

The Kingdom Of God

Jerry C. Brewer

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Dedicated To The Memory of Raymond and Veva Bailey

Faithful Christians whom I loved long ago and love still. “Their works do follow them.”

Table of Contents

[Author's Preface](#)

[Chapter One The Kingdom In God's Purpose](#)

[Chapter Two The Kingdom In Prophecy](#)

[Chapter Three - Millenialism And The Kingdom](#)

[Chapter Four - The Millenial Postponement Theory](#)

[Chapter Five - The Kingdom In Preparation](#)

[Chapter Six - The Kingdom In Perfection](#)

[Chapter Seven - The Nature Of The Kingdom](#)

[Chapter Eight - The Kingdom In Metaphor](#)

[Chapter Nine - Identifying The Church Today](#)

Author 's Preface

This volume is a labor of devotion to Christ and the greatest of all institution's among men—His church. Begun while the author preached at El Reno, Oklahoma in 1969, this work manifests the influence of such faithful teachers as W. R. Craig, W. S. Boyett and Gary G. Colley, Sr., who were my first teachers at the Elk City School of Preaching in the 1960s, and Foy E. Wallace, Jr, with whom I was blessed to work in two gospel meetings. Sitting at the feet of these men, I gleaned much of the knowledge of the kingdom of God which I now possess and I am grateful to a beneficent God who allowed their lives to touch mine The church of Christ is “not of this world.” It is here but not *from* here. Christ's body is that kingdom of purpose, promise and prophecy conceived in the mind of God from eternity. Having no geographical boundaries, it cannot be measured with the surveyor's rod. It is within men.

The church for which our Blessed Lord died has no peer among the institutions of men. But the distinction it bears that elevates it above all institutions of earth has been marred by change agents and so-called scholars who view the church of our Blessed Lord as a “movement” originating in the 19th century. I deny this with every fiber of my being. The church for which Jesus died had its genesis in the eternal counsel of Jehovah. While great and good

men lifted up their voices in the wilderness of sectarianism and called for a return to the church of the New Testament on the North American Continent in the 18th and 19th centuries, they established no church. Theirs was a call to repudiate the oral traditions of Catholicism and the written creeds of Protestantism and return to the pristine purity of New Testament Christianity. It is that pristine and eternal nature of the church which this volume addresses.

Chapter One

The Kingdom In God's Purpose

Existing from eternity, the kingdom was purposed and promised by God, foretold by the prophets, prepared by John the Baptist and perfected by Jesus Christ. The revelation of that purpose had its inception in the statement concerning the seed of woman and from that germinal promise sprang all Messianic and kingdom prophecies. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

The focal point of all divine revelation, Christ's work of redemption was purposed in God's eternal counsel. Central to that work is the church or kingdom which is the locus of salvation and the instrument by which Jehovah accomplished His eternal purpose. Christ was the Logos with the Father by whom the worlds were created, (John 1:1-3) and in him was all prophecy concerning the kingdom fulfilled. (Heb. 1:1-4).

Existing in promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, illustrated in the types and shadows of the Mosaic covenant, foretold by the Old Testament prophets and prepared by John the Baptizer, the kingdom was perfected on the day of Pentecost, (Acts 2:22-28). Contained in the germinal promise of Genesis 3:15, God's eternal purpose comprehended Christ's Virgin Birth, his struggle with the powers of hell, his death, burial, resurrection, triumphant exaltation to the throne of David and the salvation of Jew and Gentile in one body.

"The Genesis record introduces 'the seed of woman' - one who was not to be the offspring of man. Here is the germ of all prophecy. As the oak is in the acorn and the eagle in the egg, all Messianic prophecies are here in germ" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Certified Gospel*, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, Oklahoma City, 1951, p. 16).

God purposed salvation in the kingdom and only in that realm can we obtain justification and partake of all spiritual blessings, (Eph. 1:3). The kingdom is the church, the house of God and the body of Christ. One who is not under the divine government of Christ's kingdom is neither in the house of God nor a member of the church of which he is the Saviour, (Eph. 5:23).

The kingdom of God and the church of Christ are the same institution, (Matt. 16:16-18). Each term is illustrative of the relationship which those who constitute it sustain to God. The church, in which men of every nation are reconciled to God, is the *ecclesia*. That New Testament word, translated as "church," means "the called out" or "a called out body," indicating that its members have been called out of the world to serve Jesus Christ.

The appellation "kingdom" defines the nature of its government. It is an absolute monarchy over which Jesus reigns as King and its citizens are His subjects. It is a creation of God the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, decreed from eternity and destined for eternity. That is the meaning and theme of Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the pleasure of his good will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will... (Eph. 1:3-11).

What the Protestant world calls predestination today is the concoction of 16th century Reformer, John Calvin. Taught by Paul in the Ephesian epistle, predestination in God’s eternal purpose is a Biblical subject which was perverted by Calvin’s theology. Born July 10, 1509 in Noyon, France, Calvin devoted his life to theological pursuits. In 1536 he published his views on man’s redemption in a volume entitled the *Institutes of The Christian Religion*. As a leader in the Reformation, Calvin wielded a tremendous influence and his philosophy was warmly received by the Protestant world because it attacked many of the peculiarities of the Church of Rome. The enthusiasm with which Protestants accepted his views is paradoxical since many of them were borrowed from the Catholic Augustine (354- 430 AD).

Calvin claimed man was “*created* to that misery to which he is subject” and “the necessity of sinning is laid upon the reprobate *by the ordination of God.*” (John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. II, p. 43). Divesting man of free will and perverting the Biblical concept of grace with its twisted theories of predestination and election, Calvin’s theology renders man a mindless entity in the hands of a sadistic God.

But election is the immutable purpose of God, by which, before the foundations of the world were laid, he chose, out of the whole human race, fallen by their own fault from their primeval integrity into sin and destruction, according to the most free pleasure of his own will, and of *mere grace*, a certain number of men, neither better nor worthier than others, but lying in the same misery with the rest, to salvation in Christ, whom he had, even from eternity, constituted Mediator and head of all the elect, and the foundation of all salvation; and therefore he decreed to give them unto him to be saved, and effectually call and draw them into communion with him by his word *and Spirit*...Moreover, holy Scripture...doth testify all men not to be elected; but that some are non-elect, or *passed by* in the eternal election of God, whom truly God, from most free, just, irreprehensible, and immutable good pleasure, decreed to leave in the *common misery*...and not to bestow on them living faith, and the grace of conversion; but having been left in their own ways, and under just judgment, at length, not only on account of their unbelief, but also of all their other sins, to condemn and eternally punish them to the manifestation of his own justice. (ibid, p. 44).

Expressed as “grace only” by the sectarian world, salvation by *mere grace* springs from false premises—Calvin’s doctrines of deterministic fatalism which he called *predestination* and

election. As the magicians of Pharaoh's court counterfeited the miracles wrought by God through Moses and Aaron, so Calvin counterfeited those Biblical doctrines and palmed them off on the Protestant world.

Calvinistic election is attributed to God's arbitrary predestination of *individuals*. While the Bible teaches the children of God are the elect (1 Peter 2:9), it speaks of a *class* of persons, not individuals. Calvinism says the elect are those who were *individually* selected to salvation ("a certain number") and the non-elect are those eternally condemned *individuals*, both of whom were predestined to those ends before the world began. *Predestination* and *election* are Biblical terms, but Calvin perverted them in formulating his doctrine. According to Calvin, electing individuals to salvation, before the world began, God thereby predestined *certain persons* to salvation and others to damnation.

Holding that God's grace is only for the elect, Calvinism says certain *individuals* were arbitrarily chosen as recipients of it. Biblical predestination is concerned not with individuals, but the *locus* of salvation for election of a certain *class* of persons. That's the thrust of Paul's teaching in Ephesians 1:3-11.

1. All spiritual blessings are *in Christ* (v. 3).
2. We are chosen *in Christ* (v. 4).
3. Our adoption as God's children was predestined *through Christ* (v. 5).
4. Our acceptance by God is *in Christ* (v. 6).
5. Our Redemption, through his blood is *in Christ* (v. 7).
6. God purposed that all should be one *in Christ* (vv. 9, 10)
7. Our inheritance as God's children was predestined *in Christ* (v. 11).

As God predestined creatures with gills to life *in water*, so those in Christ were predestined to eternal life *in Him*. God does not choose who will enter Christ, but says that all who do are classified as His elect. A creature of free will, man chooses to obey or disobey God and when he chooses God, he is thereby elected to salvation in Christ Jesus. God's elect is constituted of *all* who elect to enter Christ through obedience to the gospel, (Romans 6:3-6). That is salvation by "grace through faith," (Ephesians 2:8). God's grace provides salvation and man's faith appropriates the blessings thereof.

"God has allowed men liberty and free will to choose between good and evil. Some will choose evil and cause the ruin of others; the necessity is in the obstinacy of men and not in the decrees of God...God does not slay men, nor deprive them of their free nature, nor limit its natural free action in its allotted range, in order to prevent men from sinning. It is a fundamental law of man's nature that his character shall have full scope freely to develop itself; hence responsibility can justly exist, penalty can be justified, and rewards can be bestowed" (H. Leo Boles, *New Testament Commentaries*, Gospel Advocate Co., *Matthew*, pp. 370, 371).

God's grace has been provided in Christ, not in some arbitrary decree of God to save and condemn "a certain number" of individuals before the world began. Denying the grace of God to the non-elect, Calvinism circumscribes it and contradicts Paul's inspired teaching on its

universality.

“For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14).

