they have a few who profess faith in Christ let them baptize them and immediately set them in church order."

Another tradition, born out of the one just mentioned is the tradition of a missionary on a field baptizing folks and they become members of a church on another continent or at a long distance. Those members have usually never attended a service at the so-called "mother" church. In fact, they may never attend a service at the church where they are enrolled as members.

At this point I have been unable to ascertain when this practice started but I can assure you it was this side of the completion of the Scripture. I can also assure you that it is a practice that is not of ancient origin.

Let me tell about a meeting of the Goshen Baptist Association in Virginia. The meeting took place on October 17, 1795, a little over 200 years ago. One of the preachers in the association by the name of George Morris had been baptizing folks who were joined to a church at a remote distance from where they lived, evidently somewhere else in Virginia. And now I quote from Semple's History of the Virginia Baptists.

"The following query was introduced: 'Has a minister a right to baptize persons and join them to a church at a remote distance?' which was answered in the negative. From this query and solution it seems great disturbance arose. George Morris, an ordained minister, had been in the habit of violating this rule. When the subject was debated in the Association Mr. Morris became so exasperated that he abruptly left his seat and went home. Continuing still to profess the same principles, and publicly to censure the Association for their decision, and thereby to create no little confusion, the moderator, by the advice of friends, thought proper to call a conference, i.e., a kind of occasional Association. The conference accordingly met at Waller's meetinghouse on the first Saturday in January, 1796. Thirteen churches were represented, and Morris was present. The Moderator, by the instruction of the conference, asked Morris such questions as tended to effect a reconciliation if it was possible; but Morris continued refractory. Where upon he was censured by the conference, and cited to appear at the next Association to answer for his conduct."

It is apparent from this information provided by Semple on P. 188 of his History of the Virginia Baptists that it was not yet a tradition to baptize folks in China and put them on the roles of churches in the United States. Otherwise, the Goshen Association surely would not have censured a man for baptizing folks in one area of Virginia and placing them as members of a church that was probably located in another area of Virginia or a neighboring state.

It has been repeatedly set forth in this conference that a church is an organized assembly that assembles from time to time and I assure you there are few, if any, Landmark Baptists who would not heartily "Amen" those declarations. But, we all know that it is common practice among Landmark Baptists to do the very thing for which George Morris was censured 200 years ago. How quickly tradition becomes our rule of practice!

Brethren, with some folks this is law that is as inflexible as the law of the Medes and Persians and I will be branded a heretic, Protestant, and liberal for saying it is nowhere taught in all of God's holy Word. But, let those who would call me such find for us one Scripture that shows that Paul and his co-workers ever started a congregation of baptized believers and called it a mission. It was always a church, a duly organized assembly of scripturally baptized believers.

There is absolutely no biblical foundation for a missionary at some remote distance, even in a different country or on a different continent baptizing those who profess faith in Christ and joining them to a church that they may never attend and with which they will likely never assemble. If there is, I have been unable to find it in 44 years of rather regular and often intensive

Bible study.

Churches who practice this receive members into their churches without ever meeting the people. They raise their hands and vote to letter them out again without ever meeting them. They give them letters of full fellowship even though they have never fellowshiped in the church assembly and the church assembly has never fellowshiped with them. It is a Baptist barnacle with no biblical basis. We need a revival in doing God's work God's way and God's way is found in the pages of his Holy Word and not in history or long standing traditions.

Early in my ministry I led a church to vote to stop doing something for which they admitted they had no Scripture. One brother met me the next Sunday morning when I arrived at the church to try to persuade me to reverse my stand. He said, "Bro. Camp, I know it would be wrong for us to start doing that if we had never done it. But, since it has been practiced for a long time I think that makes it right." I said, "Brother, are you ready to die?" He said, "Why do you ask?" I said, "I know it would be wrong for me to kill you if no one had ever killed anyone else. But, ever since Cain killed Abel men have been killing one another. I have a 32 caliber pistol out in my car and I am going to go out there and get it and shoot you. After all, men have been killing for centuries and I believe that makes it okay for me to kill you."

Needless to say the brother changed his tune right quickly. Beloved brothers and sisters, antiquity has no sanctifying effect on error or tradition. Tradition must not become law with us. But, with some it has become inflexible law. Only a revival of giving God's word preeminence in our faith and practice will cure our love and worship of traditions.

