

A SUGGESTED CREED

FOR THE 21ST CENTURY NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Because creeds have been such a source of division, we are going to label the product of our endeavors, A *suggested* creed, rather than a binding creed.¹

PRELUDE TO THE CREED: AN AFFIRMATION OF THE CREED AND A WORD OF CAUTION

There are two Greek words in the New Testament that refer to knowing God:

- οἶδα (*oida*) which is a derivative of the verb, εἶδω (*eido*), which refers to *seeing*. Thus, οἶδα refers to objective knowledge of something, i.e., facts, information, identity, etc.²
- γινώσκω (*ginohskoh*), which refers to having experiential knowledge.³

To illustrate: I have οἶδα knowledge of Abraham Lincoln. I know that he was born in a log cabin in Kentucky, but he grew up in poverty on the Indiana frontier. I know that his mother died when he was nine years of age and for the most part, he was self-educated. I know about his political debates and his career. I know about his assassination in 1865. Indeed, I know many facts about Abraham Lincoln.

Yet, I don't really know the man. I do not have γινώσκω knowledge of Abraham Lincoln. He did not talk with me about being engaged to marry, cancelling the engagement, then reconciling with the woman who ultimately became his bride. I did not listen to his lament as he poured out his heart on the three occasions when three of his sons died before reaching adulthood. I did not walk with him through the vicissitudes and joys of life. I do not have experiential knowledge of Abraham Lincoln.

The distinctions between these two forms of knowledge is important to bear in mind as one creates a creed or, for that matter, engages in a study of the Scriptures. One can become an expert on the Bible, as a document, but never have a γινώσκω knowledge of God. One can know the book but not know the author. Sadly, such has been the case with many Christians since the invention of the moveable type printing press and the resulting production of Bibles.

This is a special risk when one becomes involved in the project of studying Scripture with the intent of discovering correct doctrine and presenting that doctrine in a creed. For that matter, the production of a creed, and the creed itself, is a manifestation of οἶδα. It is a mental activity.

Even so, the pursuit of οἶδα is an important endeavor, because it is the means whereby one avoids the tragedy of worshipping a false God. Some individuals, mocking οἶδα knowledge, have pursued experience exclusively. As a result, the god that they worship is not the True God, or to some degree, they greatly misunderstand the God whom they worship.

Often this results in their being manipulated by false teachers. Lack of οἶδα knowledge has resulted in extreme cults, such as that of Jim Jones and its resulting Jonestown, Guyana, tragedy.

¹ For a defense of the basis of this creed see, *Suggested Creed Part I*, <http://www.tulsachristianfellowship.com/doulos-press.html>, papers are available at this link

² Examples of this usage: I Thessalonians 1:8; 4:5; Titus 1:16; Galatians 4:8

³ Examples of this usage: Galatians 4:9; Philippians 3:10; I John 2:14; 4:8

Lack of οἶδα knowledge has left individuals vulnerable to extreme Word of Faith teachers, such as Hobart Freeman, who taught that turning to medical doctors demonstrates lack of faith – resulting in the untimely death of some who sat under his teaching - even the death of infants.

Sadly, in the 1960's when the Charismatic Movement was birthed, and people were seeking spiritual experiences, some became Hindus, some Buddhists, some became Shinto worshippers. Some, with feminist leanings, fell into the worship of *Gaia*, i.e. *Mother Earth*.

Οἶδα knowledge of God is essential for those who seek to worship the True God.

The goal of the following creed is to present true οἶδα, to the degree that such is possible.

There is a third Greek term in the New Testament that is rendered as, *knowledge*. The term is, ἐπίγνωσις (*epignosis*), which implies, *full accurate knowledge*.⁴ When so used, this term would include both οἶδα and γινώσκω. This is the term that Paul used when describing his prayers for the Ephesians,

...do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of Him. (Ephesians 1:16-17)

He also used this term in describing the goal of the ministry gifts that He had given to the Church,

until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)

We urge all who read and study the following creed to seek, diligently, the οἶδα contained in this creed, but to do so without forfeiting one's personal γινώσκω knowledge of God. Let our goal be, ἐπίγνωσις, the full knowledge of God, both intellectual and experiential, to the degree that Our Lord allows.

