

18. WHAT DID CHRIST BUILD WHEN HE BUILT HIS CHURCH?

Matthew 16

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

14 So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Some think that Jesus said He was going to build His church upon Peter because Peter means rock in the original Greek text. But in the above text of Matthew 16:18, **Peter** in the Greek is *Petros*, masculine gender and means stone, whereas **rock** is *petra*, feminine gender, and means a large mass of rock such as bedrock. Therefore, Jesus did not say that He was going to build His church upon Peter, but rather upon the confession that Peter had made that “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”

If Christ had built His church upon Peter, then Peter would have been the foundation. But this is clearly refuted by the following:

1 Corinthians 3

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

So what did Christ build when He built His church?

Since the days of Noah, God’s people have always been (1) those He has called to follow Him, (2) those with whom He has made a covenant to walk in His way, and (3) those upon which He has favored with special blessings. God called Noah’s family out of a wicked world and separated them from that world by the great flood.

God called Abraham out of his idolatrous home land to go unto a land that He would show him. And God called the Israelite nation out of the idolatrous nation of Egypt to go into a land that He would show them. God made a covenant with these people to walk in His way and He favored them with special blessings.

In like manner, Christ came to build and purchase His church as a special called out people for God’s possession.

The English word church is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia* (from **ek** which means **out of**, and **klesis** which means **a calling**). *Ekklesia* is therefore defined as “called out or forth; a calling out; or that which is called out”. Hence, the word **church** in the New Testament Scriptures simply means a called out body of people. But called **by what**, **out of what**, and **into what**? Unto the followers of Christ, the apostles wrote:

Thessalonians 2

13 ...God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

1 Corinthians 1

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...

9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. cf. Romans 1:7

1 Corinthians 7

15 ...God has called us to peace.

Ephesians 4

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called...

Colossians 3

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

1 Thessalonians 4

7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

2 Timothy 1

9 God has saved us and called us with a holy calling...

1 Peter 2

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...

Thus, as the “*ekklesia*” of the Lord, God’s people would be called out of sin and darkness into a life of godliness, holiness and righteousness in Christ. God has given His *ekklesia* a New Covenant—the Law of Christ (Matt. 26:28; Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21; Heb. 9:15-17; James 1:25). And God has favored His *ekklesia* (called out people) with special blessings, promises and rewards.

God’s people therefore are a **special called out people**: called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28); called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14); called out of Satan’s domain of sin and the way to hell into the kingdom and marvelous light of God’s dear Son (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9); called to be saints (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2); called into the fellowship of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9); called in one body and with one hope (Col. 3:15; Eph. 4:4); and called to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 5:10). For this reason, God’s people must walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they have been called (Eph 4:1) and strive to make their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

Old Testament usage of *ekklesia*.

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, but in about 270 B.C. it was translated into Greek, and in that first translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint version which was in use in the time of Christ, the Hebrew word *qahal* is translated *ekklesia* over 100 times. When translated into our English language, it usually refers to an **assembly** (Cf. Deut 9:10 where the assembly is composed of God’s people.

New Testament usage of *ekklesia*.

Ekklesia is used in the New Testament 114 times and simply means a called out body of people. In Acts 7:38, Stephen, in referring to Moses, said: “**This is he who was in the congregation [church-KJV & ASV] in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai...**”).

Ekklesia is not always used in a religious context. For example, at a public uproar in Ephesus, it is stated:

Acts 19

32 Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly (*ekklesia*) was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. The town clerk then said:

39 But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly (*ekklesia*).

41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly (*ekklesia*).

But most of the time in the New Testament, the context will show that *ekklesia* is used in a spiritual sense, and simply refers to the called-out people of God.

The *ekklesia* of Christ is used in only two senses in the New Testament:

1. The universal sense (cf. Matt. 16:18; Ephesians 5:25-27; etc.) in which all of the congregations of the Lord’s people are included; and

2. The local sense, such as the church at Antioch, Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, etc.

Now carefully observe the difference between the Lord’s church (singular) and denominations (plural): The New Testament speaks of the Lord’s church in only two senses: the universal sense and the local sense. But a denomination is smaller than the Lord’s church in the universal sense and larger than the Lord’s church in the local sense. How then can a denomination be the Lord’s church in any sense? Note how the principle of denominationalism (division) is condemned in the New Testament:

Romans 16

16 ...The churches of Christ greet you.

17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

18 For those who are such do not serve our

Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

1 Corinthians 1

10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

1 Corinthians 3

3 for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal?

5 Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?

Ephesians 4

11 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...

