

Basic Bible Course

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NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY RESTORED

Lesson Twenty-Seven

INTRODUCTION: In the book of Hebrews the writer, after having devoted the first seven chapters to establishing reasons for his conclusions, starts out Chapter 8 by saying, “Now of the things which we have spoken *this is the sum.*” We might well have used just these words for beginning this present lesson. For, having already devoted 26 lessons to establishing the BIBLE BASICS of the Christian religion, we are now ready to SUM UP all we have studied thus far, thus reaching certain definite, Bible-based conclusions.

I. RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.

In the outset of this course, we considered Paul’s injunction to the young Christian preacher Timothy to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH” (2 Timothy 2:15). The TRUTH we pointed out is God’s WORD, the BIBLE (John 17:17). Paul’s use of the word “rightly” implies that it CAN be divided “wrongly.” And if wrongly, then the “word of TRUTH” can be divided into the word of ERROR, instead.

In showing how the Bible’s 66 books should be RIGHTLY divided, we considered it first as GOD’S GREAT LIBRARY—39 books in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament we subdivided into five books of LAW, twelve books of HISTORY, five books of LITERATURE or POETRY, five books of MAJOR PROPHETS and twelve books of MINOR PROPHETS. Likewise the New Testament into four books of BIOGRAPHY, one book of HISTORY, fourteen books of SPECIAL LETTERS, seven books of GENERAL LETTERS and one book of PROPHECY.

II. HOW ALL THINGS BEGAN.

Next we examined the Bible’s declaration as to how the earth, the sky, living things and He Himself began. Rather than going into a long, involved, fantastic theory of things just HAPPENING into being without a cause, we found the Bible simply stating that “In the beginning God CREATED the HEAVEN and the EARTH” (Genesis 1:1). He said, “Let there be LIGHT—and there WAS light.” He **spoke** the FIRMAMENT (sky) into existence, gathered the waters under the heaven into SEAS, and let the DRY LAND appear. He then caused the earth to bring forth GRASS, HERB and FRUIT TREE. For signs, seasons, days and years—and to give light upon the earth—God made the SUN, MOON and STARS. He caused the waters to bring forth the MOVING CREATURES that have life as well as FOWLS that fly. He said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, CATTLE, and CREEPING THING, and BEASTS of the earth after his kind”—and it was so.

Lastly, God made MAN in His own image and gave him DOMINION over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. All this bringing things into being by CREATION took God SIX DAYS—and on the SEVENTH DAY He RESTED. God blessed and sanctified the seventh day because that in it He had rested from all His work.

III. THE THREE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD’S WILL TO MAN.

In our third study, we found that the stars of heaven may declare the GLORY of God, and the firmament show forth His handywork, but to know the WILL of God, we must study His WORD.

God’s WORD, we found, is divided logically into three separate, distinct dispensations of religion—PATRIARCHAL, JEWISH and CHRISTIAN. Though God HIMSELF changes not, yet He HAS changed His WILL from one dispensation to another. For the first approximately 2,500 years, He dealt with human beings as individuals and families. The head of each family—the “patriarch” —was a sort of priest over his family. God did not command the same things of all, but different things. For instance, Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; Noah was commanded to build an ARK; Abraham was required to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. These commands were not interchangeable; neither was anyone else ever required to do these things. Thus, under the Patriarchal dispensation, when the ones died to whom the commands were specifically given, the commands died with them.

Following the patriarchal dispensation (from Adam to Moses—Genesis 1:1 to Exodus 20), God next instituted the JEWISH dispensation (from Moses to Christ—Exodus 20 to Acts 2). Under this dispensation, He fulfilled His promise to faithful Abraham that “I will make of thee a great nation.” Family worship was replaced with national worship; and for approximately 1,500 years God no longer dealt with individual and families, but with the children of Israel AS A NATION.

Finally, “in the fulness of time,” Jesus Christ was born, born of woman (though begotten of God), born under the law of Moses, the Ten Commandment covenant given by God through Moses to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 20. Jesus said He did not come to destroy the law, but to FULFILL it—and that it should not pass TILL ALL BE FULFILLED. From John 17:4 we learned that Jesus FINISHED the work He came to do. Since His work was to FULFILL THE LAW and the prophets, He thus accomplished the circumstances whereby the law could pass—not by destroying it, but by FULFILLING it! He thus paved the way for the abrogation of the Ten Commandment law and the bringing in of a new (and different) law—the New Testament.

Hebrews 9:15-17 shows that this new testament could not become of force while the testator was alive before His death. Hence, the OLD Testament continued to be of force all during Jesus’ lifetime prior to His death on Calvary. However, having lived up to the Old Testament (Ten Commandment) Law PERFECTLY—the law described by Hebrews 10 as “THE FIRST”—verse 9 says, “He TAKETH AWAY THE FIRST, that he may ESTABLISH THE SECOND.”

The SECOND (i.e., the NEW Testament) WHOLLY TOOK THE PLACE OF THE FIRST. And whereas the first was limited to just the ONE nation—Israel—the second enlarged the scope of religion, under Christianity, to embrace ALL people, among ALL nations, in ALL the world.

IV. CHRISTIANS ARE NOT GOVERNED BY THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Having already demonstrated how God’s commands to the Patriarchs died with the Patriarchs to whom given, we next presented two lessons especially designed to show that the OLD Testament (INCLUDING the TEN COMMANDMENTS) ended at the cross, thus clearing the way for the NEW Testament to become of force on Pentecost some 53 days later, as it did, in Acts 2. We showed Jesus’ principle of not putting a piece of new cloth on an old garment nor pouring new wine into old bottles (Luke 5:36-39). “NEW WINE,” He taught, “must be put into NEW BOTTLES.” In other words, the New Testament is neither patched onto nor poured into the Old Testament. The old Ten Commandment law of the Old Testament (“old garment,” “old bottle”) applied solely to the JEWISH NATION from its deliverance on Mt. Sinai through Moses until Jesus’ crucifixion. In a figure, it was “NAILED TO THE CROSS!” The New Testament which came into force on Pentecost was neither a part of the Old Testament, nor was part of the Old joined onto the New. The New Testament ALONE (and none of the Old) was binding from Pentecost, Acts 2, onward.

If Christians, who are described as “married” to Christ, are also married to the LAW that said “Thou shalt not covet” (the Ten Commandment law), Romans 7:1-7 argues that such would be ADULTERY. However, Paul points out we have been made “DEAD TO THE LAW,” “DELIVERED” from the LAW. Which law? The law that said “Thou shalt not covet” (verse 7). (Compare with Exodus 20:17, which is in the Ten Commandments).

2 Corinthians 3 teaches that the Old Testament was DONE AWAY, and ABOLISHED. Galatians, Chapters 4 through 6, that to turn again to the law of Moses is to “turn...again to the WEAK AND BEGGARLY ELEMENTS.” The “bondwoman” (i.e., the law from mount Sinai) is described as “CAST OUT.” Christians are described as NOT children of the bondwoman (the Ten-Commandment law) but of the FREE. Ephesians 2:11-19 shows that the law was a “middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, but that Jesus has made BOTH ONE by BREAKING DOWN THE WALL! Calling it “the law of commandment” (i.e., the Ten Commandments), Paul says it has been “ABOLISHED,” “SLAIN.” Colossians 2:14-17 delivers the “coup de grace” to the whole matter, saying, that the “hand writing of ordinances” (compare Ephesians 2:15) has been BLOTTED OUT, TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY, NAILED TO THE CROSS! Hence, Paul declares, CHRISTIANS are NOT JUDGED in respect of MEAT, DRINK, an HOLY DAY, observing of the NEW MOON or keeping the SABBATH! All these things together with all the rest of the Old Testament, are DEAD, DONE AWAY, ABOLISHED, CAST OUT, BROKEN DOWN, SLAIN, BLOTTED OUT, TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY, NAILED TO THE CROSS!

Because the law has been changed, there has been made of necessity also a change of the priesthood—Jesus Christ having become our high priest, although Hebrews 7 points out He could not even have been a priest at all under the first covenant. His ministry is declared to be “MORE EXCELLENT” because it is established upon “BETTER PROMISES” based upon the “BETTER COVENANT” of which Jesus Himself is mediator. It should be self-evident that He could not be the mediator of a “**BETTER COVENANT**” if the covenant of which He is mediator is the **SAME COVENANT**. “HE TAKETH AWAY THE FIRST THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH THE SECOND!” (Hebrews 10:9).

V. CHRISTIANS ARE NOT GOVERNED BY THE PREACHING OR THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

While the Old Testament was still of force, two of the Old Testament prophets—Isaiah and Malachi—writing some four centuries apart, foretold the coming of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus Christ. (See Isaiah 40:3-8 and Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6). As John 1:6 puts it, “there was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” Being “sent from God,” John came to fulfil a definite purpose, which was to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:1-4; Luke 3:1-6; John 1:23). He lived and died under the Old Testament JEWISH dispensation. Thus his life, work, preaching and baptism ALL were a part of the JEWISH religion, which was NAILED TO THE CROSS on Calvary. John himself denied that he personally was the Christ, recognized Jesus as the Christ (God’s anointed), and said of Jesus that “He must INCREASE, but I [John] *must* decrease” (Luke 3:15-16; John 1:19-20; 3:28-30). Jesus, in turn, acknowledged that He had “A GREATER WITNESS” than John (John 5:35-36). And after His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection, Jesus gave a commission to His disciples requiring a baptism superior to John’s (Matthew 28:18-30; Mark 16:15-16).

Thus it was that when Aquilla and Priscilla, years later, heard the eloquent Apollos preach, “knowing only the baptism of John,” they took him unto themselves and “expounded unto him the way of God MORE PERFECTLY” (Acts 18:24-28). Also Paul, upon finding disciples having only JOHN’S baptism, showed that John told the people they should believe on Jesus, thus leading them to be baptized IN THE NAME OF JESUS (Acts 19:1-5).