As foreign to the New Testament as Mariolatry, Calvinistic predestination and election are false doctrines. The Protestant world got them from John Calvin, who plagiarized them from the Catholics. A system of error woven into the fabric of almost every Protestant denomination, Calvinism undergirds false systems from the Baptist Church to Pentecostalism. A driving force behind the religion of the Puritans, Calvinism pervaded the Church of England, formed the basis for Presbyterianism in Scotland and finds devotees in America from the Assembly of God, Baptist, and Nazarene Churches to Promise Keepers and the 700 Club. While they aren't all accepted as he first propounded them, most of Calvin's views have been adopted by Protestant bodies in some form or another.

Strict Calvinism, as we know it today, was defined by the Synod of Dort in 1618. Convened on November 13th, the Synod crystallized Calvin's views into the form that is preached and practiced by much of the Protestant world and which opposes and contradicts plain scriptural teaching concerning those for whom Christ died. Calvinism limits the grace of God to those few whom God selected to receive it before the world began. The Scriptures say “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to *all* men.” Jesus died for all the world, (John 3:16) as a manifestation of God's grace toward man. The grace of God has appeared in the form of teaching and without God's revelation in the New Testament we would have no knowledge of his grace. This grace that has appeared to *all men* teaches us to deny certain things and live “soberly, righteously and godly.” Why teach *all men* if God has only appointed a “certain number” to salvation? Paul says God predetermined salvation for all who would, by obedience to his commands, enter into Christ and that is equal to entering the church, which is Christ's body, (Eph. 1-22-23; Col. 1:18; Acts 2:47).

The grace of God does not negate obedience on man's part and anyone who so teaches is in absolute opposition to Biblical doctrine. God chooses to save *in Christ* and there is no occupancy limit. The only limit to salvation is on the part of those who will not believe and obey the gospel. Peter says God “is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” (2 Pet. 3:9).

All Spiritual Blessings

Beginning the Ephesian letter with the assertion that all spiritual blessings are in Christ, Paul enumerates those blessings in the verses following. God chose to save those in Christ before the world began, (v. 4). God predestined those in Christ to be his children, (v. 5), and that they would be acceptable to him, (v. 6). He predestined redemption in Christ through Christ's blood, according to his grace, (v. 7) and those in Christ have an inheritance, (v. 11).

Chosen In Him

God did not arbitrarily choose “a certain number” to salvation. Verse 4 says he determined from eternity to save all those in Christ, but there is no intimation that he decreed who or how

many would enter into Christ. All who accept Christ by obeying his will are chosen by God to salvation but the choosing is *in him* (Christ). It is *in Christ* where God has placed all spiritual blessings, (Eph. 1:3) and no one is chosen to salvation outside of Christ. God chose to offer salvation in him and gives man the option of entering Christ by baptism.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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 should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4).

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27- 29).

Baptism puts one into Christ where God has placed all spiritual blessings and in that act of obedience we enter the kingdom of God which is his church, (Matt. 16:16-18).

Children of God Through Christ

As we were chosen to salvation in Christ, so we become the children of God by our relationship to Christ. God predestined us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, (Eph. 1:5). It was foreordained that all who would be in Christ would be the children of God. There was no “immutable” decree that certain individuals would be his children, but that all those in Christ would sustain that relationship to him.

“For ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:26-29).

Our Inheritance Is In Christ

Those who are in the church—the body, (Eph. 1:22-23)— are in Christ and members of the household of God, (1 Tim. 3:15). They are, therefore, the heirs of eternal life. This was God’s purpose from eternity and members of the body of Christ today are the heirs. Salvation, according to God’s purpose, is in Christ and if we are in Christ we enjoy the blessings of the forgiveness of sin and hope of eternal life. That is predestination as revealed in Holy Writ - not according to the false doctrine of Calvinism.

All mankind lies under the curse of sin, (Romans 3:23), from which human wisdom cannot save, (Jer. 10:23; 1 Cor. 1:18-21). What man did not know and could not know without revelation was the plan by which God chose to save him. That plan involved the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile unto God in one body. That is the plan Paul calls “the mystery.” “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto us his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:3, 5, 6).

The mystery of which Paul writes is not something that is unknown and unknowable. It is the scheme of redemption, purposed by God before the world began and revealed in the fullness of time. (Gal. 4:4).

“The use of the word ‘mystery’ in Revelation comports with the same meaning of the word as

used elsewhere in the New Testament - that is, the spiritual truths not discoverable by human reason; understandable, but hidden from human knowledge until revealed. The word has the connotation of 'secret doctrine,' hence prior to revelation it was a hidden thing; but when revealed, it was brought within human intelligence and understanding. The gospel mystery embedded in the old dispensation, as in Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3-9 and Col. 1:26, was hidden beneath the types and sacrifices of the law and the prophecies and promises which were radiant with hope and joy to a guilty world, but were rather concealed than revealed, because of the metaphorical costume and figurative style they could not be discerned and had to await revelation. The word mystery did not mean 'mysterious.' It meant that which could not be known until it was made known, or revealed, and in the references cited, it meant the gospel plan of salvation. The doctrine of the New Testament is, in this sense, called a mystery - 'the mystery of the gospel,' as in Rom 11:25; 16:25; Cor. 15:51; I Tim. 3:9; Eph. 3:9. The truths thus requiring revelation and elucidation are classed as mysteries, as numerous passages could be used to exemplify. But let it be emphasized that in all these examples the basic meaning inherent in the word 'mystery' is that which cannot be known by the human mind until, by superhuman force, it is made known to it (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Book of Revelation*, Sec. II, Part IV, p. 82).

The "mystery of his will" in Eph. 1:9 is explained in verse 10: "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ." The reconciliation of Jew and Gentile unto God in the body of Christ is the mystery which is now revealed in the apostles' teachings.

"Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to them that were nigh" (Eph. 2:11-17).

God's eternal purpose is the salvation of all who accept his terms of pardon in his kingdom. The kingdom *is God's plan of salvation!* The church is the body of Christ, (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), of which he is the Saviour, (Eph. 5:23). The "mystery" that Paul reveals in the Ephesian epistle is that the everlasting kingdom, purposed from eternity, was not to be limited to the Jews. "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel," (Eph. 3:6). The salvation of mankind was God's purpose before the world began and the church of Christ, the kingdom of God, is the divine institution in which that purpose is accomplished. In it the fulness of Christ dwells, (Eph. 1:22-23). One cannot be in Christ without being in his church and one who is in the church is in Christ. It is instrument of salvation for which Christ was the lamb foreordained to be slain before the foundation of the world, (1 Pet. 1:18-19) and within the kingdom are all the spiritual blessings of heaven, (Eph. 1:3).

Chapter Two

The Kingdom In Prophecy

Involving hundreds of years, the process of revealing God's eternal purpose in the everlasting kingdom was gradual. As parents impart knowledge to their children in portions and parts from infancy to adulthood, so God dealt with the human race in the revelation of His eternal purpose. Fed on milk when they are infants, children are given stronger food as they mature. In this fashion God gradually unfolded his kingdom to the sons of men in divers portions. Accomplishing this tutoring process through the promises to the patriarchs and the inspired utterances of the prophets, God dealt with humanity as humanity was able to understand His purpose.

The revelation of God's eternal purpose began after the fall and was first contained in the promise of a One who would bruise the head of the serpent, (Gen. 3:15). It was reiterated in the promise to Abraham that "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," (Gen 12:3) and repeated in further promises concerning his seed.

"As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee...And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:4-5, 7).

The everlasting covenant is in the "kingdom which cannot be moved," (Heb. 12:28) and existed in the promises that God renewed to Isaac at Beersheba, (Gen. 26:24) and to Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28:14). The prophecies of the old covenant all pointed to Jesus Christ and the establishment of his kingdom. (Heb. 1:1-2). Without fully understanding the things of which they spoke, the prophets, moved by the Holy Spirit, foretold the coming of the kingdom and the time and place of its establishment, (I Pet. 1:10-12).

While Israel was in Babylonian captivity God used a remarkable man to prophesy of the everlasting kingdom. The second chapter of Daniel recounts a dream of Nebuchadnezzar which he could not remember. Calling his sorcerers, magicians and astrologers, he commanded that they tell him the dream and the interpretation thereof. When they were unable to do so he decreed that the wise men in Babylon should be destroyed. But a Hebrew captive named Daniel intervened. Requesting the decree be rescinded, He asked the king for time and promised that he would make known the dream.

With his request granted, Daniel not only told the king what he had dreamed but gave the interpretation of it. Nebuchadnezzar had seen an image with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, thighs and belly of brass, legs of iron and the feet a mixture of iron and clay. In the dream the image was broken into pieces with a stone which became a mountain. The various parts of the image, Daniel said, were four kingdoms of men and the head of gold represented the Babylonian kingdom over which Nebuchadnezzar reigned. The dream pictured the Babylonian empire and its fall. The breast and arms of silver represented the rise and fall of the Medo-Persian empire. The thighs and belly of brass were the empire of Alexander and the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay were the Roman empire. Interpreting the dream, Daniel foretold rise of the church or the everlasting kingdom of heaven. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and

the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever (Dan. 2:44).

“In the days of these kings” referred to the last great kingdom represented by the image—the Roman Empire— and the prophecy specified when the kingdom of God would be established: “in the days of these kings.” The Grecian empire fell about 31 B.C. and the remnants of the Roman empire fell in approximately 453 A.D. Therefore the kingdom which Daniel foretold was established between those dates. But a more specific time for its establishment came to Daniel in another vision in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar.

“I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14).

Those events described by Daniel in chapter seven would signal the establishment of the everlasting kingdom of the second chapter of Daniel.