Christ taught that he is the Shepherd of but one fold (John 10:16). He died on the cross to unite Jews and Gentiles into one body (Ephesians 2:11-16). He prayed for His followers (God's people) that they might be one (John 17:20-23). And, in the first century, the Lord's called out people answered

that prayer by worshipping the same God, obeying the same Lord, and receiving the same Word revealed by and received from the same Holy Spirit. They all contended for the same faith, practiced the same thing, were members of the same body (church), were citizens of the same kingdom and were said to be of one accord and of the same mind (cf. **PropheSied:** Jeremiah 32:38-40; Ezekiel 37:22, 24; Zephaniah 3:9. **Fulfilled:** Acts 2:44; 4:32; Romans 15:5-6; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Eph. 4:1-6; Philippians 1:27; 2:2; 3:16; 1 Peter 3:8. Question, if we do the same today, will it not make for the same kind of unity Christ prayed for and His followers practiced in the 1st century? It is when these principles are violated, that division and denominationalism come into play.

What is the significance of Christ being the builder of His church?

Psalm 127

1 Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it;

Matthew 15

13 ..."Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted."—*Jesus Christ*

Carefully observe that after the Lord's church was established in Jerusalem (Acts 2),

Acts 2

47 ...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

What does this imply about those outside of Christ's church (God's called out people)? Are they saved or lost? Note again:

Ephesians 5

23 ...Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

That body is His church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Now if Christ is the Savior of His body, His church, what does that imply about those outside His body, His church? Are they saved or lost? But some will say that is too narrow. Too narrow? But did Jesus say about narrow and few or many being chosen?

Matthew 7

13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few

who find it. –*Jesus Christ*

Twice, Jesus said:

Matthew 22

14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

See also Matthew 20:16 and Matthew 7:21

John 14

6 Jesus said..., “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

John 15

1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away...

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. –*Jesus Christ*

And note also the following:

1 Peter 4

18 Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? So where has the Lord placed salvation?

Again the question: What did Christ build when He built His church (God’s called out people)?

The following was addressed to the Lord’s church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 3

9 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.

16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

The following was addressed to the Lord’s church in Ephesus:

Ephesians 2

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 4

11 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying [building up-ASV] of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ... Now note the following:

1 Timothy 3

15 [*The apostle Paul to Timothy the evangelist:*] I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Hebrews 3

3 For this One (*Christ*) has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.

6 ...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

1 Peter 2

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Is the Lord’s church the only body of Christ, and is Christ its only head?

Ephesians 1

22 And He (*God*) put all things under His (*Christ’s*) feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 4

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Ephesians 5

23 ...Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Cf. Col. 1:18; Rom. 12:4-5

24 ...the church is subject to Christ...

Colossians 1

18 And He [*Christ*] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Romans 12

4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ...

1 Corinthians 12

20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

The word church (Gr. *ekklesia*), God's called out people, is but one of several words used to describe one and the same thing. Others are:

1. **The Body of Christ** (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-12; 5:23, 25; Colossians 1:18)

2. **The Elect:** (Matthew 24:24-31; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:2, 4; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:10)

3. **God's building:** (1 Corinthians 3:9; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5)

4. **The Lord's family, children and household:** (Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6-7; Ephesians 2:19; Ephesians 3:14-15; 1 John 3:1; etc.)

All of God's children are in his family. But His family is the Lord's church. Therefore all of God's children are in the Lord's church. In God's family, there is Fatherly provision (2 Pet. 1:3), Fatherly correction (Heb. 12:4-11) and Fatherly protection (Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 10:12-13).

5. **One Shepherd with one fold:** (John 10:11-16)

6. **The kingdom:** (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 16:28; Hebrews 12:28; James 2:5)

7. **The kingdom of God:**

Cf. Matt. 6:33; 26:29; Mark 9:1; John 3:3, 5; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 15:50; Galatians 5:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:5)

8. **The kingdom of Christ:** (John 18:36; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 1:9).

9. **The kingdom of heaven:** Cf. Matt. 5:3, 10, 20; 7:21; 10:7; 16:19; 18:3-4; 19:14; 2 Tim. 4:18

10. **The temple of God and The Holy Spirit:** (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:19) **Christ** is also said to **dwell in our hearts through faith** (Ephesians 3:17) and Colossians 3:16 commands **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...”**

11. **The vine and the branches:** (John 15:1-6)

12. **The bride of Christ:** (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-33; cf. Revelation 21:2, 9-10)

13. In addition, during Jesus' earthly ministry and before His church/kingdom began (Acts 2), He often compared it to certain things, especially in His parables (Matthew 13:24-52; 18:23-35; 20:1-16; 22:2-14; 25:1-46; Luke 13:18-21; etc.).

14. And the New Testament makes a distinction between (1) the Lord's kingdom/church composed of the Lord's people here on earth and (2) the everlasting or eternal kingdom of our Lord (heaven) which flesh and blood cannot inherit (1 Corinthians 15:50; Acts 14:21-22; 2 Peter 1:10-11).

How then did the Lord's church function after it began on Pentecost (Acts 2) and what pattern has been left for God's people of today to follow?