VI. THE NATURE, PRE-EXISTENCE AND ETERNAL PURPOSE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Those who think of Jesus as being merely human, stumble at the claims made for Him by the Bible. John the Baptist had said, “he that cometh after me [Jesus] is MIGHTIER THAN I, whose shoes I am not

worthy to bear” (Matthew 3:11). He said Jesus “that cometh AFTER me is preferred BEFORE me: for he WAS before me” (John 1:15, 30). How could this be?

The New Testament presents Jesus as being “ONE” with God, in the FORM of God, EQUAL with God and existing AS God (John 17:20-22; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:8-9; John 1:1-2). “For IN HIM dwelleth all the FULNESS of the GODHEAD BODILY” (Colossians 2:9).

Jesus, thus, being God, did not have His beginning with His birth of the virgin Mary into this world. He always HAD existed—from ETERNITY! (Thus John could truly say, “He IS before me because he WAS before me”). Jesus declared He existed BEFORE ABRAHAM, who lived 2,000 years before John, the Baptist: “BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM” (John 8:58). He referred to the glory “which I had with [God, the Father] BEFORE THE WORLD WAS,” and of the Father having loved Him “BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD” (John 17:5, 24). Jesus existed BEFORE ALL THINGS because “ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM!” (John 1:3). Even the WORLDS themselves were made by Him! (Hebrews 1:1-2). Referred to as “the Word,” Jesus is declared to have been “IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD” (John 1:1-2). In the words of Hebrews 13:8, Jesus Christ is the same “YESTERDAY, TODAY and FOR EVER!”

Since Jesus, as God the Son, was coexistent and equal with God the Father Himself, then why did He ever come into the world at all? Man was created perfect and put into this world to do the will of God. But man disobeyed God. Thus sin came into the world—and death by sin. (See Romans 5:12). Man’s sin, thus, separated between him (the creature) and God (the Creator) (Isaiah 59:1-2). God drove him from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24). Man offered sacrifices to God, but these could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:3-4). So hideous was the guilt of man before God that man could not be reconciled to God without an ATONEMENT. Neither man himself nor anything man had was worthy to be accepted as an atonement. Evidently Jesus volunteered to atone for man’s sins. And God the Father accepted this atonement. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST DIED FOR US. Much more then, being now JUSTIFIED by his BLOOD, we shall be SAVED FROM WRATH THROUGH HIM. For if, when we were enemies, we were RECONCILED TO GOD BY THE DEATH OF HIS SON, much more, being RECONCILED, we shall be SAVED BY HIS LIFE. And not only so, but we also JOY IN GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, by whom we have now received the ATONEMENT” (Romans 5:8-11).

Thus we see that Jesus is not just a man, but GOD; did not have existence beginning from Mary, but, AS God, existed eternally WITH God; and that His coming into the world was no accident, but as an atonement for the sins of all mankind, according to God’s “ETERNAL PURPOSE which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” (Ephesians 3:11-12).

VII. THE FIRST COMING AND EVIDENCES OF THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

According to the New Testament, Jesus is to come to this world, not just ONCE, but TWICE —the FIRST time to pay the ATONEMENT price of His OWN BLOOD to REDEEM MAN FROM HIS SINS, the SECOND time to JUDGE the world and to RECEIVE THE SAVED into their EVERLASTING INHERITANCE with God.

God the Father, being God, of course COULD have employed any method He might like for the sending of His Son Jesus into this world in the first instance. He CHOSE to overshadow a virgin (Mary) by the power of His Holy Spirit thus causing her to conceive to be born of her womb “the only BEGOTTEN Son of God” (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-36; Luke 2:1-7, 21). Thus that child who was born of this begettal was the divine SON OF GOD, on His FATHER’S side; and being born of Mary, a human being, He was also the Son of man, on His MOTHER’S side. Being born of a union between God and Mary, He thus was

both God and man. As God He understood the things of God; as man, He could also be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities...[having been] in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

But it is one thing to DECLARE Jesus to be God’s Son, quite a different thing to PROVE it. In evidence of this at-first-seemingly-fantastic claim, we presented the proofs of Jesus’ fulfilling at least 38 separate prophecies from the Old Testament and the record of His own extraordinary miracles as well.

Of the fulfillment of prophecy, we emphasized that the YOUNGEST of these—the prophecy of Malachi—was already MORE THAN 400 YEARS OLD when Jesus was born. Some of the prophecies were 600, 800, 1,000 or even 1,500 years old—or even older than that—when fulfilled. Because of this, there would be no way at all for the one prophesying to exercise any control over the fulfillment of what he had prophesied. Inasmuch as Jesus fulfilled all these prophecies—not just in general, but in detail—this is almost conclusive proof that He was whom He claimed to be, the Son of God, and not a fraud. It is inconceivable that the God of heaven would fulfil prophecy so as to induce belief in an imposter!

But the FULFILLED PROPHECIES concerning Jesus are not the ONLY evidence of His Divinity! Consider His DEMONSTRATION of SUPERNATURAL POWER evinced by His miracles. MULTITUDES of people who witnessed these miracles felt compelled to accept Him as the Son of God He claimed to be. There was no other way to account for the otherwise incredible wonders which He performed. We listed 41 of these from the records of them written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, how Jesus gave SIGHT, TO THE BLIND, caused the DEAF TO HEAR, the DUMB TO SPEAK, the LAME TO WALK, the LEPERS TO BE CLEANSED, the DEAD TO RISE, WATER TO BE MADE WINE; how He STILLED THE STORM, CAST OUT DEVILS, FED 5,000 WITH FIVE LOAVES AND TWO SMALL FISH—AND THEN TOOK UP 12 baskets full! How He WALKED ON WATER, WITHERED A FIG TREE, RESTORED AN EAR THAT HAD BEEN CUT OFF, RAISED HIMSELF FROM THE DEAD, and finally ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN while 11 men stood by and WATCHED HIM GO!

It is just too much to ask to believe that any mere man did all these things with no greater power than humanity. They are too well documented for there to be any mistake about what happened; and the sincerity of the writers is too well established for them all to have been lying. All but one of His apostles sealed their testimony to these things with their blood—and that one (John) is alleged to have died in prison, rather than admit his testimony of Jesus untrue! On the face of the record, Jesus Christ just HAS to be God’s SON!

VIII. WHAT JESUS TAUGHT BY WORD AND DEED.

Having thus proved beyond reasonable doubt the CREDIBILITY of Jesus, next we examined the things Jesus taught His disciples to believe, do, say and be, not only verbally but by the power of His own matchless example. From His childhood we found His sense of responsibility toward God at the early age of 12, and how He increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man, demonstrating mental, physical, spiritual and social growth. Then, from the age of about 30, we studied principles learned from His 3 ½ year ministry, which, though short in duration, was so powerful that it has turned the course of world history every since!

The first rather curious fact we learned at the outset of His adult life was His INSISTENCE on being BAPTIZED. John the Baptist almost refused to do it, saying HE needed to be baptized of Jesus, “and comest thou to me?” But Jesus reasoned with John that “Thus IT BECOMETH US TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Then John baptized Him, after which the heavens opened and a voice was heard, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:13-17).

In resisting and overcoming temptation, Jesus demonstrated the proper use of God’s WORD, combating the devil with “IT IS WRITTEN.” He did not, as some, teach one thing and practice another; He PRACTICED what He PREACHED, saying to His disciples, “FOLLOW ME.” To do this, He taught, means SELF-DENIAL and SACRIFICE. But that everyone who sacrifices houses, brethren, sisters, father,

mother, wife, children or lands for his name's sake “shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matthew 19:27-29).

Jesus set an example of the evangelistic zeal He expects of His followers by GOING “about all the cities and villages, TEACHING in their synagogues, and PREACHING the gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 9:35). He did not WAIT for the people to COME TO HIM (though He INVITED them to come); rather He CARRIED HIS CAMPAIGN AGGRESSIVELY TO THE PEOPLE. Rather than taking an attitude of complacency toward those who were commercializing religion, He drove the temple merchants, moneychangers, sheep and oxen out of the temple, poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables, demanding, “Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise” (John 2:13-16).

The necessity of being “BORN AGAIN” (“of water and of the Spirit”) Jesus stressed, saying that otherwise a man “CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.” He that does not believe in Christ, He taught, is condemned by his unbelief; however, the BELIEVER in Christ should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:15-18).

Not only was Jesus baptized Himself, but He practiced baptism for His disciples. In fact, John 4:1 says, Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, though he Himself did not do the actual baptizing, but His disciples (verse 2). And “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him,” he told the woman at the well of Sychar, “shall NEVER THIRST...but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a WELL OF WATER SPRINGING UP INTO EVERLASTING LIFE” (John 4:7-27). “TRUE WORSHIPPERS,” He said, worship God “IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH.”

In Matthew 4:17 He preached that “the kingdom of heaven” was at hand. In view of this that the people should “repent” and “believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). He reproved evil-thinking in heart (Matthew 9:4). Rather than glory-seeking, He practiced self-efacement. He taught people not to sin, as in the case of the impotent man who was healed, “lest a worse thing come unto thee.”

“All men,” Jesus said, “should HONOUR THE SON, even as they HONOUR THE FATHER. He that HONOURETH NOT THE SON HONOURETH NOT THE FATHER which hath sent him” (John 5:22-23). “He that HEARETH my word, and BELIEVETH on him that sent me, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE” (verse 24). “The hour is coming...when THE DEAD SHALL HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD: and THEY THAT HEAR SHALL LIVE” (verse 25). “ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES shall hear his voice, And shall COME FORTH; they that have DONE GOOD, unto the RESURRECTION OF LIFE; and they that have DONE EVIL, unto the RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION” (verses 28-29). Jesus Himself will be the JUDGE (verse 30). Those who seek “HONOUR ONE OF ANOTHER, and SEEK NOT THE HONOUR THAT COMETH FROM GOD ONLY” cannot believe (verse 44).