1. The Son of man, Jesus Christ, would come to the Ancient of Days—God—with the clouds of heaven.
2. When he came to the Ancient of Days he would be given dominion, and glory and a kingdom.

The New Testament records the fulfillment of those events and reveals when the kingdom was established. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

Christ was given dominion after he ascended to the Father and the kingdom was established when the events described in the above passage took place. The kingdom was established after Christ’s death, burial, resurrection and ascension and on the day of Pentecost following the death of Christ, Peter recounted those events and crowned his sermon with the proclamation of Christ’s kingship. “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear...Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:32, 33, 36).

Those things were fulfilled when Rome ruled the world. That was the last great kingdom represented by feet of clay mixed with iron of the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom of God took place “in the days of those kings.” True to Daniel’s prophecy, the Chaldean kingdom fell to the Medo-Persian Empire of Darius and Cyrus when they conquered Babylon, the fact of which is confirmed by Josephus.

“And this is the end of the posterity of King Nebuchadnezzar, as history informs us; but when Babylon was taken by Darius, and when he, with his kinsman Cyrus, had put an end to the

dominion of the Babylonians, he was sixty-two years old...Moreover, he took Daniel the prophet and honoured him very greatly, and kept him with him; for he was one of the three presidents whom he sent over his 360 provinces..." (Josephus, *Antiquities of The Jews*, Book X, Ch. XI, p. 324).

Josephus also chronicles the rise of the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great in 335 B.C., (Bk. XI, Ch. VIII, pp. 348-351). and the succession of Rome following the breakup of Alexander's empire, (Bk. XIV, Ch. IV, pp. 418-420). These were the great kingdoms foretold by Daniel and in the days of the Roman kings Jesus was born, conducted his personal ministry, died, was resurrected and ascended to the Father, in precise fulfillment of that prophecy.

While Daniel foretold the coming of the kingdom during the time of the Roman kings, Isaiah further pinpointed the time and place of its establishment.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:2-4).

Isaiah said the kingdom would be established "in the last days" and "out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Joel said "in the last days" the Lord would pour out his Spirit on all flesh and in Jerusalem Peter quoted Joel's prophecy on Pentecost as proof that those events fulfilled it. Isaiah said the kingdom would be established in "the last days" and Peter said "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," (Acts 2:16-21). Isaiah's prophecy comports with Joel's. When Joel's was fulfilled, the "mountain of the Lord's house was established in the top of the mountains" and from Zion went forth the law and the "word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

The kingdom existed in the precise prophecies of the Old Testament, just as it had been contained in the promises made to the patriarchs and in the purpose of God from eternity.

Chapter Three

Millennialism And The Kingdom

The everlasting kingdom of God's purpose is a spiritual entity, designed for the salvation of Jew and Gentile, (Eph. 2:11-22). Jesus said it was "not of this world," (John 18:36). But, like so many other truths, man has corrupted divine teaching on this point and many would have us believe that Christ will return to the earth to reign over a literal kingdom from a throne in Jerusalem for a period of 1,000 years. That doctrine is a central point in the false system known as millennialism or premillennialism. While there are numerous variations of thought among the devotees of millennialism, the basic doctrine of this many-headed spiritual Hydra is that just prior to the end of the world Christ will return to earth and establish his kingdom. Based on the premise that Christ did not establish his kingdom in his first advent, they attempt to prove their theories by lifting passages from the Old Testament that deal with the restoration of the Jews to Palestine and applying them to the second coming of the Lord. A Biblical

understanding of Old Testament prophecies relating to the Jews and the kingdom of God will dispel any millennial notions from the minds of those who love the truth.

There never was and never shall be an *uninspired* interpretation of prophecy. Inspired prophecy requires inspired interpretation. So-called “interpreters” of prophecy in the present age are pseudo-seers without the required credentials of inspiration. Cultists such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and others claim to see a fulfillment of Bible prophecy in every natural disaster or political upheaval. *The Watchtower* is an official organ of the Jehovah’s Witnesses cult. While it states that it does not pretend to be an inspired prophet, it claims that it *interprets* a book of prophecy. That claim is false. Without inspiration it is impossible to interpret Bible prophecy. When a New Testament writer quoted an Old Testament prophecy and said “this is that which was spoken” his application of the prophecy was an inspired application and the only correct one. Every writer or speaker in the New Testament who interpreted Old Testament prophecy was inspired in that interpretation. No inspired interpretation can be made today. The age of direct inspiration has passed and the revelation of God has been committed to the inspired book, (Jude 3).

The prophecies of the Old Testament were all spoken before, during, or during the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity and dealt with two basic themes growing out of the promises made to Abraham. They prophesied that the Messiah would descend from Abraham according to the flesh and Jesus said those prophecies were to prepare the Jews for his coming, (John 5:39). They further prophesied of the Jews restoration to their land before the coming of the Messiah and those prophecies were fulfilled in the decree of the Persian king Cyrus described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. There is no prophecy of the Old Testament that has not been fulfilled, whether it relates to the restoration of the Jews to Palestine or to the coming of Christ. The era of prophecy is past. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. makes a threefold division of the Old Testament promises in his work entitled *God’s Prophetic Word*. “The promises of the Old Testament are threefold - the temporal promise to Abraham; the restoration promise to Israel; the spiritual promise to all nations. These promises have a threefold fulfillment” (p. 104).

The land promise to Abraham was fulfilled according to Joshua 21:43-45.

“And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers; and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which the the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.” Everything which God had promised to Abraham in Gen. 12:7, regarding his seed’s possession of Caanan, was fulfilled when Israel possessed the land under the leadership of Joshua and it was declared that *all came to pass*. Promise number one was fulfilled.

The restoration of the Jews to that land was fulfilled in the decree of Cyrus.

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is

there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up” (2 Chron. 36:20-23).

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill offering that is for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-4).

Jeremiah also foretold Israel’s captivity and restoration. “And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years... They shall be carried to Babylon and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord: then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place (Jer. 25:11; 29:22).

Having fulfilled the land promise and restoration promise to the seed of Abraham, there remained but one for God to fulfill—that in Abraham and his seed would all nations be blessed. That has been fulfilled in Christ. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

Defining their point of termination, Jesus said “The law and the prophets were until John,” (Luke 16:16). Old Testament prophecy ended when the law ended. There is no such thing as “unfulfilled prophecy.” Jesus fulfilled all that was spoken of him in the law, the psalms and the prophets, (Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44) and Peter affirmed as much in his second sermon, (Acts 3:12-26).

The threefold purpose of Old Testament prophecy served as a temporary means to a permanent end. The land and restoration prophecies served to maintain a racial line of descent through which Christ would enter the world. They had no other purpose. Every prophetic utterance of old focused upon the Son of God and in Him is summed up all Old Testament prophecy. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things (Heb. 1:1-2).

While divine revelation came to man through the prophets in previous ages at various times and in fragmented portions, God speaks today through Jesus Christ. The above passage further declares that Christ is the “heir of all things” the antecedent of which is all things spoken by the prophets. When the Son of God came in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy God ceased to speak through the prophets and revealed the mystery of the gospel through His Son. A proper understanding of Old Testament prophecy regarding the kingdom will eliminate any millennial theories. It is a dishonest application of those prophecies to apply them to the second coming of Christ. Having fulfilled all that was written of him in the law, the Psalms

and the prophets, Christ removed the law, nailing it to his cross, thereby ending the prophetic age (Luke 24:44).

Chapter 4

The Millennial Postponement Theory

If the kingdom is in existence (and it is) the millennial theory of a future reign of Christ on earth is false. For that reason, the millennialist must explain away Biblical passages dealing with Christ's present reign on his throne. To do so they attempt a rationale that goes something like this: Christ intended to establish his kingdom at His first advent but could not do so because He was rejected by the Jews. Therefore He established the church in place of the kingdom and will establish his kingdom when He returns at His second advent. This is, in a nutshell, the millennial teaching regarding the church and what they call the "church age." Denying Biblical teaching that the church and the kingdom are terms referring to the same entity, the millennialist says the second coming of Christ will mark the inauguration of the kingdom, the conversion of the Jews and a literal thousand year reign of Christ on a throne in the City of Jerusalem.

The basic error of millennialism in this tenet is applying the words "church" and "kingdom" to different institutions. They are the same thing, according to the Bible, and were so used by Jesus. "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. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19).

Jesus indicated that the keys of the kingdom fit the church because the church and the kingdom are the same thing. Millennialists who say the church was substituted for the kingdom because unbelieving Jews foiled God's purpose are saying mortals prevailed against the Almighty. But Jesus said "the gates of hell" or the forces of Satan and power of death could not prevent his building it, yet millennialists say the Jews thwarted God's plan! If the kingdom was postponed and the church substituted in its place John and Jesus were liars when they both preached that it was "at hand."

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Matt. 3:1). "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel (Mk. 1:14-15).

Their proclamation that the kingdom was "at hand" didn't refer to its establishment in a millenium at the end of time. "At hand" meant that it was near—that its coming was imminent and it would be soon established. Paul employed the same terminology when he told Timothy that the end of his earthly life was near. "For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand," (2 Tim. 4:6). If Jesus and John were mistaken in their declarations and God's word doesn't mean what it says in Matthew 16 and Mark 1, how can we trust any of the Bible?

On another occasion Jesus told some of His hearers that the kingdom would come within

their lifetime. "Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mk. 9:1). If the millennial theory of the kingdom's postponement is true, we have people living today who are about two thousand years old! Jesus said the kingdom would come with power and it would come while his hearers were still living and it did come in exactly that fashion on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2).