God gave Noah a pattern for the building of the ark (Genesis 6:14-16). He gave Moses a pattern for the building of the tabernacle and the contents within (Exodus 25:9, 40; 26:30; Numbers 8:4; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5). He gave Solomon instructions and a pattern for the building of the temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 43:10). Therefore, it should not seem strange that our Lord gave His apostles instructions, examples and pattern relative to the building, functioning, purpose and work of His church, His people, His kingdom (cf. John 13:15; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Timothy 1:16; 4:12; 2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 2:21).

Were The Lord's People To Assemble Themselves Together As Local Congregations?

That local congregations of the Lord's church did assemble is evident from the following:

Matthew 18

20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them. *—Jesus Christ*

1 Corinthians 5

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together...

1 Corinthians 11

18 For first of all, when you come together as a church... cf. vs. 20

1 Corinthians 14

23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place...

Hebrews 10

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

But what characterized the assembly of the Lord's church when God's people came together?

What Characterized The Worship Of God's People?

Matthew 4

10 ...You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve. *—Jesus Christ*

John 4

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. cf. Philipians 3:3

24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. *—Jesus Christ*

Hebrews 12

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

But how was worship unto God expressed in the assembly of the Lord's church in New Testament times? Part of the answer to this can be found in the second chapter of Acts which is a record of the day the Lord's church began. In Jerusalem, the apostle Peter, standing with the other apostles, helped many in that large Jewish audience realize they had crucified the Son of God. These were told to repent and be baptized

for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Now observe what followed:

Acts 2

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Therefore, (1) the apostle's doctrine, (2) fellowship, (3) breaking of bread, and (4) prayers became expressions of worship within the assemblies of the Lord's church:

Why Did They Continue In The Apostles' Doctrine?

Jesus had earlier told the apostles:

John 14

25 These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 16

12 I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...

Matthew 28

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...

Thus, the apostle's doctrine, expressed in the worship assemblies of the early church, was that which had been revealed by the Holy Spirit through Christ's inspired apostles:

Acts 5

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 11

26 ...So it was that for a whole year they (*the apostle Paul and Barnabus*) assembled with the church and taught a great many people.

Acts 20

7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread,

Paul preached unto them... [KJV]

Colossians 4

16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. *—the apostle Paul*

1 Thessalonians 5

27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. *—the apostle Paul*

1 Timothy 4

13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. *—the apostle Paul*

What was the purpose of teaching and preaching “the apostles’ doctrine”?

Colossians 1

28 Him [*Christ*] we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3

16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 4

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

1 Peter 2

2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby...

But in what way could teaching make worship vain?

Matthew 15

8 These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. *—Christ* [cf. Mark 7:5-9; Acts 20:28-32; Gal. 1:8-10]

What Purpose Would Fellowship Serve?

Acts 2

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship...

Their being in fellowship with one another was based upon their first being in fellowship with the Lord:

John 8

31 ...“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” *—Jesus Christ*

1 Corinthians 1

9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *—the apostle Paul*

1 John 1

5 God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

This fellowship is further developed among God’s people when they assemble together, edify and encourage one another.

Hebrews 10

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Would such fellowship also not contribute to the unity for which Christ prayed and enable each congregation to become a wonderful “support group” in the way God’s people would help and encourage one another?

How would the Lord’s Supper fit into the assemblies and what role would it play?

1. Who instituted the Lord’s Supper?

Matthew 26

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My

body.”

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.

28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.” [See also Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20]

2.What is the Lord's Supper?

1 Corinthians 10

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

3.In what manner is the Lord's Supper to be observed?

1 Corinthians 11

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;

24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. cf. verses 30-34

4.How often was the Lord's Supper to be observed?

Acts 2

42 And they continued steadfastly...in the breaking of bread...

Does this sound like monthly, quarterly or annually? Note the following approved example:

Acts 20

7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...

The first day of the week was the day our Lord arose from the dead (Matt. 28:1-2), the day the Lord's church began (Acts 2), the day the Lord's Supper was observed (Acts 20:7) and the day saints were commanded to lay by in store (give as they had been prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

The first day of the week is an approved example of how often the Lord's Supper was observed by the Lord's church in the first century. Where is there an approved example for a different arrangement? And if God's people were admonished not to forsake the assembly (Hebrews 10:25), then what was part of the purpose of their coming together on the first day of the week?

What Role Did Prayer Play In the Assemblies And Lives Of First Century Christians?

Acts 2

42 And they continued steadfastly... in prayers. [See also Acts 6:4; and 12:4]

In the preceding chapter, and shortly before the Lord's church began on Pentecost in Jerusalem, it was said of the disciples that they “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). Later it was said of the apostles and their companions that “they raised their voice to God with one accord” (Acts 4:24) and that the apostles “gave themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). When Peter was put in prison, “constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” (Acts 12:5), and when Peter was miraculously released from prison, he went “to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, where many were gathered together praying” (Acts 12:12). Paul credited God's delivering him from death in part to the church at Corinth when he wrote: “...you also helping together in prayer for us...” (2 Cor. 1:11). To the Lord's church at Ephesus, he requested that they be “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” and

“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...” (Eph. 3:20; 6:18). Again he would write:

Philippians 4

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

1 Timothy 2

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

1 John 3

22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Nothing lies beyond the power of prayer except that which lies beyond the will of God:

1 John 5

14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

James 5

16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Cf. 1 Thess. 5:17-18; James 1:5-8

What Role Did The Singing Of Psalms, Hymns And Spiritual Songs Play In The Assemblies?