Concerning the SABBATH, Jesus taught that “the SABBATH was made FOR MAN and NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH” (Mark 2:27). “Wherefore, IT IS LAWFUL TO DO WELL ON THE SABBATH DAYS” (Matthew 12:12). Jesus was seldom angry; however, because of the “hardness of their hearts” Jesus looked round about on the Pharisees who questioned Him about the sabbath with ANGER, being GRIEVED (Mark 3:5).

It is enough for the disciple to be AS HIS MASTER, Jesus stated; and the servant to be AS HIS LORD (Matthew 10:24-25). He promised to CONFESS before His Father in heaven “whosoever shall CONFESS me before men”—and to DENY whomsoever would DENY HIM! (Matthew 10:32-33). He required that HIS DISCIPLES must put Him FIRST BEFORE FATHER, MOTHER, SON, DAUGHTER or even HIS OWN LIFE (Matthew 10:37-39). And He put the receiving of those whom He sent on the same basis as receiving Himself and God the Father (Matthew 10:40-41).

In His magnificent sermon on the mount (Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7) Jesus advocated humility, mourning, meekness, desire for righteousness, mercy, spiritual purity, peace-making, endurance of persecution for righteousness' sake, and rejoicing when suffering for His sake. He wanted His disciples to influence people, calling them the “salt of the earth,” “the light of the world.” He told them not to hide their light

under a bushel but to let it shine before men, like a city set on a hill or like a candle on a candlestick. To do this we must do our good works before men in such a manner that God will be glorified.

In the six examples He used in Matthew 5, He contrasted HIS OWN DOCTRINE with what had been said “OF OLD TIME,” i.e., in the Old Testament. One way what He taught was different was that the Old Testament was more concerned with the overt ACT of sin, whereas Jesus was more concerned about the MOTIVE which PRODUCED THE ACT. Another way is that Jesus’ idea under the NEW Testament was considerably MORE STRICT THAN THE OLD.

HYPOCRISY, Jesus emphasized as the thing to guard against when we give alms, pray, or fast, In prayer, we should not just repeat the same prayer over and over meaninglessly, but we should MODEL our prayers after the prayer Jesus gave as a model (Matthew 6:1-18).

Rather than laying up treasures ON EARTH, Jesus taught us to lay up treasures IN HEAVEN. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” He denied man can serve two masters. Rather than our worrying about life, food, drink, clothes or size, He said, “But seek ye FIRST the KINGDOM OF GOD, and his RIGHTEOUSNESS; and ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU” (Matthew 6:33).

As to judging others, He taught we should first correct our own faults—and not to judge them if we do not want them to judge us; that they will judge and treat us the same as we judge and treat them (Matthew 7:1-5). We should do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matthew 7:12).

Instead of following the crowd through the wide gate and the broad way to OUR OWN DESTRUCTION, we should follow the few through the strait gate and narrow way that LEADS TO LIFE (Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus warned us to “beware of false prophets,” saying, “by their FRUITS ye shall KNOW them” (verses 15-20). Also that LIP-SERVICE to Jesus is not enough; we must do God’s will (verses 21-23). To build wisely upon a rock, we must DO His sayings, not HEAR THEM ONLY (verses 24-27).

The people were astonished at Jesus’ teaching, “For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes” (verses 28-29).

IX. CHRISTIANS ARE NOT GOVERNED BY THE LIMITED COMMISSIONS.

Our basic reason for presenting several lessons showing what Christians are NOT governed by is our realization of the fact that many have been taught much that is not so. Before we can expect Bible students to have a clear understanding of the part of the Bible which DOES govern Christians, we must expel the misconceptions regarding those parts that DO NOT. Preparatory to a solid harvest of well-taught, truth-understanding, Bible-trained students at the completion of the course, we have felt it necessary to pay careful attention to the NEGATIVE side of our study first.

Our first two negative studies in the course had to do with Christians not being governed by 1) the Old Testament, and 2) the preaching and baptism of John the Baptist. Before moving on to the POSITIVE side, we then felt it necessary 3) to show that Christians likewise are not bound by the two commissions found in Matthew 10 and Luke 10, which He strictly limited to “the twelve” and to “the seventy,” respectively.

For the former “limited commission”—to the twelve—we urged a careful reading of Matthew 10 to show that it was limited strictly to them and to no others. In verse 1 Jesus specified that “he called unto him his TWELVE DISCIPLES,” giving “THEM power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” To insure against there being any mistake to whom He was giving this power, verses 2 through 4 then proceed to NAME which ones. Then, verse 5 says, “THESE TWELVE Jesus sent forth, and commanded THEM, saying, GO NOT into the way of the GENTILES, and into any city of the SAMARITANS ENTER YE NOT: but go rather to the LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL.” Then, dropping on down to verse 23, Jesus indicates the DURATION as well as the EXTENT of this commission limited to the twelve: “Ye shall not have gone over the CITIES OF ISRAEL, till the Son of man be come.” In other words, their purpose was evidently to get the backslidden Jews (“lost

sheep of the house of Israel”) ready to receive Christ when He arrived in their cities. And the first verse of the succeeding chapter says, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.” It is certain that this commission has no bearing on ANYONE who is not of Israel, i.e., Jewish. Also Jesus long since finished His teaching-preaching tour of the cities of Israel. So this limited commission was fulfilled before Jesus died on the cross!

As for the SECOND limited commission—to the seventy—Luke 10:1 specifies it was to “OTHER SEVENTY” also. Other than whom? Other than THE TWELVE to whom Jesus already had given a similar commission! Not only did He limit it to the SEVENTY, but He sent them only to the cities and towns where He Himself would come. Upon fulfilling this limited commission, verse 17 shows the seventy “RETURNED” and made their report. Thus this commission too, expired by fulfillment!

X. CHRISTIANS ARE GOVERNED BY THE GREAT COMMISSION.

Now that we are crystal clear that NONE of us living SINCE the cross are governed by ANYTHING that was of force BEFORE the cross, the next question is: IF PEOPLE TODAY ARE NOT BOUND BY ANY OF THOSE THINGS, THEN WHAT PART OF GOD’S WILL TO MAN IS BINDING NOW?

After Jesus died, was buried and arose again, He delivered a commission so comprehensive within its scope that it was to concern ALL PEOPLE among ALL NATIONS in ALL THE WORLD for ALL TIME TO COME—from the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (A.D. 33) onward—even unto the end of the world. The Scripture references setting forth the terms of this Great Commission are Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; and Luke 24:47-49).

Announcing, first, that “ALL AUTHORITY,” both in heaven and in earth, had been given unto Him, Jesus then commanded His apostles to GO TEACH AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE AMONG ALL NATIONS, IN ALL THE WORLD: HE THAT BELIEVES (in Jesus Christ), REPENTS (of his sins) and is BAPTIZED shall be SAVED, having the REMISSION OF SINS. Such REPENTANT, BAPTIZED BELIEVERS, Matthew records, then were to be taught to “OBSERVE ALL THINGS” that Jesus had commanded His apostles to teach.

We pointed out that while Jesus was alive on earth, BEFORE His death on the cross, He taught (or “commanded”) many things which were distinct from the requirements of the OLD testament. However, as we had learned previously, that these commands and principles, which were to form His NEW testament, COULD NOT BECOME OF FORCE until AFTER HIS DEATH (Hebrews 9:15-17). Therefore, it was not until after He had DIED, WAS BURIED and AROSE AGAIN that Jesus authorized His apostles to teach and baptize all nations, teaching them (those baptized) to “OBSERVE ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded” (Matthew 28:20).

The apostles were not to begin this work at once, however, Luke 24:47 instructed that they were to BEGIN at JERUSALEM. “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you,” Jesus continued (verse 49), “but TARRY YE IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM, UNTIL YE BE ENDUED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH.” Promising them that they should be “baptized with the Holy Ghost NOT MANY DAYS HENCE” (Acts 1:5), Jesus said, “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 JUDAEA, and in SAMARIA, and UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH” (verse 8). “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 stedfastly 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. Then RETURNED they unto JERUSALEM” (verses 9-12). And there they “TARRIED” (i.e., waited), as Jesus had commanded them.

Then, in Acts 2, we read the description of the Great Commission's coming into force, "BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM." It was on PENTECOST—A.D. 33 (verse 1). The HOLY SPIRIT CAME UPON THE APOSTLES (verses 2-4), emPOWERing them to "speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." It was in JERUSALEM (verse 5). "EVERY NATION UNDER HEAVEN" was represented (verse 5). Their amazement and confusion was described (verse 6-13). Peter, standing up with the eleven, took advantage of their wonderment to preach the first gospel sermon ever delivered under the authority of the Great Commission (verses 14-36). So mightily did he convince those Jews making up the audience on that occasion, that they were "PRICKED IN THEIR HEART," asking of Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, WHAT SHALL WE DO?" (verse 37). Peter then commanded 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" (verse 38). These things were in order to be saved also: "SAVE yourselves" Peter exhorted (verse 40). And they who "GLADLY RECEIVED" Peter's word "WERE BAPTIZED." About 3,000 souls were "ADDED" unto them that same day (verse 41). "And the Lord ADDED UNTO THE CHURCH daily such as should be SAVED" (verse 47).