ARTICLE I: THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

A. Defining Scripture

Although, by observing the creation, mankind has been able to discern the existence of a creator, the identity of that creator, and objective knowledge about Him, is not obtainable by examination of the creation. Thankfully, God has chosen to give mankind accurate information concerning His Person, His activities, and His Will. This revelation is found in documents that human authors have written at the Holy Spirit's direction and inspiration. It is important to emphasize that these writings are not the result of human creativity or of human wisdom. but are the product of the Holy Spirit. These documents, labeled, *Holy Scripture*, constitute the canon.⁵

Holy Scripture is divided into two testaments: the Old and New Testaments. The documents that constitute the Old and New Testaments are the following:

⁴ This the noun derived from the verb, ἐπιγνώσκω. See Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, Mass, Hendrickson Publishers) May 2000 printing, page 237; Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press) Second Edition 1958, page 291

⁵ The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon.

The Old Testament

Genesis	I. Samuel	Esther	Jeremiah	Jonah
Exodus	II. Samuel	Job	Lamentations	Micah
Leviticus	I. Kings	Psalms	Ezekiel	Nahum
Numbers	II. Kings	Proverbs	Daniel	Habakkuk
Deuteronomy	I. Chronicles	Ecclesiastes	Hosea	Zephaniah
Joshua	II. Chronicles	The Song of	Joel	Haggai
Judges	Ezra	Songs	Amos	Zechariah
Ruth	Nehemiah	Isaiah	Obadiah	Malachi

The New Testament

The Gospel according to:	Paul's Epistles:	The Epistle to the Hebrews
Matthew	Romans	The Epistle of James
Mark	I & II Corinthians.	I & II Peter
Luke	Galatians	I II & III John
John	Ephesians	The Epistle of Jude
The Acts of the Apostles	Philippians	The Revelation of John
	Colossians	
	I & II Thessalonians	
	I & II Timothy.	
	Titus	
	Philemon	

B. The Authority of Scripture

The New Testament Church looks to these Divinely inspired documents as:

- the only source of Divine doctrine,
- the only authority for directing the administration of the Church, and the doctrines that the Church proclaims,
- the only rule of faith and life for the Church and for the individual Christian.

C. Understanding and Interpreting Scripture

In constructing a *Suggested Creed for the Twenty-first Century New Testament Church*, responsible exegesis must be employed in exploring the Scriptures for the elements of the creed. The first rule of biblical interpretation is that where possible, Scripture interprets itself. Thus, when a passage is unclear, the first recourse is to seek clarification through the examination of the entire corpus of Scripture. This results in an inductive study of the entire Bible, rather than a deductive study of a single passage.

When examining a particular passage, the sequence of approach is the following:

- Context must control the understanding of a passage of Scripture.
- The exegete first must note, who said it. In Scripture there are statements of mere men, statements of apostles, statements of Satan, as well as statements made by God.
- The exegete must note when it was said. Was it said as a part of the Old Covenant, a statement made by Jesus before His ascension, a statement made before Pentecost, or a statement made after the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost etc.?⁶

⁶ See ADDENDUM J for an example of the relevance of covenant

- The exegete must note where was it spoken. Was it a statement restricted to a particular place (i.e., the Jewish Temple, Palestine, etc.)?⁷
- The exegete must note to whom it was spoken. Was it spoken to a particular individual, to a particular group, or to everyone?⁸
- The exegete must note why was it said.
- The exegete must ask, is there any enlightenment gained from examining the text in the original language: Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament.⁹
- The exegete must note what is said.
- The type of literature involved in the passage must be recognized (narrative, parable, proverb, precept, etc.) Each of these must be examined according to the hermeneutical principles involved in each type of literature.

ARTICLE II: WHO IS GOD?

A. The Trinity

When seeking to understand the Trinity, it must be admitted that we are in an arena where the human mind is not adequate to fully grasp the subject. One of the traits of some of the historic creeds is that they seek to define precisely what must always remain somewhat imprecise to human understanding. We will seek to avoid that in creating a creed.

We are thankful that Scripture does give us much important information concerning the Trinity.

Modalism (also known as Sabellianism) states that there is only one being, who manifests Himself in three ways.¹⁰ They illustrate this with the figure of water. A pail of water can be liquid, it can be frozen into ice, and when heated it becomes steam, but it is the same pail of water.