And how was the music used within the Lord’s church in New Testament times to be rendered? What kind of music was to be used? What was to be the purpose of the music used? And was the music of the Lord’s church in New Testament times vocal, instrumental or both? Carefully observe the answers that follow:

Matthew 26

30 And when they [*Christ and the apostles*]

had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. cf. Mark 14:26

Acts 16

25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God...

Romans 15

9 ...it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.”

1 Corinthians 14

15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Ephesians 5

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...

Colossians 3

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Hebrews 2

12 ...“I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.” cf. Hebrews 13:15

James 5

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

Why not instrumental music?

Instruments of music were invented very early in human history (Genesis 4:21) and were used in worship under the Old Law (Exodus 15:20-21; 2 Chronicles 29:25; Nehemiah 12:27; Psalm 150:3-5; etc.). But with the coming of Christ and the New Covenant, there came major changes in the priesthood, law, atonement, and conduct among God’s people. And with these changes, came also the ushering in of the kingdom (church) of our Lord. Contrary to the Law of Moses which had been for the Jews only (Rom. 3:1-2; Eph. 2:11-12), citizenship in the kingdom of Christ would also be open to Gentiles (Gal. 3:27-28). And God’s giving a New Covenant in place of the Old was to make for a change in worship as well. Some Scriptures which call attention to the replacement of the Old Law by the New are as follows:

Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hosea 2:11-23 (esp. Vs. 15); Luke 16:16; Rom. 7:1-4; 10:4; 2 Cor. 3:7-14; Eph. 2:14-19; Col. 2:13-14; Heb. 8:6-7, 13; 9:15-17; 10:9-10. Also, many things were practiced under the Old Law which are not allowed under the New, such as the killing of idol worshippers and Sabbath Day violators, the offering of animal sacrifices, the practice of polygamy, etc., etc. So the fact that instrumental music may have been used in Old Testament worship is no guarantee that God approves it in the New—especially since only vocal music is authorized in the New Testament.

Carefully observe that these New Testament Scriptures clearly demonstrate that spiritual music used in worship by the Lord's church was vocal rather than instrumental—that it was done by singing and not playing—that it involved words that teach, rather than sounds that can't—that it comes from the human heart and lips rather than a mechanical instrument. And because instrumental music comes from the commandments and traditions of men rather than the authority of the Lord, instrumental music can make worship sinful and in vain (Matt. 15:8-9). To insist on the use of instrumental music today is to ignore the following:

1. **God's law of inclusion and exclusion.** When God specifies what He wants done, that excludes doing it any other way. For example, if God had simply commanded man to **marry**, such could have **included** same sex marriages, marriage to animals and polygamy. But when God ordained that marriage should be between one man and one woman, that **excluded** any other arrangement. Had God told Noah to just **build an ark**, such could have **included** whatever materials Noah wanted to use; but when God told Noah to make the ark out of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14), that **excluded** the use of other kinds of wood. When God specifies what He wants done, that excludes doing it any other way. That is a common sense principle we respect and use in daily life; integrity demands we respect God's use of it as well.

2. The use of the mechanical instrument shows a total disregard of and disrespect for **the silence of God and Scripture**. Consider the example of "**Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron** in the Old Testament. **Each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane**

fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord (Leviticus 10:1-2). God did not say not to use profane (strange) fire; but when He told them what to use, that ruled out any other. Disrespect for God's silence has caused the downfall of many.

Consider **the example of Uzza**. God commanded the Levites to be responsible for the transportation of the ark of the covenant. But the time came, when it was being brought into Jerusalem, that Uzza, who was not a Levite, put forth his hand to steady the ark which was about to fall. "**Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God**" (1 Chron. 13:10). Just because God has not given a "thou shalt not" on everything, does not mean that He allows that which He has not commanded. In the New Testament, for example, just because God has not said, "Thou shalt not practice polygamy," does that justify its practice?. And just because God did not say, "Thou shalt not use instrumental music in worship", does that justify its use?

3. **The fact that instrumental music may please man does not necessarily mean that it is pleasing to God.** God and man don't think alike (Isaiah 55:8-9). We must worship to please God—in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) and remember that "**whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him**" (Colossians 3:17).

4. **Presuming a thing to be okay without divine approval can lead to disastrous consequences.** 2 Peter 2:9-10 states that the Lord "**knows how to...reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed...**" King David learned the consequences of being presumptuous the hard way and would later pray "**Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression** (Psalm 19:12-13).