The present existence of the kingdom is further seen in the inspired writings of Luke, Paul and John. Luke said "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," (Acts 2:47). Paul told the Colossians that they had been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's Son, (Col. 1:13). Those who were added to the church on Pentecost were added to the kingdom and if one is in the kingdom one is in the church. The Hebrews were told they received a kingdom, (Heb. 12:28) and the apostle John said he was in the kingdom of God, (Rev. 1:9). If the kingdom has been postponed and has no present existence, how could have the Colossians been translated into it, the Hebrews received a kingdom and the beloved John been in it?

The idea that the kingdom was postponed because the unbelieving Jews rejected Christ is the result of the twisted meanderings of a false theology. Jesus said "my kingdom is not of this world," (John 18:36) but millennialists say that's exactly the kind of kingdom Christ intended to establish. Their doctrine entangles them in their own web of deception. The Jews were looking for the kind of kingdom the millennialists now look for. They expected the Messiah to throw off the yoke of Roman dominion and re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem, and at one time they tried to forcefully make him their earthly king, (Jn. 6:15). Millennialists are keeping company with infidel Jews in their insistence that the kingdom is earthly. They reason that the Jews expected an earthly kingdom and that Christ came to establish the earthly kingdom which they expected but they rejected Him because He came to do what they expected in the first place. Therefore He postponed the kingdom until his second coming, at which time He will establish that which the Jews expected at His first coming but which He did not establish because they rejected Him for attempting to establish the kingdom they wanted in the first place! That, in a nutshell, is the nonsense of the millennialist's kingdom postponement theory.

Teaching that the kingdom will be established at Christ's second coming, millennialism denies the current kingship of Christ, (Acts 2:36). They have Christ's coronation on abdication day. When Christ returns He won't receive a kingdom. He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

The kingdom of God now exists. It is a spiritual kingdom over which Christ currently reigns on the throne of David and will reign until the end of time. Its existence is concurrent with the church and the two are synonymous. The theory that the kingdom was postponed is a false doctrine and denies the authority of Christ in the present age.

Chapter Five

The Kingdom In Preparation

At the crossroads of ancient civilization, Palestine was a battleground on which ancient powers clashed. Following the Babylonian Captivity, the children of Israel were successively ruled by the Medes and Persians and the Greeks under Alexander The Great until, at last, they came under the yoke of Roman dominion. No prophetic voice had been heard in Israel for more than four hundred years and Israelite glory under David and Solomon was but a dim memory. These conditions heightened expectations of a Messiah and a longing for deliverance welled up within them. But God is longsuffering and works all things after the counsel of his own will, (Eph. 1:11). The depths to which the race had sunk since the creation necessitated a slow and gradual process of bringing mankind to the point of receiving the kingdom. That process included not only the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament but a period of preparation. That work was committed to a man whose unique mission was without precedent and who had no successor.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was Governor of Judea and Herod was Tetrarch of Galilee, the silence of heaven was broken by a voice crying in the Judean wilderness, "Repent, ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (Matt. 3:2). It was the fulness of time, (Gal. 4:4). Fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy, the Messianic Harbinger began his work. John the Baptist had come to prepare the way of the Lord and proclaim the approaching kingdom.

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 40:3-5).

Commissioned by God to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, John lived, worked and died in the preparatory stage of the kingdom. The full light of the gospel dispensation was about to dawn upon a benighted human race, enslaved by Satan. Deliverance was near and Christ would burst asunder the yoke of hell and the bands of death to establish his kingdom. John was a man sent from God, (John 1:6), whose special mission was to prepare the hearts of the people to receive the kingdom. He had not come to establish a new order, but labored under the Mosaic Covenant delivered at Sinai.

The son of a Levite priest and his wife Elisabeth, John's birth was miraculous. The angel who announced it told his father Zechariah that the child would be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb and his mission would be a special one. "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). John's unique task was to announce Jesus as the Messiah. The prophets of the Old Testament had foretold Christ's coming, but John announced his arrival. Jesus said he was like none who had gone before him. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. (Matt. 11:9-10).

It was John's task to gather the material for the approaching kingdom and have it ready for the spiritual building to be erected. While prepared the material for the kingdom, he was never a subject of it. "Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding: he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11).

The harbinger was not the bridegroom, nor was he sent to establish a kingdom or a new order. Recognizing his own place in the purpose of God, John did not assume to himself the prerogatives of Christ. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. (Jn. 3:27-30).

John's Preparatory Work

While Christ's order would increase, John's would give way to the Lamb of God whom he announced. (John 1:29). His message was the baptism of repentance and belief on Christ who would come after him, in order to the remission of sins. (Acts 19:4; cf. Matt. 3:1, 2, 6). "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins...And he came into all the country round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins...And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves being not baptized of him" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Luke 3:29-30).

Jesus Comes To His Own

Following Christ's baptism and temptation, John was cast into prison and Matthew says Jesus began, from that time, to preach the same message John had proclaimed. (Matt. 4:17). Their message was that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Neither taught that the kingdom was in existence during their work on the earth. The phrase "at hand" meant it was nigh. That is the message Jesus and John preached concerning the kingdom.

"He came unto his own and his own received him not. But, as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, but of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:11-13). Those to whom Jesus came were those whom John had prepared. "His own" were those to whom he came with his message of the kingdom. The Jews rejected the teachings of Christ but "as many as received him" were given the right to become the sons of God. As many of whom? Those to whom he came. To whom did he come? To "his own" - those who had been born of God. The birth hereof spoken was baptism. When they were baptized with the baptism of John they became heirs to the kingdom. They had the right to become sons of God and those who remained faithful exercised that right on the day of Pentecost. Those who were convicted by Peter's sermon on Pentecost were baptized into Christ, obeying the command in Acts 2:38. As a result, the record says "and the same day there were *added unto them* about three thousand souls, (Acts 2:41). To what were they *added*? Acts 2:47 says they were added to the church. A building has to exist before one can add to it. The church existed before the three thousand were baptized. The apostles were set in the church, (1 Cor. 12:28).

They had been the disciples of Jesus and, as such, had been baptized with John's baptism. They and others who had received John's baptism were set in the church on Pentecost and forever afterward those who obey the gospel are added to them and constitute the kingdom of God.

We do not contend that the church was established in the days of John the Baptist, prior to Pentecost. We have dealt with fallacy elsewhere. Jesus established his church on Pentecost, seven sabbaths and one day after his resurrection and it was built of the material which John had prepared as his messenger. The principle is the same as the construction of a pre-fabricated building. The parts are prepared to fit together at one point and shipped to another to be assembled into an existing structure. Before the material was assembled it constituted the building in a preparatory state. When the material was assembled it constituted a building in existence. The house of God, which is his kingdom or church, is built of living stones.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17). "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

Solomon's temple in the Old Testament was a type of the church or the true temple of God revealed in the New Testament. In the building of both, there is a parallel. "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Ki. 6:7). The stones of which Solomon's temple was built were hewn out and prepared to fit together before they were set in place for its construction. John performed the same work for the living stones to be set in the church. When the time came for the establishment or construction of God's spiritual temple on the day of Pentecost, the living stones that had been previously hewn from the wilderness of Israel were set in place. Both temples, Solomon's and Christ's, were built by the authority of God and the preparatory work for each was parallel to the other.

Having finished his work of preparing the way of the Lord, John's unique place among God's messengers would never be filled again. Jesus said "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. The one who was "more than a prophet" had made the crooked way straight, exalted the valleys and brought low the hills. The consummation of God's eternal purpose drew near and the establishment of the kingdom through which that purpose would be accomplished was about to take place.

Chapter Six

The Kingdom In Perfection

The patriarchs received God's revelation of a future kingdom in the dim star light age of promise and the prophets in the moonlight age of prophecy. Those who heard the message of John and Jesus lived in the pre-dawn age of the kingdom in preparation. Embodied in the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the utterances of Old Testament proph-

ets and in the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, the kingdom was always in the future. If the kingdom was established in the days of any of those, then the promises and prophecies are false and if they haven't been fulfilled, the kingdom hasn't yet been established.

Christ's Birth

Born of the virgin Mary, Jesus came into the world in fulfillment of prophecy to bring salvation. That was his mission revealed to Joseph by the angel. "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and they shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:20-23).

Christ's Childhood

Jesus grew to manhood in the village of Nazareth of Galilee. Of his childhood, there is but one inspired account. Recorded by Luke, it took place when he was twelve years old during the Passover in Jerusalem. It is significant that the Lamb of God, who came of age in the flesh, should first be mentioned at so significant a feast as the memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, wherein the passover lamb was slain.

Having fulfilled their obligation to observe the Passover, Mary and Joseph began their journey back to Nazareth, unaware that Jesus had tarried behind in Jerusalem. Journeying a full day, they supposed him to have been in the company of their relatives. But after inquiring of them they realized that he wasn't among them. Returning to Jerusalem they found him in the temple, hearing the learned doctors and asking them questions. Luke says those who heard him "were astonished at his understanding and answers." "And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:48-49).

While the twelve-year-old Jesus understood who he was and the gravity of his mission, his mother and Joseph "understood not the saying which he spake unto them," (Luke 2:50). Returning to Nazareth with them, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," (Luke 2:52) and the scriptures are silent concerning Jesus, from that day until he came to be baptized of John in Jordan eighteen years later.

Christ And The Kingdom

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 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: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt 3:13-17).

Taking up the work which God sent him to accomplish, Jesus preached the message of the

imminent kingdom. "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mk. 1:14).