Some Modalists state that God never manifested Himself in any two or three of these ways at the same time, but rather, consecutively. Prior to the incarnation, He manifested Himself as the Father, at the incarnation, as the Son, and from Pentecost, onward, as the Holy Spirit. This is a very old doctrine, which was condemned by Tertullian (c. 213 AD),¹¹ Dionysius (a bishop in Rome, c. 262 AD),¹² the Council of Nicea (325) as well as other various councils in the early centuries of the Church.

Most contemporary Modalists begin their argument by tracing the name of God throughout the Old Testament. They argue that the monotheism of the Old Testament requires that there be only one being. For the Christian, the Old Testament is not sufficient. The axiom, *The Old is the New concealed, and the New is the Old revealed*, is the manner in which Christians must approach Scripture.

⁷ See ADDENDUM K for an example of a promise related to a specific place

⁸ See ADDENDUM L for an example of a promise to a particular people for a particular purpose

⁹ See ADDENDUM M for an example of exploring the original language.

¹⁰ Contemporary groups that hold to Modalism are the United Pentecostals, the United Apostolic Churches, and many of the heirs of the Latter Rain Movement. These argue that the name of God is Jesus and that baptism should be in the name of Jesus, only.

¹¹ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 1, in *Ante Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3

¹² Dionysius, *Philosophumena (Refutation of All Heresies)*

In contrast to the Modalist view, the New Testament presents all three, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit as existing simultaneously, but as separate beings. Matthew describes the presence of all three at Jesus' immersion.

And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him,¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17)

The Spirit immediately led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested – thus two, the Spirit and the Son, existed simultaneously.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (Matthew 4:1)

On the mount of transfiguration, the Father and the Son are described as separate beings, co-existing

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5)

Either the Father and the Son are separate persons, who existed simultaneously, or else Jesus practiced deception.

- When Jesus was in the Garden, on the night He was betrayed, he prayed, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me¹³*. Was He really praying to the Father or was He pretending?
- On the cross, as Jesus breathed His last, He said, *Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.¹⁴* Was He really speaking to the Father, or was He just putting on a show for the benefit of the onlookers?

These and many other instances could be cited in which the Father and Son are presented as, co-existing separate entities.

An interesting insight into the plurality, but indivisibility of God is seen in the Hebrew term, *Elohim*, rendered as, *God*. In Hebrew, the means of showing plurality is to end a noun with, *im*. This ending fulfills the same function as the *S* fulfills in English (i.e. boy(s) as contrasted with boy). This implies that in some fashion, God is a plural being.¹⁵ It would be going too far to declare that the plural use of the term, clearly indicates the Trinity, but, rather, that the plural term is compatible with the concept of the Trinity, as revealed in the New Testament.

¹³ Matthew 26:39

¹⁴ Luke 23:46

¹⁵ Modalists and some other argue that the use of the plural here is *pluralis majestatis*, which refers to a monarch's using plural pronouns in reference to himself/herself. In contemporary language, this usually is referred to as the *royal we*, in which a monarch refers to himself/herself, as *we*, rather than, *I*. The church fathers and the early church theologians, almost unanimously, regarded the plural, *Elohim*, as indicative of the Trinity. Many modern commentators argue that this is *pluralis majestatis*. For a discussion of this subject, see H. C. Leupold, D.D., *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH, Wartburg Press) 1942, p. 43; C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume I, The Pentateuch* (Peabody, Mass, Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, page 62.

Very relevant to this is Deuteronomy 6:4. This verse is rendered literally, *Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!*

As noted in the above paragraph, the word rendered as God (*Elohim*) is a plural word. The word *one* (the Hebrew, *echad*) refers to one in a collective sense. As such, it is used of the union of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:24) to describe two persons in one flesh. The term is used in this sense to describe one cluster of grapes, i.e. several things constituting a single entity.

This understanding of God has resulted in many using the term, *The Godhead* to refer to God.

These considerations, and others, demonstrate that the New Testament, clearly, and the Old Testament, covertly, describe a God who is constituted by more than one person.