5. **Early church history makes no mention of the use of mechanical instruments of music in church worship in New Testament times nor in the centuries immediately following.** And when it was finally introduced within the Catholic faith, it met with such opposition as to be one of the factors that resulted in the split of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches—the latter of which still does not use mechanical instruments.

And within the Protestant world during the past five hundred years, the introduction of instrumental music in worship was initially met with great opposition by the early reformers. Martin Luther, for example, viewed the organ in the worship of God as an ensign of Baal. John Calvin stated that “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the law.” John Wesley (Methodist) said, “I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, providing they are neither heard nor seen.” Noted commentator, Adam Clark (Methodist) said, “Music, as a science, I esteem and admire, but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all corruption in the worship of the Author of Christianity.” And Charles Spurgeon (Baptist) said, “I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.” Therefore, instrumental music in worship in the denominational world is of fairly recent origin--having gained acceptance among many only within the past two hundred or so years.

6. If instrumental music were somehow incorporated into the New Testament passages that command singing, then everyone should have an instrument and play as well as sing. But it is obvious that many who embrace the use of the instrument do not play. And many who play instruments either do not or cannot sing.

7. **The music the Lord wants under the New Covenant involves singing which in turn involves speaking to one another** (Ephesians 5:19) **and teaching with words** (Colossians 3:16). Playing an instrument does **not** qualify as singing, speaking or teaching.

How And When Were Contributions Made And For What Purpose?

1 Corinthians 16

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:

2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...

From this we learn that the first day of the week was the Divinely approved day for giving as one had been prospered. This was also the same day that the church assembled to break bread and hear a message preached unto them (Acts 20:7). Such brings us to a brief study on commitment that should be reflected in our worship and giving.

When the children of Israel were tempted to say within their heart “**My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth,**” they were warned to “**remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth**” (Deut. 8:17-18). After all, it is “**God who made the world and everything in it**” and “**He gives to all life, breath, and all things**” (Acts 17:24-25; cf. Psalm 50:10; James 1:17).

Because Christians have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20), we all would do well to ask:

Psalm 116

12 What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

The children of Israel were exhorted to:

Proverbs 3

9 Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase...

Should the Lord come first in one's giving and spending?

Genesis 4:3-5 records the offerings that Cain and Abel brought to the Lord. Abel's was accepted and Cain's was not. What made the difference? Abel brought of the “**firstlings**” that he had and “**by faith offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain**” (Heb. 11:4).

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God must be given priority over the physical things we so often concern ourselves with:

Matthew 6

33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [physical

necessities] shall be added to you.”

On one occasion, Jesus was asked:

Matthew 22

36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. cf. Deuteronomy 6:5

38 This is the first and great commandment.”

In New Testament times, liberal and cheerful giving came when Christians “**first gave themselves to the Lord**” (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Jesus taught:

Matthew 6

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Can One Rob God?

Under the Old Covenant, the time came when God had to rebuke Israel for her covetousness:

Malachi 3

8 Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, “In what way have we robbed You?” In tithes and offerings.

9 You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.

Covetousness equates with idolatry (Col. 3:5).

What Makes For Unacceptable Giving?

While Jesus said that “**It is more blessed to give than to receive**” (Acts 20:35), let us remember that charitable deeds wrongly motivated make for giving that is unacceptable to God:

Matthew 6

1 “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” --Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 13

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

2 Corinthians 9

5 ...[Acceptable giving is:] a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

In the New Testament, freewill offerings are mentioned with Divine approval and authority (Acts 2:45; 4:34-37; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:12; 9:7). For example, when informed of a great famine, Christians at Antioch “**each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea**” (Acts 11:29).

“**For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have**” (2 Cor. 8:12; cf. 2 Cor. 8:24; Rom. 15:25-26). Acceptable giving therefore must be motivated by love and commitment to the Lord.

WHAT KIND OF LEADERSHIP DID THE LORD ORDAIN FOR HIS CHURCH?

Many and diverse are the views and concepts that people hold relative to church leadership. But is just any kind of leadership acceptable to the Lord? Because God and man do not think alike (Isaiah 55:8-9), it behooves us to “let the Scriptures answer” if we would desire to know God’s will in this matter.

1. Who is the head and to whom has God given all authority and preeminence in the church?

Matthew 28

18 ...“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” --Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 11

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Ephesians 1

20 God raised Him [Christ] from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body...

Ephesians 5

23 ...Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

24 ...the church is subject to Christ...

Colossians 1

18 And He (Christ) is the head of the body, the church... that in all things He may have the preeminence.

The executive, legislative and judicial headquarters of the church of our Lord, therefore, are in heaven and come not from man on earth.

2. With Christ as the head of the church, what kind of leadership did the Lord ordain for each local congregation?

Philippians 1

1 ...to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons...

Acts 14

23 ...they [Barnabas and Paul]...appointed elders in every church...