We need a revival of Christ-exalting preaching. 1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. It is God's will that Christ have preeminence in all things and he should certainly be preminent in our preaching. When we preach messages about the word of God we need to remind our hearers that Christ is preminent in the Scriptures. John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

When we preach on the doctrine of election we need to magnify the fact that the election to salvation is in Christ. Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

If we preach the doctrine of predestination and adoption we need to keep Christ central in that doctrine. Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

If we preach of wisdom, imputed righteousness, sanctification, and redemption we must speak of Christ for God has made him those things unto us. 1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

When we preach on the church we should set forth Christ as the head, founder, foundation, purchaser, preserver and perpetuator of the church. Keep him ever in the forefront of all our

preaching concerning the church.

Yes, my beloved brothers and sisters, we need a revival of preaching Christ. What did Philip do when he went to Samaria? Acts 8:5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

What did Philip do when he joined himself to the chariot of the eunuch? Acts 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

What did Saul do when he reached Damascus after the Lord apprehended him on the road to that city? Acts 9:20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

What did Peter do when he went to the house of Cornelius? Acts 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:).

What was the policy of Paul when he went to the ungodly city of Corinth? 1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

We need to be able to join with Paul when he said, 1 Corinthians 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified. Oh, let us have the spirit Paul expresses in his second epistle to the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

We need a revival of Biblical evangelism as was so well set forth by Bro. Keener in the message last evening. Take all the verses I have just read and bring them down under this heading and review them again.

Some brethren are perplexed today and are asking what we can do to make our churches and our mission efforts more effective. My answer is that we cannot improve on the biblical method of preaching the word. 2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

When Jesus sent some men to the lost sheep of the house of Israel he instructed them on their method of operation. Matthew 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Here his instructions again. Matthew 10:27 What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

When he commissioned his church to go into all the world he commissioned preaching. Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Luke 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Again we read of the commission that Jesus gave his disciples. Luke 9:2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God. When they went forth they went forth preaching. Luke 9:6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel.

When a certain man would go preach but asked that he be allowed to go and bury his father, Jesus made no bones about what he was to do. Luke 9:60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury

their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. When Peter and John had been jailed for preaching and were freed from jail they were told to go and preach some more. Acts 5:20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

Our preaching should be as broad in content as the whole counsel of God. Acts 20:26-27 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

If you would build up your church in the most holy faith, preach the word. If you would evangelize preach the word. If you need to combat false doctrine preach the word. Don't waste your time sitting around trying to figure out new ways to establish churches, reach the lost, edify the saved, and combat heresy. God has it all figured out and has given us an instruction book that says over and over again, *“Preach! Preach! Preach! Preach the word in season. Preach the word out of season. Preach the word when men like it. Preach the word when men hate it.*

I also believe that we need a revival of biblical church discipline. I appreciated the thorough and biblical message by Bro. John Kohler on church discipline this morning. Too little church discipline is practiced today. When church discipline is practiced, too little of it is practiced scripturally.

I have heard of cases where discipline was practiced because someone had differed with the pastor on something and he wanted them out of the church. I have heard of people being excluded on the testimony of a single person. Under the law God required more than one witness. Hebrews 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Paul did not deal with serious trouble without the testimony of more than one witness. 2 Corinthians 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

Bro. Ron has pointed out that that God has protected his pastors against accusations unless there are two or three witnesses who can confirm the accusation. 1 Timothy 5:19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. God's people receiving accusations from one witness have ruined pastors. That violates the word of God. Better a guilty man go free than an innocent man is destroyed because of the word of one person.

CONCLUSION

There are other areas in which we need revival. I have been encouraged and motivated in this conference to preach more on the church than I have in recent years. When I came to see the glorious doctrine of free and sovereign grace, it opened up so many areas of Scripture to me that I had before said little about that I began to preach more on that and less on other fundamentals of the faith. How we do need to preach the whole counsel of God and not just get into one area of biblical truth and stay there. May God grant our churches a real revival in whatever areas we fall short.