B. The Divinity of Each of the Beings Who Constitute the Godhead

The Divinity of each person of the Godhead must be established in order to know how to frame this portion of our creed. There is no dispute as to the Divinity of the Father, and so we can accept that without question. However, there is dispute concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Divinity of Jesus

As early as Arius (early 4th Century), there was a dispute as to the Divinity of the man, Jesus. In recent days, some of the followers of Bill Johnson, Pastor Bethel Church of Redding California, and co-founder of the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry, contend that Jesus was a mere man and that all that Jesus did was done under the anointing of the Holy Spirit – thus, we can have that same anointing and do the same things that Jesus did. Johnson, himself, has never stated that Jesus is a mere man, but that He limited Himself to the role of humanity, prior to His ascension.¹⁶

We must ask, was/is Jesus Divine? How does the New Testament describe Him?

Immediately comes to mind the prologue to John's Gospel,

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*¹⁷

He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being...

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3, 14)

Thus, John began his Gospel with a clear acknowledgement of the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

A second passage that immediately comes to mind is Paul's description of Jesus Christ in his Philippian letter.

Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶*who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be a thing to be grasped,*

⁷*but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of men.*

(Philippians 2:5-7)

¹⁶ Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, (Shippensburg, PA, Destiny Image Publishers) 2003 page 23

¹⁷ For an analysis of the Greek in this sentence, see ADDENDUM N

The Greek terms referring to Jesus in this passage are revealing.

The term rendered as *form* is, μορφή (*morphé*). This is the term used both in the expression, *the form of God* and *the form of a slave*. This term implies more than mere appearance, although appearance is included in the term. It implies *essence*, or *nature*.

The term rendered as *the likeness of men* is σχῆμα (*schema*). This term refers to one's outward appearance, not necessarily to one's nature or essence.

Thus, Philippians 2:5-7 states that Christ was of the same essence as the Father, but He emptied Himself of the prerogatives of that essence and took on Himself the identity of a slave and He did this by taking on the form of a human.

Thus, in this passage Paul described Christ Jesus as being Divine, having the same essence as the Father prior to his incarnation.

Paul's letter to the Colossians expresses this same truth,

And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. (Colossians 1:15)

Hebrews 1:1-8 not only describes the Divine essence of Jesus but also records God's elaboration of Jesus identity, and His role in the creation and the sustaining all things.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

³ *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.*

When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; ⁴ having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

⁵ *For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me"?*

⁶ *And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."*

⁷ *And of the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire."*

⁸ *But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. (Hebrews 1:2-8)*

Not only do we have these and other direct citations that establish the Divinity of Jesus, but there also is indirect affirmation of His identity.

Jesus repeatedly placed Himself in the place of Yahweh, by assuming the Father's Divine prerogatives. He often did and said things that only God has the right to say. For example, when Jesus stood before the High Priest, the High Priest asked him, *Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?*

Jesus answered, *I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.* (Mark 14:61-62)

In this answer, Jesus was referencing Daniel,

"I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

Jesus was declaring that He was the fulfillment of Daniel's prophetic vision.

When quizzed about how He had special knowledge of Abraham, Jesus responded,

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58)

In this reply Jesus was applying the personal name of God to Himself, i.e. *I AM* (Exodus 3:14). The audience understood exactly what He was doing. So, offended by His claim,

⁵⁹ *Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple. (John 8:59)*

It also is significant that there are passages that apply to Jesus the title, *the First and the Last*. This is one of the Old Testament titles of Yahweh.

"Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me. (Isaiah 44:6)¹⁸

This title is directly applied to Jesus three times in the Book of Revelation.

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, (Revelation 1:17)

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: (Revelation 2:8)

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. ¹³ "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Revelation 22:12-13)

Jesus exercised the power to forgive, a prerogative that belongs only to God.

And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. ⁴ And being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying

⁵ *And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."*

⁶ *But there were some of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

⁸ *And immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? ⁹ "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Arise, and take up your pallet and walk '?*

¹⁰ *"But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins "-- He said to the paralytic-- ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home."*

¹⁸ See also Isaiah 41:4; 48:12

¹² *And he rose and immediately took up the pallet and went out in the sight of all; so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."* (Mark 2:3-12)

Note also that Jesus used the label, *Son of Man*, for Himself. As noted earlier, this was the prophetic label of the one who would come in clouds of glory.

The Gospels record several times in which Jesus was worshipped. Here are a few examples: *And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.* (Matthew 28:9)

And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. (Matthew 28:17)
And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. (John 9:38)

Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Also, as cited earlier, Hebrews 1:6

And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."

In none of these situations in which people worshipped Him, did Jesus object to their worship, but rather He considered it to be well-placed (as contrasted with Peter in Acts 10:26).