From this point forward (Day of Pentecost—Acts 2) both Luke and all subsequent Bible writers clearly considered the NEW Testament to be "OF FORCE." This is the first reference in the Bible to the CHURCH as being IN EXISTENCE. Earlier references always pointed forward to its future establishment. But from the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 onward through the rest of the Bible, the church is never recorded as future any more, but as being an ESTABLISHED FACT. Membership in this church was not gained by "joining" it (a human act), but by being "ADDED" to it (a Divine act). Human churches that can be "joined" through HUMAN RITUAL thus clearly cannot be the church established by Jesus Christ in Acts 2. Only the LORD could "add" saved persons to THAT CHURCH. Since He never authorized but ONE church, NO OTHER CHURCH BUT THE ONE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT HAS ANY GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO EXIST. And since THE LORD adds THE SAVED to HIS CHURCH—all of them—it follows THERE ARE NO SAVED PEOPLE IN ANY OTHER. Thus the church which had its beginning in this 2nd chapter of Acts is the ONLY CHURCH which has any standing whatever before the Lord; and all persons who are "saved" according to the teaching of the New Testament are members of it.

XI. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

An hiatus in God's revealed will to mankind was reached on that great and notable day of Pentecost in Acts 2. For it was upon THAT DAY that not only the GREAT COMMISSION activating the NEW TESTAMENT became of force, resulting in the establishment of the CHURCH, which Jesus had promised "I will build," but, concurrently, the KINGDOM OF GOD—foretold by prophets and preached by John and Jesus as "at hand"—at last was "set up."

As far back as the prophet Daniel (approximately 600 years before Christ), as we learned from our study of Daniel 2, God had revealed there were to be four great kingdoms in succession—and that in the days of the FOURTH kingdom, the God of heaven should 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 FOR EVER."

Daniel identified the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar—the BABYLONIAN EMPIRE as being the FIRST of the four kingdoms aforementioned. Tracing down through world history, we found that the MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE came second, the GRECIAN EMPIRE third, and the ROMAN EMPIRE fourth. Thus, according to Daniel's prophecy, it was to be in the days of the Roman Empire—the fourth kingdom—that the Kingdom GOD was to establish should be "set up." It was during THIS PERIOD—the days of the Roman Empire—that John the Baptist came preaching, "Repent ye: for the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is AT HAND" (Matthew 4:17). A little later, in His model prayer of Matthew 6, Jesus prayed, "Thy kingdom come" (verse 10). And still later He told His disciples that some of them would not die until they saw the Son

of man (Himself) coming “in his KINGDOM” (Matthew 16:28). They were to SEE the KINGDOM OF GOD come WITH POWER (Mark 9:1). They were to tarry in JERUSALEM until the “POWER” came (Luke 24:49). They were to receive the “POWER” when the HOLY SPIRIT should come upon them (Acts 1:8). When the day of PENTECOST was fully come, the HOLY SPIRIT CAME ON THE APOSTLES. And from that day in Acts 2 ONWARD the KINGDOM OF GOD is never again referred to as something yet future, but as something already IN EXISTENCE, hence ESTABLISHED, or, as Daniel phrased it—“SET UP.” Thus Paul told the church at Colosse that God had translated him and them “out of the power of darkness...into the KINGDOM of his dear son” (Colossians 1:13). And John, to the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 1:4), said he was their brother and companion in tribulation and “in the KINGDOM” (see verse 9).

Since ALL the scriptural conditions for the setting up of the kingdom of God were met on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2—and all later references to the kingdom point to its establishment as already accomplished—it follows that the SAME DAY the Lord EMPOWERED THE APOSTLES, MADE THE NEW TESTAMENT OF FORCE, SET HIS GREAT COMMISSION IN MOTION, and BUILT HIS CHURCH—on that SAME DAY He SET UP HIS KINGDOM! In fact, when one examines carefully the Scriptures pertinent to the point, the conclusion is almost conclusive that the CHURCH and the KINGDOM are ONE and THE SAME. Hence to be a MEMBER of the one is to be a CITIZEN of the other. They are just two different appellations referring to the same institution. In evidence of this, we noted Matthew 16:18-19, wherein Jesus told Peter, “upon this rock I will build my CHURCH,” promising in the succeeding verse to give to him the “keys of the KINGDOM of heaven.” Peter used those keys of the KINGDOM for the first time on Pentecost in Acts 2—and those who did what he said were added to the CHURCH (verse 47). Members of the CHURCH are called a “ROYAL (i.e., kingly) priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9) and “KINGS” (Revelation 1:6). Jesus Christ, who is the “HEAD” of the CHURCH (Ephesians 1:22-23) is also “KING OR KINGS.” So the members of the church, being KINGS, must be the KINGS he is KING OF: hence the members of the church—Christians—make up the “kingdom of God” (Hebrews 12:28). Jesus must reign over His kingdom—the church—until death itself is destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Then He is to DELIVER UP the kingdom to God the Father, that the Father may be “all in all” (verse 28).

XII. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES—BOOK OF CONVERSIONS. (THE FIRST CASE OF CONVERSION—ON PENTECOST.)

When it comes to a thorough understanding of the subject of CONVERSION, where else can we better concentrate our attention than upon that BOOK of conversions—the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES! All cases of conversion recorded in the Word of God are found in this book.

As we begin our study of the Book of ACTS, we sought to determine what facts, promises, warnings and commands characterized EACH CASE of conversion as taught by the Word of God. Our reasoning being that if WE (you and I) BELIEVE THE SAME FACTS, HEED THE SAME WARNINGS, and OBEY THE SAME COMMANDS for the SAME PURPOSES as they, then we should ENJOY THE SAME PROMISES they enjoyed, having been CONVERTED TO CHRIST the SAME AS THEY.

In the FIRST case of conversion—on Pentecost, Acts 2—we began this phase of our Bible investigation by bridging the gap between the giving of the Great Commission and Pentecost. Then, after Peter had preached the first gospel sermon under the authority of the Great Commission, to the question of that conscience-stricken multitude, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter commanded, “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” (verse 38). “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, SAVE yourselves from this untoward generation” (verse 40). Then they that “GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD were BAPTIZED” (verse 41). “About 3,000 souls” were “ADDED” that day (verse 41). They were “ADDED

to the CHURCH”—and it was the LORD who did the ADDING (verse 47). Those ADDED continued steadfastly, then, in the things which make up CHRISTIANITY.

XIII. THE SECOND CASE OF CONVERSION—AT SOLOMON’S PORCH (Acts 3, 4, 5).

On the second occasion of conversion, Peter took advantage of a beggar’s having asked an alms to heal the beggar “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” Knowing that this man had been “lame from his mother’s womb,” when the people saw him walking and praising God, they were filled with wonder and amazement that he could now walk. Thousands of them ran together unto Peter, John and the healed man in Solomon’s Porch of the Temple. Peter denied it was by their own power or holiness that this healing had been performed. He gave God the credit, saying he had done it to glorify His Son, Jesus. Identifying Jesus as the one they had delivered up, denied before Pilate, and crucified, Peter declared that God had raised up Jesus from the dead, that he and John were witnesses of this fact, and that it was CHRIST’S NAME—through FAITH in His name—that had made this man strong. He recognized that both the people and their rulers had crucified Jesus through ignorance; however, even though because of ignorance, that they had made Jesus to suffer. To BLOT OUT their SINS, Peter commanded them to “REPENT ye therefore, and BE CONVERTED” (3:19), assuring them that if they did this they also should experience “TIMES OF REFRESHING,” from the presence of the Lord. He also preached REPENTANCE, saying that “God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in TURNING AWAY every one of you from his iniquities” (verse 26). The priests, captain of the temple and the Sadducees were grieved by Peter’s and John’s preaching and teaching through Jesus the resurrection of the dead (4:1-2). They laid hands on them (verse 3 and put them in jail overnight (verse 3). “Howbeit many of them which HEARD the word BELIEVED: and the number of the men was ABOUT FIVE THOUSAND!” Later on—also in Solomon’s Porch—“BELIEVERS” were the more “ADDED to the Lord,” MULTITUDES both of men and women” (5:12-14).

XIV. THE THIRD CASE OF CONVERSION—THE SAMARITANS (Acts 8).

Following the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, a great persecution was brought against the church at Jerusalem. Resulting from this persecution, Philip left Jerusalem, went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them (verse 5). The people of Samaria “GAVE HEED” to what Philip preached (verse 6). And when the Samaritans BELIEVED Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were BAPTIZED, both men and women (verse 12).

XV. THE FOURTH CASE OF CONVERSION—SIMON THE SORCERER (Acts 8).

“Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip” (verse 13).

XVI. THE FIFTH CASE OF CONVERSION—THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH (Acts 8).

The angel of the angel of Lord commanded Philip to go south to the Gaza highway, leading from Jerusalem. He saw an Ethiopian eunuch, sitting in his chariot, reading Esaias the prophet. The Spirit commanded Philip to “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Philip ran to the chariot. He heard the eunuch read from Esaias (Isaiah 53) “Understandest thou what thou reade?” Philip inquired. “How can I, except some man should guide me?” the eunuch replied. He then invited Philip to come up into the chariot and sit with him.

Beginning at the same Scripture, Philip, upon the eunuch’s asking the meaning, preached JESUS unto him (verse 35).

As they continue their journey they came to a certain water. Evidently, in preaching “Jesus”, Philip must also have preached about baptism—for the eunuch said, “See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be BAPTIZED?” (verse 36). Philip said, “If thou BELIEVEST with all thine heart, thou mayest” (be baptized) (verse 37). The eunuch answered, “I BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (verse 37). The eunuch then commanded the chariot to stand still (verse 38). Both Philip and the eunuch “WENT DOWN BOTH INTO THE WATER” (verse 38). Philip BAPTIZED the eunuch (verse 38). Then they both came “UP

OUT OF THE WATER” (verse 39). The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more and he went on his way rejoicing (verse 39).