Jesus was born, conducted his personal ministry and died under the Law of Moses. his relationship to the law was one of obedience and fulfillment. In doing the first, he accomplished the latter and defined his relationship to the Mosaic Law in the Sermon on the Mount. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17).

Attempts are made by false teachers to use this passage to prove that the Law of Moses is still binding upon us today. Their contention is that Jesus said he would not take it away. While it is true that he said he did not "come to destroy the law or the prophets," he did not say the Law of Moses would be retained. He neither destroyed it nor retained it. He fulfilled it and in so doing removed it as one removes a debt. He paid the price the Law required for sin and in paying the price, took the Law out of the way. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:14-15). "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14)

Christ came not to destroy the law or the prophets and thereby repudiate the Father's will. He came to fulfill them. Failing to understand that the Law of Moses was to bring them to Christ, the Jews erroneously believed eternal life was contained in the Old Testament scriptures and by their fleshly descent from Abraham, they were entitled to salvation. But Jesus said their conception of their scriptures was erroneous. "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life" (John 5:39-40, ASV).

Had the Jews understood their own scriptures, they would not have crucified Christ and Jesus said their failure to believe him resulted from their failure to believe Moses to whom they claimed allegiance. "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (Jn. 5:45-47).

Beginning and ending his work in obedience to God, Jesus emphasized his desire to do the complete will of the Father. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. (John 5:30). For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me ' (John 6:38).

The Kingdom In The Beatitudes

The Sermon on the Mount might well be termed "The Kingdom in Prologue." That discourse, recorded in Matthew 5-7, has far greater import than to be classed as a group of idealistic principles of morality. It is not a code to regulate conduct in the social or religious realms. The beatitudes constitute a forecast of the kingdom and the principles enunciated in it by Jesus were given to illustrate the spiritual nature of the kingdom which he had come to establish and

the character of its members.

Following his baptism and temptation, Matthew says “he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,” (Matt. 4:23). The context of the Sermon on the Mount is generally overlooked and it is regarded as a monolithic discourse with no connection to what went before. The Scripture must be interpreted within the context in which it is written. The arbitrary chapter break between Matthew 4 and 5 does not constitute a break in context. The gospel of the kingdom which Jesus preached in Galilee was the subject of the Beatitudes. In them, he describes the nature of the coming kingdom and its subjects.

Foy E. Wallace, Jr. cites Matt. 4:23 and comments on the context in which the discourse was delivered. “The next thing in context was The Sermon on The Mount at the conclusion of which, in Matthew 7:28-29, it is recorded that ‘the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.’ The first passage refers to his preaching as the gospel of the kingdom, which already he had announced as at hand. The second passage refers to his teaching as his doctrine. The Sermon on the Mount is therefore the gospel of the kingdom and the doctrine of Christ” (The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State, p. 9).

The Apostolic Office

The apostolic office and those appointed to that unique position were part of the ministry of Jesus. He gathered twelve men to be his witnesses and prepared them for that task. The qualifications of an apostle are defined by Luke in the book of Acts. Recounting the fall of Judas, Peter said one had to be appointed to replace him as an apostle. “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, *beginning* from the baptism of John, unto the day that He was taken up *from us*, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22).

The only persons qualified to occupy the office of an apostle were those who had been specially chosen by Christ and had witnessed his work from his baptism by John until he ascended to heaven. No one can scripturally claim to be an apostle, a witness or an ambassador for Christ today. An apostle was an eyewitness of the work, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ and Paul said they were Christ’s ambassadors (1 Cor. 5:20). An ambassador is the personal representative of a sovereign, endowed with credentials from that sovereign and empowered to speak as though that sovereign spoke himself. No man can make that claim today and substantiate it by the scriptures. The apostles occupy a unique place in the kingdom, having been prepared for their work during the personal ministry of Jesus. During that ministry, He made a statement in Caesarea that is central to our study of the establishment of the kingdom. “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias, and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 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 Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 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. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;

and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:13-19).

Four things arrest our attention in this remarkable passage.

1. The foundation upon which the church is built is Christ, not Peter. Jesus said the church would be built upon His divinity expressed in the confession Peter made. Christ is the foundation. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus,” (1 Cor. 3:11).
2. Jesus indicated the church was not yet in existence. “I will build” is future tense.
3. Jesus used the terms “church” and “kingdom” referring to the same institution. This indicates that the church and the kingdom are identical.
4. Peter and the other apostles were told that they would be given the “keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Upon the inauguration of the kingdom, it would be their privilege to open its doors for men to enter, indicating that the kingdom would come between the time Jesus promised to build it and their death.

We are then brought to the conclusion that the kingdom, or church, would be established in the near future, with Jesus as its foundation and the terms of admittance announced by the apostles with Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 being the first recorded under the new dispensation.

Mark records another statement in which Jesus tells His hearers that the kingdom would come in their lifetime. “And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1).

Three additional things are mentioned here by Jesus regarding the establishment of the kingdom.

1. It was yet in the future.
2. It was imminent and would come within the lifetime of some of those whom Jesus addressed.
3. The kingdom would come with power.

We conclude, then, that the kingdom would be established within the lifetimes of Peter and others who heard Jesus and its establishment would be accompanied by power.

Christ’s Last Days

As the completion of his earthly task drew near, Jesus went to Jerusalem with his disciples and prepared to eat His final Passover supper with them. It was at this feast that He instituted the Lord’s Supper as a memorial to His death on the cross. But even as He gave them the loaf and the fruit of the vine as emblems of His body and blood, He indicated that the kingdom still had not come.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is

shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:26-29). His promise that He would drink the fruit of the vine new with them in the kingdom indicated that even in the last hours of His life on earth the kingdom was still in the future.

Having eaten the supper, Jesus retired to the quiet recesses of the Garden of Gethsemane and poured out the torment of an anguished heart to His Father. In his agony, Luke says His "sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground," (Luke 24:44). Having received the strength to endure the awful events which lay before Him, He arose to meet the mob led by Judas Iscariot.

Taken by the mob to Caiaphas the high priest, He faced false witnesses who testified that He had threatened to destroy the temple and rebuild it within three days. (Matt. 26:61). Caiaphas accused Jesus of Blasphemy and sent Him away to Pilate, the governor of Judea. He was sent to the Roman governor because the Jews could only assess the death penalty but had no civil authority to execute it. Pilate, whose name will forever be associated with cowardice, could find no fault in Christ but didn't have the courage to release Him. Instead, he sent Him to Herod, reasoning that he could avoid a decision because Jesus was a Galilean and Herod was Tetrarch of Galilee.

Having mocked Jesus and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, Herod returned Him to Pilate where, at the insistence of the Jewish mob, Pilate condemned Him to death. Forced to bear the instrument of His own execution, Jesus was taken to Calvary, stripped of His clothes and nailed to the cross as though He were a common criminal. The eminent Robert Milligan describes his agony.

"The nails that pierced his hands and feet were but as nothing. Persons of ordinary strength generally lived on the cross from one to four or five days, and sometimes even longer. The weight of our indebtedness to the Divine government fell like a mountain avalanche on his soul. The light of God's countenance was withheld; and a horror of appalling darkness overwhelmed his spirit. He could bear no more (Milligan, *Commentary on Hebrews*, Sec. 4, p. 159).

The price at last was paid. The deed was done. Bowing His head, the sinless Son of God declared the end of the Mosaic Covenant and the work of redemption He had come to accomplish. He said, "It is finished," (John 19:30). Still, the kingdom had not come. "And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor; and he was a good man, and a just: (the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them:) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself *waited for the kingdom of God*. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone" (Lk. 23:50-53).

Jesus had told Peter that the "gates of hell" would not prevent the establishment of the kingdom, (Matt. 16:18). He referred to his death and sojourn in hades, the resting place of disembodied spirits awaiting the resurrection. Though Satan, through the Jewish and Roman authorities, tried to prevent Christ from establishing his church, he burst asunder the bands of hades and on the third day arose triumphant over death and appeared to his apostles for a period of forty days. (Acts 1:1-5). But even then the kingdom was a future entity which they did not understand. That is evident from the question they asked at his last appearance to

them. "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Their conception of the kingdom was no different from the Jews who thought Jesus would overthrow the Roman government and re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem.

"And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:7-8).

Returning to Jerusalem as Jesus had commanded, the apostles waited for the power which he had promised. For ten days they continued in prayer and supplication until of Pentecost when they assembled together with one accord and in one place. Luke records the events.

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2-4).

All that had gone before in the promises, prophecies and preparation of the kingdom pointed to this day and this moment. The Seed of woman had bruised the Serpent's head in his triumphant resurrection and fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel. The Son of man had gone to the Ancient of Days in the clouds of heaven, (Dan. 7:13-14). He was given power and glory and dominion, (Philippians. 2:5-11) and a kingdom that shall never be destroyed.

Moreover, this was done in the days of the last great kingdom prophesied in Daniel 2:44 and Peter said the events of Acts 2 were in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, marking the beginning of the "last days," (Acts 2:14-21). The kingdom had come with power as Jesus promised in Mark 9:1 and the "mountain of the Lord's house," the universal kingdom of God, was "exalted above the hills" as Isaiah had foretold and on that day the "law went forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," (Isa. 2:2-4; Luke 24:45-49).

Standing before the assembled multitude, Peter used the keys of the kingdom, proclaiming the gospel and announcing for the first time that Christ had been exalted to the throne of David at the right hand of God, (Acts 2:29-36). "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls (Acts 2:37-41).