Titus 1

5 ...I [Paul] left you [Titus] in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you –

3. Was there to be more than one overseer appointed over each local congregation?

Acts 14

23 So when they [Paul and Barnabas] had appointed elders [plural] in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20

17 From Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus and called for the elders [plural] of the church.

Philippians 1

1 ...To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops [plural] and deacons...

4. What is the difference between elders, bishops, pastors, overseers, shepherds and the presbytery?

These words are used interchangeably in the Scriptures to refer to the same office (cf. Titus 1:5-7). These different terms convey the nature and work of those who have the oversight of each local congregation. For example: (1) the word “elder” [Gr. *Presbuteros*] (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:1, 17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1) denotes one who is older in age and faith and one who is spiritually mature; cf. Job. 12:12; (2) the words “bishop” and “overseer” [Gr. *episkopos*] (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:25) refer to one who takes the oversight; (3) the words “pastor” (Eph. 4:11) and “shepherd” (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2) [Gr. *poimen*] refer to their work of tending, guiding, feeding, and caring for the flock of God; and (4) the word “presbytery” [Gr. *presbuterion*] (1 Tim. 4:14) refers to the combined group of elders in a local congregation.

5. What is the work of the elders in each congregation?

Acts 20

17 From Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them...

28 “...take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Ephesians 4

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ --

1 Thessalonians 5

12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you...

1 Timothy 5

17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

Titus 1

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God...

8 ...hospitable...

9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Hebrews 13

7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.

17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

James 5

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him...

1 Peter 5

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the

sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. --*the apostle Peter*

Because local congregations of the Lord's church are autonomous [independent of outside control except that of the Lord's], elders of one congregation do not rule over another. But all of the Lord's con-gregations are subject to Him and to the Holy Scriptures given by His inspiration. (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

6. Are there certain qualifications that a Christian must possess before he can serve as an elder or bishop?

1 Timothy 3

1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence

5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

In addition to these qualifications, Titus 1:5-9 adds the following: **having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination; not self willed, not quick-tempered; a lover of what is good; just, holy, self-controlled; holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who**

contradict.

1 Peter 5

2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

7. What is the responsibility of the local congregation toward its elders?

1 Timothy 5

17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

8. What is the work of the deacons in each local congregation? cf. Philippians 1:1

Although the work of the deacons is not specifically stated as such in the Scriptures, never the less, from their qualifications, meaning of the word "deacon", and an account given in Acts 6:1-6, we learn the following about their work:

The word "deacon" means "one who serves". This distinguishes them from the elders who have the responsibility of spiritual oversight. Deacons therefore are subject to, and serve under the elders.

Inasmuch as the elders have the responsibility of feeding the flock in a spiritual way, it would appear that the deacons have the responsibility of serving the flock in helping to provide for their physical needs. The following passage would seem to bear this out:

Acts 6

1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

2 Then the twelve [apostles] summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

3 "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among

you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose... [seven brethren]

6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

9. What are the qualifications for deacons?

1 Timothy 3

8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,

9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

11 Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The qualifications for deacons call for men who are honest and trustworthy in the administration and distribution of money and commodities used in the Lord's work. Cf. Acts 6:1-6

10. Does the Bible mention the offices of pope, cardinal, and arch-bishop?

No. These offices were created by man long after the Lord's church came into existence, are nowhere mentioned in the Bible and they do not meet Biblical church leadership qualifications.

11. Can Christian women and or celibates (those who are unmarried) qualify as elders or deacons in the Lord's church?

1 Corinthians 14

34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

1 Timothy 2

11 Let a woman learn in silence with all

submission.

12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

1 Timothy 3

2 A bishop then must be... the husband of one wife... cf. Titus 1:6

4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence...

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. cf. Titus 1:6, 9

12. Are there apostles today?

The literal meaning of the word **apostle** is “one sent forth”. Jesus was called an apostle (Heb. 3:1; cf. John 17:3). In addition to the twelve selected by Jesus, three others are called by that term: (1) Matthias, who took the place of Judas (Acts 1:26); (2) Paul, called to be an apostle by Christ (Gal. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1) as one born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:8-10); and (3) Barnabus (Acts 14:14). But as for apostolic succession to the original twelve, the Bible only refers to a replacement for Judas and then gives the rigid qualifications for his successor:

Acts 1

15 And in those days Peter... said,

16 “Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office.’

21 Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

From these qualifications it is evident that no man living today could be such an apostle. Furthermore, no mention was ever made in the New Testament of successors being chosen for apostles other than Judas. For example, when the apostle James was beheaded (Acts 12:1-2) there is

no indication that a successor was chosen for him.

15. Was the church built upon Peter?

For the answer to this, see page 1

Did Peter become the first pope and did he possess the marks of a pope?

The office of pope was created by man centuries after the Lord’s church came into existence and is nowhere mentioned or authorized in the Scriptures. Some see a prophetic reference to this office when the apostle Paul warned of the approaching apostasy (*falling away or departure from the faith*) in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; Acts 20:29-32; etc.