THE TRUE CHURCH & THE PARACHURCH

Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 9:38-40

by Elder John Kohler

After His victorious resurrection from the dead and just before His glorious ascension into Heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ gave what is usually called *the Great Commission*. This Great Commission is recorded in its fullest form in Matthew 28:18-20, but portions of it are also found in Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; and John 20:19-23. Many Bible students are of the opinion that it is also mentioned in Acts 1:8, but this verse seems to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. In other words, it reads more like a prediction or prophecy than a commission or command.

The Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ is His authoritative command to go and “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” It is His divine authorization or formal legal warrant to evangelize by teaching all nations the true Biblical gospel, to baptize or immerse in water those human beings who hear, understand, repent, and believe the true Biblical gospel, and to catechize those human beings who believe the true Biblical gospel and submit to Scriptural baptism. It is an official charge from the Commander-in-Chief to help other human beings enter into a right relationship with the Son of God, the church of God, and the word of God. As such, it is a perpetual project or everlasting enterprise, for Jesus said, “*And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*”

The question that needs to be answered is, *to whom was the Great Commission given?* This question is answered in one of two ways by professing Christians. First, there are professing Christians who hold that the Great Commission was given by Christ only to the true church. This is the deeply-held conviction of this writer. Secondly, there are professing Christians who are convinced that the Great Commission was also given by Christ to the parachurch. This writer is totally-opposed to this idea. These two views are considered below:

THE GREAT COMMISSION WAS GIVEN ONLY TO THE TRUE CHURCH

- A. The immediate context of Matthew 28:18-20 and Christ’s words in Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; and John 20:19-23 make it clear that the Great Commission was given by the Lord Jesus Christ primarily to His eleven remaining disciples or apostles.
- B. The following questions need to be asked and answered in relation to this subject:
 1. Was the Great Commission given to Christ’s apostles *as individual disciples or Christians?* If so, then every individual disciple or Christian---including women and children---has the right and responsibility to preach, baptize, and teach. The book of Acts does not present the Great Commission as being carried out in such a haphazard manner in New Testament times.

2. Was the Great Commission given to Christ's apostles *as individual, immersed disciples or baptized Christians*? If so, then every individual, immersed, disciple or baptized Christian---including women and children---has the right and responsibility to preach, baptize, and teach. The book of Acts does not present the Great Commission as being carried out in such a haphazard manner in New Testament times.
3. Was the Great Commission given to Christ's apostles *as apostles*? If so, then only apostles have the right and responsibility to preach, baptize, and teach, and there are no apostles today. (The Roman Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession is totally false and heretical.) In the end, this would mean that the Great Commission is no longer in effect and expired with the death of the Apostle John. (This, by the way, is the view of some Primitive Baptists, who believe the Great Commission was fulfilled completely during the Apostolic Era and is no longer binding.)
4. Was the Great Commission given to Christ's apostles *as ordained New Testament church ministers*? This is the view of some other Primitive Baptists, and there is an element of truth in this position. It is primarily ordained New Testament church ministers who have the right and responsibility to preach, baptize, and teach. This is because the Great Commission is not an informal, unofficial teaching about the need for all Christians to witness to others about the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is a formal, official command to preach, baptize, and teach. Of course, ordained New Testament church ministers are never to carry out the Great Commission in isolation from a true New Testament church, but in and through such a body.
5. Was the Great Commission given to Christ's apostles *as a New Testament church*? This is the deeply-held conviction of this writer. The Great Commission was not given by Christ to His apostles in an individual capacity to be carried out in a free-lance manner, but it was given to them in a corporate church capacity. This means it is the formal, official right and responsibility of each and every New Testament church, as it is led by its ordained ministers, to preach, baptize, and teach. The New Testament church has an exclusive franchise on the Great Commission, and it cannot delegate to anyone or anything else the right and responsibility to carry it out in accordance with Christ's specific instructions.

THE GREAT COMMISSION WAS ALSO GIVEN TO THE PARACHURCH.

- A. A *parachurch organization* may be defined as “any Christian ministry that attempts to carry out any part of the Great Commission or to do God’s work in the world apart from the authority of a New Testament church.” A *parachurch organization* is one that **attempts to** operate alongside of and sometimes cooperate with the church, while a *suprachurch* organization (e.g., a formal Fellowship, Association, Convention, and so on) is one that often operates above the church (if not on paper or in theory, at least in actual practice). This writer is totally-opposed to any and all parachurch organizations (though he

freely admits that they accomplish some relative good), but he is very supportive of the Biblical principle and practice of New Testament churches informally fellowshiping, associating, or working together to carry out the Great Commission, as long as the independence and autonomy of each church is carefully guarded and never, ever violated. It must always be remembered that the Lord Jesus Christ is the *only* Head of the church, and it does not need any earthly head. If it develops a second head, it becomes a two-headed monstrosity!