Those who obeyed the terms of the gospel he announced were added to the church. What God had purposed from eternity had come to pass. The kingdom had come and in that kingdom had come salvation for the world. Peter opened the doors with the gospel keys and they remain open to receive all who will enter to partake of the blessings that are in Christ, (Eph. 1:3) until time shall be no more. To know what God would have us do to be saved, we need to

look no further than the terms announced by Peter in Acts two. The same gospel Peter preached and which Paul said saves men (Rom. 1:16-17) will save men today who obey its terms.

Chapter Seven

The Nature Of The Kingdom

An eternal entity, the kingdom of God has a nature that transcends things temporal. Its laws, ideals, subjects, and mission are not earthly, but heavenly. Jesus made that pronouncement at his trial before Pilate. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36).

Foy E. Wallace, Jr., in *The Sermon On The Mount* and *The Civil State*, says Jesus' statement was one of contrast between an earthly kingdom and a heavenly one. "The church is a spiritual order which is not subject to alteration, a kingdom which cannot be moved, and the faith which cannot be changed... The sphere of the kingdom of Christ is the domain of the truth. The sphere of the earthly kingdom is the civil and social order....So that the statement of Jesus Christ to Governor Pilate in the words, 'my kingdom is not of this world,' was declarative only of the contrast in the nature of the imperial kingdom which Pilate represented and the spiritual kingdom which Christ had come to establish. The one was of that world - Jesus said 'this world,' the world of Caesar, of Pilate, the Roman world - the other was not to be of it, not a revolution in the Roman empire out of which a kingdom like it would emerge, but a kingdom of another kind and another realm, of heaven and from heaven" (pp. 149-151).

Jesus contrasted his kingdom with that of the kingdoms of men. Theirs wax old and pass away. Witness the empires of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Macedonia and Rome. But the kingdom of God is universal in scope and eternal nature, (Psalms 145:13; Isaiah 9:6-7). Having an eternal nature, the kingdom's mission is different from the kingdoms of men. It is neither social, political nor racial. Social engineering is not the province of the kingdom of God. Jesus didn't give his life for racially balanced congressional districts. He didn't die to provide every adult a minimum wage, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, the right to vote, medicare, social security, job security, affirmative action, human rights or free eyeglasses. Those issues have been appropriated by the religious world in the same fashion that the Medieval church ruled in the affairs of kings. Contemporary religions have abandoned any pretense of the divine mission of the church and today usurp those prerogatives rightly belonging to the civil government.

The "Social Gospel" dabbles in the temporal things of life while omitting the weightier matters of the terms of pardon, eternal salvation, right moral living and the worship of God in spirit and in truth. The social gospel is more concerned with social security than eternal security and social welfare than spiritual warfare. Their humanistic priorities are gerrymandering congressional districts rather than taking the soul saving gospel to a lost world, and psychoanalysis instead of soul-searching sermons. Its adherents have exchanged the Bread of life for temporal loaves and fishes, the Water of Life for broken cisterns of humanistic philosophy and eternal glory for thirty pieces of silver, paid at minimum wage. Its agenda is social and civil from top to bottom and its structure rests on the shifting sands of social mores rather than the Rock of salvation.

There is a parallel usurpation of authority in the religious and civil realms between the Medieval church which controlled kings who ruled by “divine right” and the Protestant usurpation of authority in the American Republic. While Catholicism used rulers to impose its will on the masses, Protestantism has adopted the humanistic philosophy of the social engineers of the civil government to such a degree that the distinction between sociology and religion is non-existent.

Protestants are in the forefront of political movements that rightly belong to the government, in many cases working hand in hand with government agencies to promote their social gospel. The ancient doctrines of the Virgin Birth of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible and the existence and deity of One God are looked upon by most Protestant churches as relics of an ignorant and uninformed past. The inspiration of the scriptures was officially rejected by the Presbyterians in 1967 when they resolved that the scriptures “are not the inerrant utterance of God to man” and that conclusion is a high universal belief in modern Protestantism.

But the kingdom of God—the church which Christ established on the day of Pentecost in Acts two—is an eternal entity containing all of the world’s redeemed. It is that which Christ saves and for which He will return at the last day (Eph. 5:23-27). It is His instrument upon the earth to carry the soul saving gospel to the world’s lost (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Its destiny is not a better life here— though life here is made better by it—but glory with the Father in eternity. To be in Christ is to be in His church, or kingdom, and to enjoy the blessings of salvation from past sins and, in remaining faithful to Him, to have the hope of eternal life to come (Rev. 2:10).

Sadly, the modern denominational industry disparages the church which Jesus purchased with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28) and for which He will return (Eph. 5:23-27). Most modern religionists say the church is unimportant. How can one say that about the greatest institution upon earth for which Jesus died? They will tell their hearers that salvation comes without being in Christ’s church. In other words, one is told to “get saved”— a process they usually define that is contrary to New Testament teaching—and then to “join the church of your choice,” as though Jesus had neither church nor choice.

Paul wrote that, “[God] hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” and, “...he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The church is defined here as the body of Christ over which He is the head and that body is, “the fulness of of him that filleth all in all.” It is impossible to be “in Christ” without being in His body, and since He is the head of the body, one who is not in the body is not connected to its head. The church, or kingdom, is where God has located salvation and unless one is in that, he is lost.

“The idea that one is first saved by some mystical or mystified, unintelligible or intangible process, and afterwards ‘joins some church,’ is a common religious delusion. Yet there is no truth more plainly emphasized in the Bible than the fact that the process of being saved is the process of entering the church (Acts 2:47). First, it is affirmed in Acts 4:12 that salvation is in Christ. Then, to have salvation, one must get into Christ. But Paul, by analogy, in Ephesians 5:30, teaches that as husband and wife are one, so Christ and the church are one. ‘I speak concerning Christ and the church,’ he said. Christ and the church being one, how can one be in Christ and out of the church? Second, Paul makes the fact that Christ is ‘the Saviour of the

body' (Eph. 5:23) the ground of his exhortation to the Ephesians concerning the church as the bride of Christ (verse 25). He washed it and sanctified it; cleansed it and saved it; purchased it with His blood and redeemed it; reconciles us to God in it and adds all the saved to it. Therefore, out of the church there is no cleansing, no blood, no redemption, no reconciliation to God, no salvation. Third, the relation between Christ and the church is the same as that which exists between God and Christ. Christ is the 'fulness' of God (Col. 1:9), and the church is the 'fulness' of Christ (Eph. 1:23). Therefore, no man can come to Christ and ignore the church for the same reason that no man can come to God and ignore Christ" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., "Christ And The Church," *The Present Truth*, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, Ft. Worth, 1977, pp. 26-27).

The mantra of denominations is that, "The church doesn't save" and is therefore unnecessary to salvation. In one sense they are right. Christ is the Saviour, but they refuse to understand that it is the church which constitutes the saved. "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" (Eph. 5:23). The church is that which Christ saves and one cannot be saved outside of it. One may as well argue that Noah could have been saved outside the ark as to say one can be saved outside of the church. It is true that Christ does not save in denominations, but to be saved one *must* be in His church. In no place does the Bible teach that salvation comes first, then at some later time one "joins" a church. Look again at the church as described in Acts two. When the three thousand obeyed the gospel by repenting and being baptized into Jesus Christ, He added them to His church. That which saves one—obedience to the gospel—is also that which places one in Christ, or in His church. (Acts 2:41-47).

We learn from the New Testament that in order to have the blessings of salvation in Christ, we must believe in him (John 8:24), repent of our sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confess our faith in Him (Acts 10:32-33; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37), and be baptized into Him for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38) where His blood cleanses us from all past sins. Having done that, one is then in Christ and, consequently, in His church which is the kingdom of God.

Chapter Eight

The Kingdom In Metaphor

Having established that the church Jesus built and His kingdom are two terms applying to the same institution, we now embark on a study of metaphors applied to the church, and the various aspects of it embodied in them.

The Body of Christ

This term is descriptive of the fellowship feature of the church. The term "fellowship" is from the Greek *koinonia*, which means "joint participation." As the human body functions as one unit through the joint participation of its many members, so does the body—or church—of Christ. Paul delineates that principle in the following language: For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. ...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular (1 Cor. 12:12-14; 27). As the human body functions at the will of the head, the body of

Christ functions at the will of Christ who is the head of it. (Eph. 1:22-23). Notice also Paul's statement that, "the body is one, and hath many members." The church is *one*. Jesus promised to build only one (Matt. 16:18), gave Himself for only one (Eph. 5:25-27), purchased only one with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and will save only one (Eph. 5:27).

The extant notion among denominational industrialists is that each separate denomination constitutes the one body of Christ. If that were so, then the body of Christ is a monstrosity that bears no resemblance to a single body. Christ is the *only* head of His church, but the Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Mormon Church has a President as its head, the Archbishop of Canterbury is head of the Anglican Church, Southern Baptists have a Convention President, and the list goes on and on among denominations. If each of them constitutes a part of the church of Christ, then Jesus created a multi-headed Hydra and He is not *the* head, but one of many.

The claim is often made that Jesus' statement in John 15:5-6 refers to Himself as the head of His church with the branches being the various denominations of men. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Jesus has no "branch churches." He has only one. The branches to which He refers in the above passages are individual members of the church, as Paul pointed out in First Corinthians 12. Note Jesus' statement in John 14:16: "If a *man* abide not in me..." He is speaking of an individual member of His church—a "man". *Men* are the branches, not denominations. The body of Christ, which is His church, is *one*.