That Peter did not possess the marks of a pope is evident from the following:

Was Peter married or celibate?

Matthew 8

14 Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever.

1 Corinthians 9

5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? [Cephas was another name for Peter (John 1:40-42)] --*The Apostle Paul*

The apostle Peter also described himself as an elder (1 Peter 5:1), and one of the qualifications for an elder was that he be married and have faithful children (Titus 1:5-6; 1 Tim. 3:2, 4).

Did Peter allow people to bow before him as the popes have done?

Acts 10

25 As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” cf. Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9

Would Christ have allowed Peter to be called “Father”?

Matthew 23

9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

Was Peter superior to the other apostles?

2 Corinthians 11

5 For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. -- *The Apostle Paul*

Was Peter infallible (incapable of error)?

On one occasion, Peter rebuked Jesus for saying that He must go to Jerusalem to suffer, be killed and be raised again the third day:

Matthew 16

23 But He [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Peter was not infallible. Consider the following scene when Jesus had been seized and led away for trial and crucifixion:

Luke 22

59 Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow [Peter] also was with Him [Christ], for he is a Galilean.”

60 But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

The apostle Peter had much to his credit, but he was human and not infallible. Even several years after Christ’s ascension and the establishment of His church in Jerusalem, Peter would again err:

Galatians 2

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I [the apostle Paul] withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”

—the apostle Paul

Was Peter the head of the Lord's Church?

If he was pope, he was. But such a concept is contradicted and refuted by the following:

Ephesians 1

22 And He [God] put all things under His [Christ's] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Did God give preeminence to Peter? If Peter was a pope, God did. But such is contradicted and refuted by the following:

Colossians 1

18 And He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

DOES THE NAME REALLY MATTER?

1. When Christ established His church, had there been any prophecies given concerning the name His people were to wear?

Isaiah 56 *[prophecy: 712 B.C.]*

5 Even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 62 *[prophecy: 712 B.C.]*

1 For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns.

2 The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name.

By way of New Testament fulfillment, Acts 2 records the conversion to Christ of 3,000 Jews in Jerusalem and Acts 10:1 thru 11:18 records the conversion of the first Gentiles (those not Jews).

2. After the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles to Christ, what new name was given them that they had not previously worn?

Acts 11

26 ...And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Acts 26

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

1 Peter 4

16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let

him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. cf. James 2:6-7; 2 Tim. 2:19; 2 Thess. 1:12

3. In the New Testament, what were some additional terms used to refer to the Lord's people?

1. children of God - Romans 8:16; 1 Peter 1:14
2. sons of God - Romans 8:14
3. household of God - Ephesians 2:19; Hebrews 3:6
4. brethren - 1 Corinthians 1:10
5. heirs of God - Romans 8:17
6. disciples - John 8:31
7. believers - Acts 5:14
8. saints - 2 Corinthians 1:1

4. In what name did Christ pray that His people might be united?

John 17

11 "...Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name..."

5. What are some things that Christians are to do in the name of (or by the authority of) the Lord?

Matthew 18

20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." -Jesus Christ

John 14

13 [To the apostles, Jesus said:] "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do..."

14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." cf. John 15:16; 16:23, 26; Rom. 1:8; Eph. 5:20

Luke 24

47 "...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Matthew 28

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." -Jesus Christ

Acts 2

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of

Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 10

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord...

Acts 19

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 3

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

6. What names were used in reference to the Lord's church (people) in the New Testament?

- (1). church of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2)
- (2). churches of Christ (Romans 16:16)
- (3). church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23)
- (4). the house of God which is the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15)
- (5). the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18, 24)
- (6). the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2)
- (7). the house of Christ (Hebrews 3:6)
- (8). the kingdom of God (Mark 9:1)
- (9). the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13)

The Lord's church was never referred to by any one specific name. However, every name by which it was called denotes ownership belonging to the Lord. For example, consider the following:

Jesus referred to the church as "my church" (Matthew 16:18). If this was not to be the church of Christ, then whose church was it to be? In consideration of the fact that Christians are said to be betrothed to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2), married to Christ (Romans 7:4), and have Christ as their head just as the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23-24), would it be right for the Christian to religiously wear some human name rather than His name, remembering that **in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily** (Colossians 2:9)?

Ephesians 3

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named...

7. Does the name really matter?

John 5

42 “But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.

43 I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. —*Jesus Christ*

Christians in Corinth were rebuked for saying “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Such had caused contentions and divisions among them: “...you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:3-7).

10. Has the Lord given man the liberty to wear exalted names or titles?

Matthew 23

8 “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. *cf. Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 4:6*

11. In whose name is salvation to be found?

Acts 4

11 This is the stone [*Jesus Christ*] which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.

12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. —*the apostle Peter*

Acts 8

12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

12. Where is Christ’s name to be glorified?

2 Thessalonians 1

12 (*The apostle Paul prayed*) that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

21 to Him [be] glory in the church by Christ Jesus...