- B. It is variously estimated that there are 5,000 to 20,000 parachurch organizations in the world. If Catholic and Protestant churches are counted as parachurch organizations (as they are counted by this writer), then the total number is INFITESMALLY HIGHER. By way of comparison, there are said to be approximately 20,000 “Christian” denominations in the world.
- C. Parachurch organizations usually focus upon such specialized activities as evangelism, discipleship, church planting, counseling, Bible translation and publishing, literature distribution, broadcasting, theological education, social and medical relief, agriculture, camping, fundraising, children’s ministry, youth ministry, men’s ministry, women’s ministry, senior citizens’ ministry, military ministry, music ministry, ad infinitum, ad nauseam (at least in this writer’s view). It is the opinion of these parachurch organizations that New Testament churches do not have the ability to carry out these specialized activities, and that the churches can only conduct more generalized activities.
- D. Parachurch organizations are said by those involved in them to be started for the following reasons: 1) to do what the church cannot do; 2) to do what the church fails to do; 3) to reach unreached peoples; 4) to meet unmet needs; 5) to take the Christian faith outside the church building and into the public arena; 6) to allow Christians of various denominations to work together; 7) to get the laity more involved in actual ministry; 8) to get women more involved in actual ministry; 9) to overcome the dead orthodoxy and traditionalism of the church; and 10) to give Christians the freedom to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and be more flexible and creative in their methodology. This writer is convinced that some of these concerns have a degree of legitimacy, while others of these concerns are completely illegitimate. At any rate, the New Testament church has the ability to do what Christ has commanded to be done in the Great Commission, and the fact that the church sometimes fails or refuses to obey Christ as it should does not under any circumstances justify the creation of man-made organizations for the purpose of carrying out a Great Commission that was not given by Christ to such organizations. (A seemingly good end does not justify an unscriptural means!) This is a major usurpation of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and a form of rebellion against the God of Heaven! Let all parachurch ministers and Christian workers carry out the Great Commission in and through the New Testament church as God has ordained and Christ has commanded! More eternal good will be accomplished when God’s work is done in God’s way as it is taught in God’s word! This is because we cannot improve upon what God has revealed in the Holy Bible.
- E. Parachurch organizations are characterized by the following weaknesses: 1) they have no clear Biblical basis for their existence; 2) they have no clear Biblical guidelines to follow and

no accountability; 3) they take needed people and gifted leaders away from the church; 4) they take tithes and offerings away from the church; 5) they tend to dilute sound Bible doctrine in order to reach greater numbers of people; 6) they are usually interdenominational and ecumenical; 7) they undermine the Biblical ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the restricted observance of the Lord's Supper; 8) they often violate God's word in their practices; 9) they create loyalty to their own organization and minimize the importance of the church; and 10) they are sometimes motivated by the love of money and financially benefit their charismatic founders. It must be admitted that some of these same weaknesses can sometimes be found in New Testament churches, so it is a good reminder for New Testament churches to strengthen their respective ministries and faithfully avoid these problems. The Bible clearly warns us that the love of money is the root of all evil, so the love of money and the things money can buy must never be introduced into or tolerated in the work of the Lord.

- F. Based upon what is taught in Mark 9:38-40, parachurch organizations that preach the true Biblical gospel should be responded to by the true church in the following manner: 1) they should not be actively encouraged, supported, or promoted; 2) they should not be aggressively opposed or persecuted; and 3) they should be left in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ to do with them whatsoever He wills. Since we believe in religious liberty for all and desire such liberty for ourselves, the right of parachurch organizations to exist and operate under the laws of the land should not be challenged, but their right to even exist under the supreme and final authority of God's word should be vigorously contested. Above all, parachurch ministers and Christian workers need to be reached by and for the true church, its ministers, and its ministries.

May New Testament churches throughout the world be found faithful in carrying out the Great Commission until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again! Obedience to Christ's marching orders is not optional for such scriptural congregations, but mandatory!