In this instance of conversion, we emphasized the WILLINGNESS with which Philip obeyed the angel and the Spirit. Also the EAGERNESS of the eunuch to receive the Lord’s instructions and to obey him. Rather than having to be PERSUADED to be baptized, he wanted to know why he COULD NOT be baptized! Philip’s answer rules out INFANT baptism—or the baptism of any other being INCAPABLE OF BELIEVING. “If thou BELIVEST with all thine heart, THOU MAYEST,” Philip said. The implication is clear from Philip’s statement that unless one BELIEVES, he may NOT be baptized.

Instead of confessing his SINS, we noted that the eunuch was required to confess his FAITH in CHRIST (verse 37). And, instead of substituting either SPRINKLING or POURING and CALLING it “baptism,” both the baptizer and the one baptized “WENT DOWN BOTH INTO THE WATER,” the baptizing was done, then they both came “UP OUT OF THE WATER” (verses 38-39). Such a description can only harmonize with immersion—a BURIAL in water (Compare Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12). We further noted that the eunuch’s REJOICING began AFTER his baptism, NOT BEFORE. Insomuch as baptism is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), why should one rejoice, after all, until his sins have been remitted!

XVII. THE SIXTH CASE OF CONVERSION—SAUL OF TARSUS (Acts 9, 22).

Saul of Tarsus—the same Saul who had aroused such persecution against the church in Acts 8:1-4—being authorized to go to the synagogues of Damascus to bring back to Jerusalem any Christians he might find there to be punished, was on his way to Damascus, when, about noon, a light from heaven shined around him brighter than the noonday sun. Falling to the earth, he heard a voice, saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Saul asked, “Who art thou Lord?” The Lord replied, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” Trembling and astonished, Saul asked, “Lord what wilt thou have me to DO?” Jesus answered, “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou MUST DO.”

Upon arising from the earth, when Saul opened his eyes, he found he could not see. His companions had to lead him by the hand and bring him into Damascus. He was blind and praying for three days, and neither ate nor drank.

On the third day a disciple of Jesus, Ananias by name, was sent by the Lord “into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for behold he prayeth and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight.” After some discussion with the Lord, Ananias did as he was instructed. Putting his hands on Saul, he informed him that the Lord Jesus had sent him “that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” Upon Ananias’ command to “receive thy sight,” there fell from Saul’s eyes “as it had been scales,” and he received his sight forthwith. Then, as Saul looked upon Ananias, Ananias PREACHED to Saul, saying, “The God of our Fathers hath CHOSEN thee, that thou shouldest KNOW HIS WILL, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? ARISE, and BE BAPTIZED, and WASH AWAY THY SINS, CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.”

Saul “AROSE, and was BAPTIZED” (Acts 9:18).

XVIII. THE SEVENTH CASE OF CONVERSION—CORNELIUS AND HIS HOUSEHOLD (Acts 10).

In the conversion of Cornelius and his household, next, we came to an event of broad significance to every GENTILE (i.e., NON-JEW) in the world. Prior to all this, all the converts to date had been Jews. Not one single Gentile convert to Christ had been made. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter, on Pentecost, had preached that the promise not only was to the Jews and their children but also to those that were “AFAR OFF” (i.e., Gentiles). Evidently, however, he did not understand this HIMSELF, for in this seventh case of conversion it took a miraculous demonstration to convince Peter that God also had granted salvation unto the Gentiles.

The principal person involved, of course, was Cornelius, a centurion, who lived at Caesarea, a devout man, who feared God with all his house, helped the poor with alms, and prayed to God always. With some astonishment we noted that even such a wonderful character as this was not exempted from obeying God's commands for salvation—that he had to DO something—the same as required of all the others we had studied thus far! An angel of the Lord appeared to him, acknowledged that God was mindful of his prayers and his alms which had come up for a “memorial.” Nevertheless, he commanded Cornelius to “send to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter...he shall tell thee what thou OUGHTEST TO DO” (verses 1-6). Also see Acts 11:14.

While Cornelius' emissaries were on their way to fetch Peter, the Lord appeared unto Peter in a vision and convinced him that he had “cleansed” the Gentiles, and that he should “get thee down, and go with” these Gentile men, “doubting nothing: for I have sent them” (verses 6-23). Next day, Peter, accompanied by “certain brethren” from Joppa, went with the men (verses 23-27). When they reached Caesarea, they found Cornelius, who had called his kinsmen and near friends together, waiting for them. Cornelius fell down at Peter's feet and worshipped him; but Peter raised him up, saying, “Stand up; I myself also am a man.” He then asked of Cornelius, “for what intent ye have sent for me” (verses 28-29). Cornelius explained what had happened, causing him to send for Peter. “Now therefore we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (verses 30-33).

Peter began, then, by preaching the first gospel sermon to the Gentiles, just as he had preached the first gospel sermon to the Jews on Pentecost in Acts 2. “Of a truth,” he said, “I perceived that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (verses 34-35). He witnessed, then, the things he knew of Jesus Christ, saying he “commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever BELIEVETH in him shall receive REMISSION OF SINS” (verses 36-43).

While Peter was preaching, a second miracle occurred, evidently to convince the Jewish, disciples, who accompanied Peter from Joppa that “God (hath) also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (11:18). They were astonished because that on GENTILES ALSO was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then Peter asked, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” And he commanded them to “BE BAPTIZED in the name of the Lord” (10:44-48).

XIX. THE EIGHTH CASE OF CONVERSION—LYDIA AND HER HOUSEHOLD (Acts 16).

Throughout the first twelve chapters of Acts, as we had seen, the apostle Peter was the dominant character. But from Acts 13 onward, it is converted Saul of Tarsus (now called Paul), who dominated the last 16 chapters of Acts. Thus it is that when we came to Acts 16, Paul and Silas had gone to Philippi, a chief city of Macedonia (verse 12). Abiding there certain days, on the sabbath they went to a place outside the city, down by a riverside, “where prayers were wont to be made” (verse 13). As they spoke to the women who resorted there, one of them, Lydia by name, a “seller of purple” from Thyatira, listened to what they taught. The result was that both she and her household were baptized (verse 15).

To any who might wonder if INFANTS might have been in her “household,” hence baptized, we pointed out that, if so, nothing was said about it in the Scriptures and that it would be nothing more than a bald, unsupported, human assumption to presume there were infants in her household. We cannot even tell, from what is recorded, whether Lydia was even MARRIED—much less HAD CHILDREN! She could easily have had servants, kinsmen, friends and others living with her—and not a child among them! Let us not assume what is NOT SAID!

XX. THE NINTH CASE OF CONVERSION—THE PHILIPPAN JAILER AND HIS HOUSEHOLD (Acts 16).

Following Lydia's conversion, Paul and Silas did not leave Philippi at once. She constrained them to be her guests. While thus living at Philippi, one day they came upon a girl possessed with a spirit of divination, a sort of fortune-teller. Following Paul and those with him, this girl kept saying, "These men are servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation" (verse 17). She did this repeatedly over a period of many days (verse 18).

Paul finally became so annoyed at her doing this that he commanded the spirit in the girl, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her (verse 18). The spirit came out that same hour.

The girl's masters, seeing that the hope of their gain (from her fortune-telling) was gone, thereupon caught Paul and Silas, drew them before the rulers and charged them, saying, "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans" (verses 20-21). After the resulting riot, thus incited, the magistrates tore off the clothes of Paul and Silas, had been beaten and cast into prison (verses 22-23).

The Jailer was charged to keep them safely. Hence he not only put them in prison, but into the INNER PRISON. And to make triply sure they did not escape, he fastened their feet in the stocks (verse 24). However, as they prayed and sang praises unto God at midnight, suddenly there was a great earthquake, the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, and everyone's hands were loosed. The jailer, awaking out of sleep, seeing the prison doors opened and supposing that the prisoners had fled, started to commit suicide. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."

Calling for a light, the jailer sprang in, came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. Bringing them out of the prison, he asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas answered, "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." To induce belief, Paul and Silas then "spake unto him the word of the Lord," as well as unto them that were in his house. (This was necessary, because belief (i.e., faith) comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:13-17).

Hearing this word not only produced FAITH in the jailer's heart, but led him to REPENT as well; for Acts 16:33 tells us "He took them the same hour of the night, and WASHED THEIR STRIPES." Furthermore, both the jailer and all his house were BAPTIZED—straightway, the same hour of the night. Afterward the jailer set meat before them and rejoiced BELIEVING in God with all his house. Both the eating as well as well as the rejoicing were postponed until AFTER the jailer and his household had been BAPTIZED!

XXI. THE TENTH CASE OF CONVERSION—THE CORINTHIANS (Acts 18).

From Athens Paul came to Corinth, where he lived with a certain Jew named Aquilla and his wife Priscilla. They lived together because they had the same trade—tent-making.

Every sabbath day, while at Corinth, Paul reasoned in the synagogue, persuading Jews and Greeks, testifying that Jesus was CHRIST (i.e., God's anointed). When the Jews resisted this and blasphemed, Paul finally turned from the Jews, saying, "hence forth I will go unto the Gentiles."

Next door to the synagogue was the house of one named Justus, who worshipped there. Paul, departing from the synagogue, went into Justus' house to resume his teaching. As a result, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue BELIEVED on the Lord with all his house (verse 8). "And many of the Corinthians HEARING, BELIEVED and were BAPTIZED" (verse 8). (From 1 Corinthians 1:14 we learn that CRISPUS ALSO was BAPTIZED).

XXII. THE ELEVENTH CASE OF CONVERSION—THE EPHESIANS (Acts 19).

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus. Upon finding "certain disciples" there, he asked them, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They answered, "We have not so much as HEARD whether there BE any Holy Ghost" (verses 1-2). "Unto what then were ye BAPTIZED?" asked Paul. "Unto JOHN'S baptism," he replied.

Paul then explained that John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should BELIEVE on him which should come AFTER him, that is, ON CHRIST JESUS (verse 4).