13. Do Christians have a name to live up to?

James 2

6 ...Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

2 Timothy 2

19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

WHAT IS THE WORK AND MISSION OF THE LORD’S CHURCH (PEOPLE)?

John 9

4 “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.” —*Jesus Christ*

John 15

1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every [branch] that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

5 I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

1 Corinthians 3

9 For we are God’s fellow workers...

1 Corinthians 15

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

2 Corinthians 9

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Ephesians 2

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God

prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Philippians 2

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Colossians 1

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you...

10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...

2 Thessalonians 2

16 Now may our Lord...

17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

1 Timothy 2

9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,

10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. Cf. 1 Timothy 5:9-10

1 Timothy 6

17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

18 *Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share...

2 Timothy 3

16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Titus 2

6 Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded,

7 in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility...

14 *Christ* gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for

good works.

Titus 3

1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work...

8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works...

14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Hebrews 13

20 Now may the God of peace...

21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

Romans 2

6 [God] will render to each one according to his deeds...

Revelation 20

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is [the Book] of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Matthew 16

27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

Congregations of the Lord's people in New Testament times were especially active in the following three areas of good works:

1. Evangelism.

Daniel 12

3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Jesus sought to impress upon His hearers the importance of teaching and learning the Word of God:

John 6

44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” [But how is this accomplished?]

45 “It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”

John 7

16 Jesus...said, “My doctrine (teaching-ASV, ESV) is not Mine, but His who sent Me.”

John 8

32 “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

In His parable of the sower, Jesus compared His word to seed being sown, and the soil in which it was sown to human hearts (Luke 8:4-15). He wanted this seed of the kingdom to be sown (broadcast) through out the world to every person (Mark 16:15-16). Just before His ascension, Jesus commanded His disciples:

Matthew 28

19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” cf. Mark 16:15-16

Jesus told His apostles that the gospel must first be preached in Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). After it was preached in Jerusalem, severe persecution broke out against God’s people (Acts 4:1-21; 5:17-33; 7:51-8:3).

Acts 8

4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Why? Because since **faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God** (Romans 10:17), people need to hear the Word of the Lord in order to know what to believe and do to be saved (Acts 11:14).

Later, the apostle Paul would write to the Lord’s church in Rome:

Romans 1

14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

15 So, as much as is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

Romans 10

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

In writing to the church at Corinth, he said:

1 Corinthians 9

16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

19 For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;

22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some.

23 Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.

In writing to the church at Thessalonica, the apostle Paul commended them because

1 Thessalonians 1

7 you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.

1 Timothy 3

15 ...the church of the living God *is* the pillar and ground of the truth.

Hebrews 5

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

That evangelists and elders who labored full time in the preaching and teaching of God’s word were entitled to financial support is evident from the following passages: 1 Corinthians 9:14; 2 Corinthians 11:7-9; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18

Restoring the fallen was a work of Christ and is also a work of the church in seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus in His three parables recorded in Luke 15 emphasized the great rejoicing in heaven that comes when those who have fallen away repent.

And note the following:

Galatians 6

1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Cf. Ezekiel 3:17-21

James 5

19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

2. Benevolence

In His appeal to the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-24), His parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), His parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and His parable of the separation of the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-46), Jesus taught the importance of compassion, mercy and help for the needy. Furthermore,

Luke 14

12 ...Jesus said... “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid.

13 But when you give a feast, invite *the* poor, *the* maimed, *the* lame, *the* blind.

14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Acts 20

35 “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” –*the apostle Paul*

Galatians 6

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

James 1

27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James 2

14 What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?

17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

1 John 3

17 But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

An example of a plurality of Gentile congregations and individuals cooperating together in sending aid to help poor saints in Judea is set forth in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 and Romans 15:27. Cf. Acts 11:27-30

3. Edification (building up; strengthening):

Ephesians 4

11 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ --

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Acts 11

23 *Barnabus* encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

Acts 14

22 *Paul and Barnabus* strengthened the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

1 Thessalonians 5

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

Hebrews 10

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...

IN CONCLUSION

What did Christ build when He built His Church? The Scriptures answer plainly.

Therefore, is it reasonable and right for God’s people of today to make a plea for a return to the New Covenant (New Testament) for the authority behind what we are to believe and practice? Is it reasonable and right to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where it is silent; to call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways? Is it reasonable and right to plead with the world today to accept the Bible as God’s complete and final revelation to man? Is it reasonable and right for Christians to strive to answer our Lord’s prayer for unity by following where He leads, being what He says be and doing what He says do?

If so, then hopefully you will understand why our Lord and His people want to acquaint everyone with **the faith once for all delivered to the saints** (Jude 3) and to **fervently pray for you that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God** (Colossians 4:12).

--David W. Echols Sr.