The House of God

In his first epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul wrote, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:14-15). The term "house of God" illustrates the familial nature of the church. Its members bear the relationship of children to God and He is their Father. One's "house" is his family. Of Cornelius, it was said that he was, "one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). Cornelius' "house" in this passage was not his the domicile in which he lived, but his family. That's the same use of the term Paul made in First Timothy, where he explained that the "house of God" was the "church of the living God. Describing the Ephesian Gentiles' relationship to Christ when they obeyed the gospel (Acts 19), Paul wrote, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. 2:19), and the Hebrews writer describes members of the church as God's house (Heb. 3:9).

There are only two spiritual households—or families—in the world and every person on earth is in one or the other. They are the family of God and the family of the devil. "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil. "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 John 3:10). God is the Father of the righteous and Satan is the father of the wicked. "Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, we be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God...Ye

are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and bode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:41-44).

We thus conclude that, 1) all of God's children are in His family. 2) God's family is the church. 3) Therefore all of God's children are in the church. In view of that conclusion, consider the implication when one asserts that God has children in all churches. Not all churches are God's. He has only one. Therefore, to say God has children in other churches is to say God has children outside of His own family. That conclusion is blasphemous, making God an adulterer! Those who are not in Christ are not God's children. One becomes a child of God in Christ by faith. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27).

The Temple Of God

The kingdom of God—the church—is also metaphorically called, "the temple of God," expressing its feature as the place of acceptable worship. The church is to the people of God in the New Testament age what the tabernacle, and later the temple, were to Israel in the Old Testament. It is the spiritual sphere where God meets His people and accepts their worship.

In every age of the world, God has always specified the acceptable place and method of acceptable worship offered to Him. That is illustrated in the Patriarchal Age when God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering.

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you (Gen. 22:1-5).

God specified Abraham's method of worship—"Take now thy son...Isaac...and offer him for a burnt offering" and He specified the place—"...the land of Moriah upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." It was not left to Abraham to choose the "worship of his choice." Nor was it left to his judgment concerning *where* his worship was to be offered.

The same was true under the Mosaic Law. At the inauguration of that law at Mount Sinai, God instructed Moses to construct the *place* where He would accept Israel's worship. "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it (Ex. 25:8-9).

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, saying, What man so ever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or a lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord:

blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people: to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the Lord, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them for peace offerings unto the Lord” (Lev. 17:1-6).

But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all of your tribes, to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come (Deut. 12:5).

The above references are explicit concerning the place where God would accept Israel’s worship. They were not given a choice as to where their worship was to be offered, but were required to offer it at the tabernacle, and later in the temple Solomon built. Neither are men given a “temple of their choice” today. Paul said, “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom 15:4) and the above passages relate to the place of acceptable worship in our day. That place is the temple of God in this present age and that temple is the church. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in who all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye are also builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

Paul uses two metaphors of the church in the above passage—“the household of God,” and “a holy temple.” It is the latter metaphor that we are concerned with here. The church is the temple of God in which He figuratively dwells today, as He figuratively dwelt in the tabernacle in the wilderness and later in Solomon’s temple. We know God’s indwelling in His temple is figurative because of Solomon’s words at the dedication of the temple he built. “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” (1 Kings 8:27).

As God designated the temple of Solomon as the place where He was to be worshipped, so He has designated his spiritual temple, the church, as that place today. The church—His temple—is what Paul calls “a habitation of God, through the Spirit.” That language does not mean God *dwells* in His temple through the Spirit, but that His dwelling place was *built* through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. Nor does the statement that they were, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” mean the apostles and prophets are the foundation. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church which was laid by inspired men in the first century. Paul said, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). From the laying of the church’s foundation as the temple of God, through the erection of its superstructure, all was accomplished through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration at the direction of God.

The stones of the temple’s superstructure are Christians who not only constitute the spiritual stones of the temple of God today, but are also priests within that temple who offer acceptable worship to God. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). Having specified that acceptable worship is offered within the confines of His temple, the church, God accepts none from those who are outside of it. Outside of God’s temple no acceptable worship to Him can be offered. The church of Christ is the spiritual temple of God where He has placed His name, where He dwells, and only where He accepts men’s worship.

The Vineyard Of The Lord

The church is also metaphorically a “vineyard.” That word is synonymous with a field of labor, indicating that the church is that sort of field in the spiritual realm. As an agricultural figure, a vineyard indicates a place where seed is sown and cultivated to grow grapes. The parallel as it relates to the church is that the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11) is sown by workers (Christians) who are in the Lord’s vineyard. Jesus illustrated that in the parable of the sower in Luke 8. Life is in the seed—placed in all seed by the Holy Spirit at creation. The Law of Biogenesis says that everything reproduces from seed after its own kind. That was God’s law from the beginning. “And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:11-12).

The same law of reproduction exists in the spiritual realm where the word of God is designated as spiritual seed. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Against this background of spiritual life contained within God’s word, as a parallel to physical seed, Jesus spoke the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-9. In that parable, He explained that the word of God is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11), indicating that the work given to the church as the vineyard of the Lord is to sow that seed in the hearts of men. That was the final order Jesus gave to His apostles just before His ascension (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16) and that is the sole mission of the church.

In Matthew 20:1, Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.” There are at least three things to notice in His words. First, He said the householder, “went out early in the morning,” indicating the urgency of the work. Second, He went out early to “hire laborers.” Labor for the Lord in His vineyard will be rewarded. Jesus said, “And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12). Third, labor for the Lord must be done in *His* vineyard. The householder of the parable represents the Lord and it was into his own vineyard that he went out to hire laborers, not into another’s. No acceptable work can be done for the Lord if one is not in His vineyard.

Chapter Nine

Identifying The Church Today

How, then, is Christ’s church to be identified among all the pseudo churches in our world? In every age, God has had a *pattern* for men to follow in worshiping and serving Him. Contrary to the modern concept that man can do as he pleases in religion and still please God, a divinely-ordained pattern exists today for us to follow. That pattern is the New Testament and revealed in its pages is the pattern for the church of Christ. Three times at strategic points throughout the Bible, man is warned to neither add to nor detract from what God has said. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it” (Deut. 4:2). “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). “...If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the

things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18-19). God has given His pattern and we dare not change it.

When God instructed Noah to build an ark, He gave him a pattern (Gen. 6:14-21) and Noah did exactly as God instructed in His word (Gen. 6:22). When God told Moses to build the tabernacle and gave him detailed instructions, Moses did not deviate from those instructions and it was said of him, as it had been written of Noah: “Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he” (Exo. 40:16). The word of God is a divine pattern with which we are forbidden to tamper, and that includes His pattern for the church of Christ.

That pattern is plainly revealed in the New Testament and if we follow it we cannot be wrong, but any religious organization that is not built according to His plan is not His church. The church of Christ can be easily identified today by the following:

By Its Builder

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 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 Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 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. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:13-19).

Jesus knew the hearts of all men (John 2:24-25), so it’s certain that he did not ask men’s opinions of Him to gain knowledge of their thoughts. He put this question to His disciples for *their* benefit. While others looked upon Him as a prophet—certainly a man from God, as Nicodemus said in John 3:2—they did not understand that He was more than a man. But Peter’s confession not only recognized Him as the Messiah, but as “the Son of the Living God.” Jesus implicitly affirmed that He is the Son of God, for had Peter been wrong, Jesus would have corrected him (John 14:2).

With the fact of His Sonship firmly established in their minds, Jesus promised that He would build His church upon the bedrock of Peter’s confession. In this passage, Jesus also used the word “kingdom” interchangeably with the word “church,” indicating that the two terms describe the same institution. The church of Christ is the kingdom of heaven. Prior to this statement, the focus of His preaching had been the same as that of John—“the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” In this passage, Jesus defined the kingdom He preached as a spiritual entity that He called “my church.”

In promising to build His church, Christ also alluded to His death, saying, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Noting that even His own death would not prevent His establishment of His church, Jesus then gave the very first prediction of His own death. “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt. 16:21). The link between His death and the establishment of the church had been prophesied in the Old Testament.

“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand” (Isa. 28:16-18)

Saying “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against His building His church, Jesus alluded to Isaiah’s prophecy. The “gates of hell” to which He referred is the same thing as the Jews’ “covenant with death,” and their “agreement with hell” in Isaiah’s prophecy. The word *hell* in Isaiah 28:18 is the Hebrew word *sheol*, and in Matthew 16:18 it is the Greek word *hades*. Neither of these words refer to the place of eternal punishment, but to the unseen realm of departed spirits of men and represent death. When the Jews conspired with Pilate to crucify Jesus, they made a covenant with death to consign Him to *hades*, thinking that would be His end. But Jesus said that even His own death would not prevent Him from establishing His church because their covenant with death and their agreement with hell (*hades*) would be disannulled by His resurrection.

Thus, in promising to establish His church, He foretold both His death and resurrection from the dead. Christ died for the church, but even His death could not prevent its establishment. There is not a man-originated church on the face of the earth today that truthfully can claim it is built upon a dead, resurrected, and ascended man. In the above passage, Jesus also referred to the church in the singular. He did not say, “I will build my *churches*,” but that, “I will build my *church*.” He promised and built only one, and all others are counterfeit. Any church built by one other than Jesus Christ is not the church revealed in the pages of Holy Writ.

By The Time And Place Of Its Establishment

The church of Christ was established on the day of Pentecost which immediately followed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 1-2). Any church which had its beginning at another time or place cannot be the one which Jesus built. The Lutheran Church is not the church of Christ. for it does not meet the Scriptural criteria given above. “The Lutheran Church dates from the eve of All Saints Day, Oct. 31, 1517, when Martin Luther tacked his celebrated 95 theses on the Castle Church in Wittenberg, in protest against the sale of indulgences as carried on by the Roman Church under Tetzl in Germany. Luther had no intention at the time of withdrawing from the Catholic Church, in which he was a priest, or monk, but was striving to put down a great evil. However, unconsciously he had struck a great blow at the papacy and this led to the Reformation and the origin of the Lutheran Church” (L. G. Tomlinson, Churches of Today in The Light of Scripture, 11th edition, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, 1967, p. 32.