When they HEARD this, they were BAPTIZED in the name of the Lord Jesus (verse 5).

In our discussion of this case of conversion we considered the contention of some that because Ephesians 4:5 says “ONE baptism,” many people who have not been baptized like the New Testament teaches, but have had SOMETHING ELSE which they CALLED “baptism,” they feel they cannot be “baptized AGAIN.” As we see from Acts 19:1-5, foregoing, the very same Ephesians, to whom Ephesians 4:5 was written, WERE BAPTIZED AGAIN! Why? Because the baptism they had previously received was not the ONE Jesus Christ had authorized. When they learned better, they submitted to being baptized AGAIN—according to the correct teaching. The SECOND baptism—though NOT THE FIRST—was the “ONE baptism” of Ephesians 4:5.

XXIII. SUMMING UP GOD’S RECORD OF CONVERSIONS (ALL 11 CASES) IN ACTS.

Seeing that no SINGLE case of conversion taught EVERYTHING recorded in Acts on the subject, we next made a careful analysis of ALL THE INFORMATION the Scriptures set forth in EACH CASE and reduced the whole matter to a chart. In ALL 11 cases we found that either TEACHING or PREACHING was done. In 9 CASES it was mentioned that they HEARD. TEN CASES, that they BELIEVED. THREE CASES indicated REPENTANCE. ONE CASE, CONFESSION of faith. And in ALL 11 CASES that they were BAPTIZED (although in the second case, Peter used the words “BE CONVERTED” to those at Solomon’s Porch, whereas he had used “BE BAPTIZED” to those on Pentecost, in the same connection and sense).

After getting ALL THE INFORMATION ON CONVERSION, as recorded in Acts, on the chart, we then found that the GRAND TOTAL of the teaching and/or PREACHING was done in each case; that to sinners who thus HEARD the gospel, were thus led to BELIEVE in Christ, to REPENT of their sins, to CONFESS their faith and to BE BAPTIZED. Those thus doing were “obeying” the “form of doctrine” prescribed, received REMISSION OF SINS, received the HOLY SPIRIT, were SAVED, had their SINS BLOTTED OUT, enjoyed “TIMES OF REFRESHING,” were BLESSED, REJOICED, and had their SINS WASHED AWAY.

XXIV. THE FIVE “W’s” AND “H” ABOUT BAPTISM.

In our following lesson, we pointed out that all that can be known of any subject reduces itself to six elements: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY and HOW. The first five of these factual elements begins with “W”; the last with “H.” When one knows the “FIVE ‘W’s’ and ‘H’” about any matter, he knows all there is to know about it!

As we have already noted the place BAPTISM occupied in one’s becoming obedient to Christ, converted a disciple, a child of God, hence A CHRISTIAN, we concluded that God had made baptism a PART of His plan for the salvation of all mankind. However, before attempting to grasp this plan of salvation as a whole, we must first clear away any confusion, wrong teaching and floundering about BAPTISM.

Under the heading of WHO may be baptized, upon sifting ALL the evidence from the 11 cases of conversion, we concluded that ANY REPENTANT BELIEVER, upon CONFESSION OF HIS FAITH in Jesus Christ, may be BAPTIZED. That since Jesus said “little children” are such as the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14), they are SAFE. Never having committed sin, they are not lost; have no need therefore to be baptized. And since baptism requires belief, confession and repentance, as pre-requisites, infants CANNOT qualify for baptism IN ANY CASE!

Under “WHAT is Baptism?” we concluded that the ONE baptism now binding on mankind is the ONE AUTHORIZED BY THE GREAT COMMISSION. After Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, He commanded His apostles to “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, BAPTIZING them IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST” (Matthew 28:19). Those thus baptized were to be taught to observe the same things (which would include baptizing) as the apostles

themselves had been commanded. This was to continue “ALWAY, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD. AMEN” (verse 20). From Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12, we found that baptism is a BURIAL, a PLANTING. Since, in the cases of either SPRINKLING or POURING, neither a burial nor a planting takes place, then it follows that neither of these is baptism, according to New Testament teaching. In IMMERSION, however, we are BURIED or PLANTED in the likeness of Jesus’ death; also we are RAISED in the likeness of His resurrection. Since baptism is connected by the Scriptures with Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, it follows, therefore, that BAPTISM is IMMERSION. And those who have been only sprinkled or poured have NOT YET BEEN BAPTIZED ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES. They must yet be IMMERSED, if they are ever to be TRULY BAPTIZED.

“WHEN be Baptized?” Converts DID NOT WAIT on Pentecost. They that “gladly received” Peter’s word were baptized THE SAME DAY (Acts 2:41). The Samaritans DID NOT WAIT. When they BELIEVED, they were BAPTIZED” (Acts 8:12). Simon DID NOT WAIT. “Then Simon himself BELIEVED...and... he was BAPTIZED” (verse 13). The Ethiopian eunuch DID NOT WAIT. Upon confessing his faith, he commanded the chariot to stand still and was baptized before going on (Acts 8:38-39). Saul of Tarsus DID NOT WAIT. When Ananias commanded Saul, “Arise, and be baptized,” he “arose and was baptized” (Acts 22:16; 9:18). The Philippian jailer DID NOT WAIT. He and all his house were baptized “the same hour of the night”—“straightway” (Acts 16:33). The Ephesians DID NOT WAIT. Immediately upon learning they had the WRONG BAPTISM, “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5).

WHERE be Baptized? Where there is WATER (Acts 10:47). It would have to be where the water is deep enough for both the baptizer and the one being baptized to go down into it and an immersion to take place (Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).

WHY be Baptized? To be SAVED (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38-41; 1 Peter 3:21) to be “BORN OF WATER and the spirit” for entry into the “KINGDOM OF GOD” (John 3:3-5). For REMISSION OF SINS (Acts 2:38). To RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 2:38). To go on your way REJOICING (Acts 8:38-39; 16:34). To WASH AWAY YOUR SINS (Acts 22:16). To GET INTO CHRIST (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26-27).

HOW be Baptized? The New Testament is a book of PRINCIPLES. WHAT God wants done is CLEARLY TAUGHT in ALL things; however in no instance is any EXCLUSIVE METHOD set forth for doing ANYTHING God has required. As long as we observe WHAT God had commanded, He leaves us FREE as to the METHODS we choose, just so they are DECENT and ORDERLY (1 Corinthians 14:40).

XXV. GOD’S NEW TESTAMENT PLAN OF SALVATION.

Having thus cleared away practically all possible misconceptions concerning BAPTISM, we next went on to emphasize that however necessary baptism is—and the New Testament requires it for salvation—yet, PRIOR TO baptism, at least FOUR OTHER THINGS must FIRST be done before one CAN be “baptized into Christ.” These four things—plus baptism—we referred to as “God’s New Testament PLAN of Salvation.”

FIRSTLY, we pointed out, one must HEAR the gospel of Jesus Christ. WITHOUT the GOSPEL OF CHRIST there could be NO SALVATION (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Jesus commanded the gospel to be PREACHED for this purpose (Mark 16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Acts 11:13-14). The PREACHING must be HEARD (Romans 10:13-15; Acts 3:22-23).

SECONDLY, one must BELIEVE (i.e., have FAITH) in JESUS CHRIST. Without FAITH (BELIEF) we CANNOT please God (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is the substance (i.e., assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Faith or belief comes by HEARING THE WORD OF GOD (Romans 10:14,17). Belief (faith) is essential to salvation (Mark 16:16; Ephesians 2:8). Christians are supposed to walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). If we doubt (i.e., do not have faith) we sin (Romans 14:23).

THIRDLY, we must REPENT of our sins. Repentance is for “remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) Repentance is essential to CONVERSION that SINS BE BLOTTED OUT (Acts 3:19). Except we REPENT, we PERISH (Luke 13:3).

FOURTHLY, comes CONFESSION of our FAITH in JESUS CHRIST. Confession is for salvation (Romans 10:8-10). Unbaptized believers confess their faith in Christ BEFORE BAPTISM (Acts 8:35-38). We must confess Jesus Christ BEFORE MEN, if He is to confess us also before His Father (God) in heaven (Matthew 10:32). Otherwise, He will DENY us before God (Matthew 10:33; Mark 8:38).

FIFTHLY—and only after having already completed the FIRST FOUR requirements in God’s plan—we must be BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST. Since SALVATION is IN CHRIST (2 Timothy 2:10), and we are BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST where salvation IS (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), it logically follows therefore that we are BAPTIZED INTO SALVATION! This conclusion harmonizes with all Bible passages applicable to this point, Baptism is to be SAVED (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:40-41; 1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is for the REMISSION OF SINS (Acts 2:38). Baptism is to RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 2:38). Baptism is to WASH AWAY SINS (Acts 22:16). REJOICING is AFTER (not before) baptism (Acts 8:38-39; 16:34). Those NOT BAPTIZED CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD (John 3:5). Hence CANNOT BE SAVED.

Most modern, so-called “Christian” denominations preach PART of the foregoing New Testament plan as “ESSENTIAL” for salvation, PART as “NON-ESSENTIAL.” The New Testament makes no such distinction. Jesus taught it ALL. Let us therefore PREACH—and DO—it all—and for the REASONS given in GOD’S WORD. For, as Jesus told the devil when the devil tempted Him in the wilderness, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD” (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4).

XXVI. THE CHURCH YOU READ ABOUT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

All right, now let us say we have HEARD the gospel of Jesus Christ, have BELIEVED in Him with all our hearts, have REPENTED of our sins, CONFESSED our faith in Christ before men and been BAPTIZED into Him. Is that ALL THERE IS to Christianity? Or does God have SOMETHING MORE for the baptized believer—the Christian—following his baptism?

As a matter of fact, obedience to God’s plan for salvation is NOT THE END but rather the BEGINNING of things for the Christian. Prior to his baptism, no person in the Bible is called a Christian. However, AFTER having been BURIED with Jesus BY BAPTISM INTO DEATH, we are raised like Christ was raised to “walk in NEWNESS OF LIFE.” The old man thus is put off in baptism, and a new birth, resulting in a new creature, takes place (John 3:3-5; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This new life is lived in the “church” you read about in the New Testament.

On the day that God’s New Testament plan of salvation went into effect, those people who obeyed it, you recall, were “added.” Acts 2:41 says that “they that GLADLY received his word WERE BAPTIZED; and the same day there were ADDED unto them ABOUT THREE THOUSAND souls.” To WHAT were they ADDED? To the apostles? Yes, but is that all? No. Verse 47 continues, “And the Lord ADDED to the CHURCH daily such as should be SAVED.” So the SAVED were added not to the apostles only, but THE CHURCH as well.

In our study of the CHURCH, we learned it comes from the Greek term “EKKLESIA,” meaning, “a called out body.” Generically the term is applied to those “called out” of Egypt. However, those Israelites were not the “CHURCH” authorized for CHRISTIANS, for 15 centuries AFTER their flight from Egypt, shortly after John the Baptist was beheaded (Matthew 14), the church authorized by the NEW TESTAMENT was foretold as YET FUTURE by Jesus Christ. In Matthew 16:18, He said, “I WILL BUILD my EKKLESIA [church].” No reference is made of this church as in existence until Acts 2, discussed foregoing. Since the church—the EKKLESIA—is “called out,” how are those in it “called”? 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 says, “he CALLED you BY OUR GOSPEL.” Not everyone “CALLED” is “called OUT.” Jesus said, “For many are

CALLED, but few are CHOSEN.” However, those who ARE “chosen” are CALLED by the gospel. (Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 one more time). Thus those who respond to the preaching of the gospel of Christ are CALLED (1 Corinthians 1:24). And this CALLING is according to God’s PURPOSE (Romans 8:28; 2 Timothy 1:9). Since the New Testament is GOD’S OWN DECLARATION of His PURPOSE, it follows that this calling is according to the TEACHING of God’s NEW TESTAMENT! And since the New Testament CALLS on people to hear the gospel, believe in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, confess Christ before men and be baptized into Christ, it follows that those who do so from their hearts are thus CALLED of God. And since He saves such people, takes them out of “the world” and puts them into His “church,” they thus are not only CALLED, but CALLED OUT. Hence, the “called out body”— the EKKLESIA—the CHURCH that Jesus said, “I will build,” is the body of BELIEVERS in Jesus Christ, who have REPENTED of their sins, CONFESSED His name and been BAPTIZED INTO HIM!

To be “in Christ” (where salvation is) is to be in His CHURCH. Ephesians 4:5 teaches there is ONE baptism. Therefore the same baptism that puts one INTO CHRIST (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:17) puts one INTO HIS CHURCH. For 1 Corinthians 12:13 teaches we are “baptized into ONE BODY.” Verse 20 says “BUT one body.” And Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18, 24 say that “BODY” is the CHURCH! Therefore not only are we baptized into CHRIST, but simultaneously, we are baptized into Christ’s CHURCH!

Modern denominational SO-CALLED “churches” say it makes no difference WHAT church you are a member of; that the church does not save you anyway! We must agree that there is no salvation in any of these DENOMINATIONAL churches, for every single one of them is MAN-MADE, and has no higher authority even to EXIST than the HUMAN BEINGS who STARTED them.

But this cannot be said of the church JESUS built, for He SHED HIS BLOOD for it (Acts 20:28), is the HEAD of it, the SAVIOUR of it, LOVES it, GAVE HIMSELF for it, SANCTIFIED it and CLEANSED it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might PRESENT it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be HOLY and without blemish (Ephesians 5:23-27). Moreover He ADDS the SAVED to it (Acts 2:47). In other words, that is what the church IS, i.e., THE SAVED! We therefore are calling upon all who have mistakenly joined DENOMINATIONS wherein they themselves admit there is NO SALVATION to come OUT OF THEM, obey the New Testament plan of salvation and be added to the ONE TRUE CHURCH where SALVATION IS! It is impossible to be BOTH in DENOMINATIONALISM and SAVED in the ONE TRUE CHURCH at the same time! DENOMINATIONAL churches teach DIFFERENT DOCTRINES from the DOCTRINE OF CHRIST. They who do this “have not God” (2 John 9). Such are neither to be RECEIVED (i.e., fellowshiped) nor approved and encouraged (verse 10). “For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (verse 11).

Once we established that Jesus has ONLY ONE CHURCH, we asked, “WHICH ONE is it? It is the one (and there is only ONE in the world which fits the following description), which is called, in the AGGREGATE, the “general assembly” (Hebrews 12:23), “the body” (Ephesians 1:23), the “church” (Matthew 16:18), “church of God” (Acts 20:28), “church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15), “church of the firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23), the “whole family in heaven and earth” (Ephesians 3:15), the “kingdom” (Colossians 1:13) and many other such things. It is the one which in the LOCAL or CONGREGATIONAL sense is called “assembly” (James 2:2), “church” (Romans 16:1), “churches” (i.e., congregations) (Acts 9:31), “churches of God” (1 Corinthians 11:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:4), “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16), “churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33), “flock” and other New Testament designations. It is the one whose INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS, whether locally or world-wide, are called “brethren” (Acts 6:3), “the called” (Romans 1:16), “the elect” (Romans 8:33), “believers” (Acts 5:14; 1 Timothy 4:12), “children of God” (Romans 8:16), “partakers” (Hebrews 3:14), “disciples” (Acts 6:1), “Christians” (Acts 11:26)—and scores of other New Testament terms.

The church we read about in the New Testament is LARGER than any denomination in its world-wide sense, yet is SMALLER than any denomination in its local or congregational sense. Thus the church that

Jesus built does not fit DENOMINATIONALISM in any sense. DENOMINATIONS ARE NOT THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. There is NO CONNECTION or RELATIONSHIP between THEM and IT. God adds ALL of the SAVED to HIS CHURCH! He adds NONE of the SAVED to ANY DENOMINATION!

How does one become a member of the ONE TRUE CHURCH—the one you read about in the New Testament? By HEARING the gospel, BELIEVING in Jesus Christ, REPENTING of past sins, CONFESSING Christ before men and being BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST. Having thus OBEYED Christ, he thus becomes the author of one's SALVATION (Hebrews 5:8-9). Having SAVED him Christ thus ADDS him to HIS CHURCH (Acts 2:47). This is how one becomes a member of the CHURCH YOU READ ABOUT IN YOUR NEW TESTAMENT. It is NOT the way to become a member of any DENOMINATION under heaven!

XXVII. THE WORK AND WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH.

Having now IDENTIFIED the church you read about in the New Testament, we next moved on to study its WORK and WORSHIP as revealed therein. A careful study of the New Testament, we pointed out, reduces all church work to three categories: 1) EVANGELIZATION, 2) EDIFICATION and 3) GLORIFICATION.

From 1 Timothy 3:15 we learned that the CHURCH is the “PILLAR AND GROUND (support)” of THE TRUTH. By the CHURCH, therefore, the WORLD is supposed to be EVANGELIZED. God's wisdom is made KNOWN “by the church” (Ephesians 3:8-10). The EXTENT of this evangelism is shown by the GREAT COMMISSION, already studied: “EVERY CREATURE,” “ALL NATIONS,” “ALL THE WORLD” (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47)—“EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD” (Matthew 28:20).

Once people were TAUGHT and BAPTIZED (Matthew 28:20), they were to be FURTHER TAUGHT (i.e., edified) “to OBSERVE ALL THINGS” which Jesus had commanded. Paul instructed the church at Rome to follow after things wherewith one may “EDIFY” another (Romans 14:19). “ALL THINGS” were to be done unto EDIFYING (1 Corinthians 14:26; 2 Corinthians 12:19). God's PURPOSE for this was Christian unity, perfection and growth (Ephesians 4:11-13).

As church members thus were edified, their reaction, in turn, was supposed to be GOD'S GLORIFICATION. This to be accomplished by FRUIT-BEARING (John 15:8). Some of the “FRUIT”: LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONG-SUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE (Galatians 5:22-23), GOOD WORKS (Matthew 5:16; Galatians 6:10). The early church also glorified God through WORSHIP. After the first converts were ADDED to the church (Acts 2:41, 47), they continued steadfastly in the “APOSTLES' DOCTRINE AND FELLOWSHIP, and in BREAKING OF BREAD, and in PRAYERS” (verse 42). Also they PRAISED God (verse 47).

Jesus said that those who BEAR NO FRUIT are HEWN DOWN and CAST INTO THE FIRE (Matthew 7:19).

In continuing steadfastly in the “APOSTLES' DOCTRINE,” we showed this could be done by continuing to HEAR the apostles' teaching, just as they had been doing (Acts 2:37,41), and by letting this teaching GOVERN and MOLD their LIVES (James 1:22-25). The “FELLOWSHIP” (i.e., sharing, joint-participation) not only involved their HEARING THE WORD, BEING BAPTIZED and ADDED TO THE CHURCH (Acts 2:41, 47), but also their CONTINUED SHARING in RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES (verses 43-46), in SUPPORT OF THE GOSPEL (1 Corinthians 9:7-14), in HELPING ONE ANOTHER (Acts 2:45; 4:34-35) and in DOING GOOD TO OTHERS (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Galatians 6:10). The religious “BREAKING OF BREAD” (the Lord's Supper or communion), instituted by Christ as a MEMORIAL before His death (Matthew 26:26-29), was not to be observed until IN HIS KINGDOM (verse 29). His KINGDOM or CHURCH was established on Pentecost, A.D. 33, as we learned earlier in our study. Thus the first mention of this “breaking of bread,” first introduced in Matthew 26, is on Pentecost

(Acts 2:42). Pentecost was on the “FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.” And it was on the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK,” Acts 20:7 tells us, that the disciples came together “to BREAK BREAD.” PRAYERS, meanwhile, were to be modeled on the SAMPLE PRAYER given by Jesus in Matthew 6:9-13. Christians were to pray CONTINUALLY (1 Thessalonians 5:17), including THANKSGIVINGS (Colossians 3:17), REQUESTS (Acts 7:59) and INTERCESSIONS (Acts 7:60; 12:5). PRAISING GOD (Acts 2:47) was by TESTIFYING (Acts 3:12-16; 8:25; 11:18, etc.), by PRAYING (Ephesians 3:14-21) and by SINGING (Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15, etc.)