The Roman Catholic Church had a beginning much later than the Pentecost immediately following the resurrection of Christ and far removed from Jerusalem. “The Catholic Church had an embryonic beginning. The early church departed from the simplicity of a congregational form of government, guided by the New Testament as the only Rule of Faith and Practice, and permitted more and more authority to be vested in the bishops of the various churches. By the middle of the second century the church was well united under the authority of the bishops who gradually came to be regarded as successors to the apostles...The adoption of a creed as the rule of faith and practice in the third century put forth the bud, the union of

church and state under Constantine; and the writing of the Nicene Creed in 325 brought forth the flower; while the setting up a 'papa' or pope as the ecclesiastical head of the church, culminating in the doctrine of his infallibility in 1870, produced the fruit as manifested in the Catholic Church of today" (Tomlinson, p. 17)

The Presbyterian Church—another man-originated church—began under the leadership of John Knox in Scotland. Its first book of discipline was written in 1560 and it became the established religion of Scotland in 1592—almost 1,600 years too late to be the church of Christ.

The Church of England was established by Henry VIII as a result of his quarrel with the Roman pope who refused to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon so he could marry Anne Boleyn. Henry persuaded the English Parliament "to sever the connection of the Church of England and the Church of Rome and make him head of the English Church."⁷ This was accomplished in 1531 and by 1533 Thomas Cranmer declared Henry free to marry Anne Boleyn. This man-originated church—known in America as the Episcopal Church—resulted from a fornicating king seeking to satisfy his own lust, and in our day the American version of this man-made organization has elected a sodomite as its bishop. Neither the Church of England nor the Episcopal Church is the church of Christ.

Another man-originated church which was established at the wrong time and place to be the church of Christ is the Methodist Church. Known today as The United Methodist Church, this organization was founded in England in the 1700s. "Methodism was founded by John Wesley, an ordained priest in the Church of England....John and Charles Wesley, with Whitefield and about a dozen other students at Oxford formed themselves into a society for the purpose of overcoming the formalism and ritualism of the Episcopal Church and to stimulate piety and spirituality among its members. Other societies were organized and because of their methodical manner of life they were called Methodists. The appellation obtained currency and upon the death of Wesley these societies banded together under a conference and became known as the Methodist Episcopal Church, although for a time they considered themselves a part of the Episcopal Church...The Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States originated with the Christian Conference held in Baltimore, Dec. 24, 1784" (Tomlinson, p. 57).

Neither is any Baptist Church the church of Christ. While Baptist origins are somewhat obscure, the first known Baptist Church was organized in Holland by John Smyth and the first Baptist Church in England was organized by Thomas Helwys in 1611. These efforts are 1,600 years too late and at the wrong place to be the church of Christ.

Seventh Day Adventism began in Massachusetts in 1831 under the leadership of William Miller. The Mormon Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—was established by the false prophet Joseph Smith, April 6, 1830 in Fayette, New York. Russellism, or the Jehovah's Witnesses began in the United States in the late 1800s, as did the Christian Science Church of Mary Baker Eddy. These man-originated Churches bear no likeness to the church promised and built by Christ, the Son of God. They originated too late, at the wrong place, and by the wrong people to be the church Jesus built. They are neither part nor parcel of the church of Christ, but counterfeits palmed off on men to deceive them and destroy their souls. Like tares sown among wheat, the churches of men will be rooted up and cast away at the last day (Matt. 13:24-30). Jesus said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). Men's churches were neither planted by God nor

have His approval and none of them can be found within the pages of the New Testament.

By Its Nomenclature

The church of the first century had no proper name. The term “the church of Christ” is a possessive term indicating ownership. When one speaks of “the farm of John Brown,” he isn’t naming the farm, but indicating who owns it. The same is true of the term “the church of Christ.” It is Christ’s church and its numerous local bodies were known as “churches of Christ” in the New Testament (Rom. 16:16). As Christ and the Father are one, it was also termed “the church of God” (1 Cor. 1:1-2, cf. John 17:10, 20-21).

Neither do members of the church of Christ denominate themselves into parties by their names. There were no hyphenated Christians in the first century, such as “Baptist-Christians,” “Methodist-Christians,” “Presbyterian-Christians,” or “Anglican-Christians.” The saved are simply Christians and wear this God-given name without hyphenating it. The name “Christian” is worn by individuals, not the church.

This was the new name of which Isaiah prophesied, and was given in precise fulfillment of his prophecy. “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name (Isa. 62:1-2)

The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Acts 10 and 11 in the New Testament. The “righteousness” of Jerusalem and that which the Gentiles would see was the gospel which would be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:45-47) and which would save Jew and Gentile alike (Rom. 1:16-17). The apostle Peter was called to preach to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile who was a Roman soldier (Acts 9-10). It was at the house of Cornelius that the Gentiles first heard and obeyed the gospel, and in the exact order of Isaiah’s prophecy the disciples of Christ were given a new name—“Christian”—in Acts 11:26. That’s the first of three times the word is used in the New Testament. The others are in Acts 26:28 when Agrippa said, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,” and in 1 Peter 4:16 where Peter wrote, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.” There isn’t a single denominational name that is found in the New Testament which is divinely applied to the disciples of Jesus Christ.

By Its Organization

The New Testament knows nothing of the councils, conferences, synods, or conventions that characterize modern denominational structure. Each local church of Christ in the first century was organized on a level no higher than the local, autonomous congregation. Under the supreme authority of Jesus Christ as head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23), each congregation worked and worshiped under the oversight of men known as “elders.” Each congregation had a plurality of men serving as elders (Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5). Divinely ordained qualifications for men so serving are given in 1 Timothy 2 and Titus 1 and only those meeting these qualifications are fit to serve as elders of the church of Christ.

These men were also known as bishops and shepherds. All three terms—elder, bishop, shepherd or pastor—refer to the same office in the New Testament and are descriptive of some

aspect of the office. The word “bishop” is from the Greek *episcopos* which means “overseer.” This word indicates that the elder has oversight of the activities of the church, but his oversight extends no further than the revealed word of God through Jesus Christ as the Head of the church (Matt. 28:18).

The word “pastor” comes from the Latin term for shepherd and is another word describing the men who oversee the local church of Christ. The shepherd is responsible for seeing that the flock under his care is fed the pure word of God, and protected from evil teaching and influences. That was the entire thrust of Paul’s charge to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31. The word “elder” simply indicates a man mature in the faith.

By Its Worship

The worship of the church of Christ is devoid of modern trappings of ritualism and show business. We follow the New Testament pattern in our worship to God in all simplicity and purity. As the first century church did, we sing praises to God, and teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16). This is a reciprocal action as commanded in Ephesians 5:19, so we do not use choirs, “praise teams” or special singing groups. Moreover, this is simply “singing.” There is no command in the New Testament for the church to use mechanical instruments of music in worship and in keeping with the injunction of Colossians 3:17 we do not use them. They are not authorized by the Lord, therefore we cannot play an instrument in His name (by His authority).

The church of Christ teaches the Bible in its assemblies as commanded in 1 Timothy 4:1-2 and as the Jerusalem church did when it continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (teaching) (Acts 2:42).

The church of Christ also observes the Lord’s Supper each first day of the week as we have example thereof in Acts 20:7. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial feast of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine which represent the body and blood of our Blessed Lord in His death on the cross. He instituted this supper on the night of His betrayal (Matt. 26:26-29) and the New Testament church regularly observed this rite in each first-day-of-the-week assembly

(Acts 2:42; 20:7). Prayers led by men (1 Tim. 2:1-8) and contributing of our material goods to further the cause of the Lord (1 Cor. 16:1-2) are also part of our worship on the first day of the week as all of the above items of worship which are authorized by the word of God. This is the simple New Testament pattern for acceptable worship to God which is practiced by the church of Christ.

By Its Terms Of Membership

The terms of membership in the church of Christ are not given by human councils, synods, conventions or conferences. They are the terms preached by first century Christians and found in the New Testament. Salvation by “faith only” that is taught by most modern denominations is a concept foreign to the New Testament and is a doctrine of the devil. We are certainly justified by faith (Rom. 5:1) but not by “faith alone.” Saving faith is that kind of faith found among the worthies listed in Hebrews 11. It is faith that hears the word of God and does what God commands, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Noah heard God’s instructions and acted upon them (Heb. 11:7). So did Abel (Heb.

11:4), Abraham (Heb. 11:8, 17), Moses' parents (Heb. 11:23), and Moses himself (Heb. 11:24-25).

Those who come to God must believe in Him (Heb. 11:6) and in His Son, Jesus Christ (John 8:24). Having done that, they must then repent of their sins (Luke 13:3) confess their faith in Christ (Acts 8:37) and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27). Having done these things, they are then added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). These are the terms of salvation and membership in the body of Christ that are delineated in the eternal word of God.

Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). There is no appeal from His word, nor is there a single syllable in the New Testament that indicates one is saved by some so-called "sinner's prayer." Obedience to the gospel saves one and makes him a member of the church of Christ. He does not "join" the church, but is added to it by the Lord. These were the same terms preached by Peter on Pentecost in Acts 2 and those who obeyed on that day became Christians and members of the church of Christ. Those same terms, faithfully preached and obeyed today will make men the same thing—Christians and members of the church which Jesus built and for which He died.