Although the particular PLACE of worship was immaterial (John 4:21), Christians nevertheless were to ASSEMBLE THEMSELVES TOGETHER (Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:25). They were to worship God in SPIRIT and in TRUTH (John 4:20-24). Since not all worship is acceptable unto God (Matthew 15:9) they were warned against worshipping according to the “doctrines and commandments of men.” To worship “in spirit” (i.e., sincerely) was not enough. Worship ALSO had to be “IN TRUTH” (John 4:24). And what is “truth?” GOD’S WORD! (John 17:17). So, to be ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD worship had to be ACCORDING TO GOD’S WORD! And any type of worship not taught in God’s Word (i.e., the NEW TESTAMENT, since it is now of force) is not acceptable unto Him.

On this basis, is it all right to have the “apostles’ doctrine?” “fellowship?” “breaking of bread?” “prayers?” “singing?” Yes. Why? Because GOD’S WORD—the NEW TESTAMENT—TEACHES Christians to WORSHIP GOD THUS. Well, is it all right, IN ADDITION to these things taught by God, to ADD candles, incense, graven images, instrumental music, prayer wheels, idols, the ringing of bells and such like to our worship? No. Why? Because NONE OF THESE THINGS are in God’s Word, hence they are not “IN TRUTH.” Thus they are after the “doctrines and commandments OF MEN.” As has already been shown, such worship is VAIN (Matthew 15:9). And both THEY, as well as the MAN-MADE “CHURCHES” who DO and TEACH such, NOT having been authorized (“planted”) by God shall be “ROOTED UP” (verse 13). Like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, “they be BLIND LEADERS OF THE BLIND. And if the BLIND LEAD THE BLIND, BOTH shall FALL INTO THE DITCH.” Jesus said of such: “LET THEM ALONE!” (verse 14).

XXVIII. THE ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH.

Just as in the case of the WORK and WORSHIP of the church—as well as for the EXISTENCE of the church itself—the New Testament does NOT leave us free to ORGANIZE and GOVERN the church after the doctrines and commandments of men. Both the ORGANIZATION as well as the GOVERNMENT of the church is clearly TAUGHT in the WORD OF GOD.

A careful examination of the New Testament discloses NO ORGANIZATION of the church as OVER or BETWEEN the congregations—worldwide—taken in the aggregate. In the general sense of the word, Jesus Christ is the HEAD (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23). Under the HEADship of Jesus Christ, the church UNIVERSAL is styled as His BODY (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18-24), His WIFE (Ephesians 5:22-32; Romans 7:4), His KINGDOM (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9), a PRIESTHOOD (1 Peter 2:5, 9), a SPIRITUAL HOUSE (1 Peter 2:5-6) and the like. LOCALLY, the people of God in a given CITY, PROVINCE, NATION or VICINITY are referred to as the “church” in this or that place or area. However NO ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS are given in the Scriptures either OVER or BETWEEN MORE THAN ONE local assembly or congregation. The LOCAL AUTONOMY of EACH INDIVIDUAL CONGREGATION, thus, is the Divine plan. These autonomous local congregations (churches) COULD and DID exist for a time in the New Testament record without being ORGANIZED with officers of any kind. As such they were merely groups of baptized believers voluntarily doing the work and worship of God as revealed in His Word. Later on, when brethren increased enough in the grace and knowledge of Christ to PROVE themselves qualified, two “offices” were authorized by the New Testament for the organization and government of the local congregation: 1) BISHOPS (also called elders, presbyters, pastors, overseers) and 2) DEACONS. Thus, once a local congregation was fully developed and organized, as at Philippi, Paul

could address his letter “to all the SAINTS in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the BISHOPS and DEACONS” (Philippians 1:1).

Rather than these “bishops and deacons” functioning as a “BOARD,” Jesus left the RULE of each local congregation in charge of the BISHOPS, i.e., elders, presbyters, pastors, overseers. Paul did NOT call for the “BOARD,” but for the “ELDERS” at Ephesus (Acts 20:17), admonishing THEM to take heed unto THEMSELVES “and to all the FLOCK (i.e., congregation), over the which the Holy Ghost hath made YOU OVERSEERS” (verse 28). This class of officers in the church is said to “RULE” (1 Timothy 5:17). Paul instructed the Thessalonians to esteem them that are “OVER YOU IN THE LORD” (1 Thessalonians 5:12). Such are to be REMEMBERED, FOLLOWED, CONSIDERED, OBEYED and SUBMITTED TO, “for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account” (Hebrews 13:7, 17). They are to FEED the flock of God, take the OVERSIGHT thereof and be EXAMPLES to it (1 Peter 5:1-5).

In order to be ordained to the office of bishop, a Christian man had first to PROVE himself. The qualifications for a bishop are given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

(Any system of church government that extends the authority of bishops BEYOND THE CONFINES of their OWN LOCAL CONGREGATION is going BEYOND THE AUTHORITY OF NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING and PERVERTS God’s order for the government of His people. Likewise any system, which DIVIDES the rule of a local congregation, as between its bishops and deacons, or which SUBSTITUTES OTHER OFFICES for this purpose OTHER than the bishops, ALSO is CONTRARY TO GOD’S ORDER. Until such a time as congregations develop qualified men for BISHOPS, God evidently has left the line of authority with the MEN as over the WOMEN, and the OLDER as over the YOUNGER (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Peter 5:5). Hence, the MEN of a local congregation, in mutual humility, would have to decide business matters for a local congregation until such a time as it could qualify and have ordained a plurality of bishops and deacons. At which time, of course, all the deacons and all the other members of the congregation would then become subject to the bishops, that the bishops might have the “rule” within the local congregation as God has ordained.

As for DEACONS, although they have an “office” (1 Timothy 3:13), their office is not to RULE but to SERVE under the rule of the bishops. In fact, the word translated “deacon” from the Greek (*diakonos*) means “servant.” Their qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. There are no differing ORDERS of deacons (or bishops either, for that matter) in the New Testament, such as common deacons, arch-deacons (teaching bishops, ruling bishops, arch-bishops) and the like. All deacons (as all bishops) are of equal rank before God.

The word for “servant” in Romans 16:1, describing Phebe, a woman, in some translations is translated “deaconess.” No qualifications are given in the New Testament for deaconesses, neither is anything said giving them authority. Because of her GOOD WORK, Paul commended Phebe, asked the brethren to RECEIVE her in the Lord “as becometh saints,” and to ASSIST her in whatever business she had need. However, there is no indication she had any authority to ENFORCE this request.

Some religious bodies affect a difference among their members, designating some members “stewards” or “Stewards” as contrasted with other members who are NOT stewards. The New Testament authorizes no such difference. Please read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. Here we see that Paul, an apostle, was a STEWARD. Sosthenes was NOT an apostle, but he WAS a STEWARD. Bishops ALSO are STEWARDS (Titus 1:7). In fact, ALL of God’s people are STEWARDS (1 Peter 4:10). It therefore is strictly a PERVERSION of scripture to affect a DISTINCTION where GOD has made NO DIFFERENCE!

Now of all the things, which we have written, foregoing, this is the sum. Whereas God one time dealt with people differently by individuals and families—and later with the children of Israel, as a nation—He has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Old Testament law perfectly, taking it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. After His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection, Jesus gave a Great Commission, which was to be binding on every creature, among all nations, in all the world—even unto the end of the world. The day of Pentecost in the year A.D. 33, when that commission was empowered, Jesus’ NEW testament likewise became of force, resulting in His CHURCH or KINGDOM

being established. Those people who HEARD the gospel, BELIEVED in Jesus Christ with all their hearts, REPENTED of their sins, CONFESSED their faith in Christ before men, and were BAPTIZED into Christ, were consequently SAVED from their past sins and ADDED by the Lord to His CHURCH, the KINGDOM OF GOD. Thus that church is made up of THE SAVED; and if a person is SAVED he is a member of that church, for God adds daily to the church such as are being saved. In the church a member is instructed by the New Testament, God's Word, unto the EVANGELIZATION of the world, the EDIFICATION of Christians and the GLORIFICATION of God. His WORSHIP of God involves not only being sincere ("in spirit") but also being according to the teaching of the New Testament ("in truth"). He must continue steadfastly in the "apostles' doctrine and fellowship, the breaking of bread and in prayers." Also he must sing in praise to God and in admonition to his fellow Christians. In organization, such Christians assemble in local "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16). Each congregation is locally autonomous, under the rule of its own bishops, served by its own deacons. Such Christians and congregations are to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). If faithful "unto death" Jesus promises them "a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Over the centuries, since the church was first begun on Pentecost, A.D. 33, MEN have invented doctrines that started churches not authorized by Jesus Christ. However, ALL authority in heaven and in earth is given unto Him (Matthew 28:18). The only way men can get back under HIS authority and enjoy HIS blessings and promises, they must forsake their OWN ways and RESTORE CHRISTIANITY AS IT WAS FROM THE BEGINNING.