Jesus also stated that his forthcoming resurrection from the dead would validate the very special claims that He made about Himself.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

³⁹ *But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;*

⁴⁰ *for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* (Matthew 12:38-40)

Indeed, after having been crucified and buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, Jesus rose from the dead, thus establishing His claims to deity.

Conclusion Concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ

Without question, the Scriptures declare the Divinity of Christ through several devices.

Therefore, as we look to defining God, and the Trinity, it is clear that Jesus Christ is Divine, and thus, a member of the Godhead.

The Divinity of the Holy Spirit

As stated earlier, when seeking to grasp a full understanding of the Godhead, there are things that are beyond our ability to fully grasp. We are reminded of the truth of Deuteronomy 29:29

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

When it comes to seeking an understanding the Holy Spirit, we must not go beyond what Scripture says, but thankfully, Scripture does give us important information concerning the Holy Spirit.

One of the things that presents a difficulty in giving definition to the Holy Spirit is the fact that the Holy Spirit speaks, not of Himself, but rather, of Jesus Christ.

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, (John 15:26)

The Spirit's role is not to glorify Himself, but to glorify the Christ.

"He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. (John 16:14)

The Holy Spirit, even though a Divine Being, does not speak on His own.

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. (John 16:13)

One might say that the Holy Spirit often works in the background, putting forth the other members of the Godhead.

There are some who argue that the Holy Spirit is a force, rather than a being. One thing on which they base this argument is the fact that the Greek term that we render as *spirit*, is *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), which is a neuter noun. Based on the fact that *pneuma* is a neuter noun, the argument is put forth that the Holy Spirit is *a thing*, instead of *a person*.

Indeed, *pneuma* is a neuter noun, but that does not mean that the Spirit is a thing and not a person. As is true in many languages, Greek nouns are labeled as being of a gender, but that does not necessarily mean that the term refers to something masculine, feminine, or neuter. In other words, the terms, masculine, feminine, and neuter refer to a class of nouns, but not necessarily the sex of the object or person to which the noun relates. It merely describes the linguistic family of nouns to which the word belongs.¹⁹

For example, the Greek word for water, *hudor* (ὕδωρ) is a feminine noun. Likewise, the word for the physical organ, the heart *kardia* (καρδία) feminine. The word for sea, *thalassa* (θάλασσα) is feminine. The word for death, *thanatos* (θάνατος) is masculine. In none of these examples does the fact that the noun is feminine, or masculine, indicate that the reference is to a male or female person. Thus, the gender assigned to a word does not necessarily refer to its identity, although it often does.

Furthermore, Jesus applied the name, *parakletos* (παράκλητος) to the Being that we know as the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:11). *Parakletos* is a masculine noun.

¹⁹ There are three broad categories of Greek nouns, which are grouped as to how the word changes spelling as it is declined from one case to the next (nominative [subject], genitive [relationship], dative [indirect object], accusative [direct object], vocative [direct address]). In recent centuries, the term, *gender*, has been used to distinguish these categories. *Gender* is an English word. The history of its usage in describing Greek nouns explains the sense in which the term is used today. Aristotle wrote three books on *Rhetoric*. In his writing, describing Greek nouns, he used the term, *genos*. The term, *genos*, simply means, *kind*, or *type*. The term worked its way into French as *genre*, hence *gender* in English. The first example of this term's occurring in English is found in 1390 A.D. The non-grammatical sense is attested about 100 years later. <https://linguistics.stackexchange.com/questions/17624/who-was-the-first-to-call-noun-classes-genders>

In addition to the masculine term, *paracletos*, John used masculine terminology in quoting Jesus reference to the Holy Spirit. We cite passages quoted earlier:

John 14:26, *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He** will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. **He** will bear witness of me.*

John 15:26 *"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, **He** will bear witness of Me,*

John 16:13-14 *"But when **He**, the Spirit of truth, comes, **He** will guide you into all the truth; for **He** will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever **He** hears, **He** will speak; and **He** will disclose to you what is to come. **He** shall glorify Me; for **He** shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.*

In each of these passages, (14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14), the Greek term rendered as *He*, is the term, ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*). This is the masculine singular of a demonstrative noun. It literally means, *this one*. The fact that the masculine form is used is another layer of evidence that the Holy Spirit is a person. In quoting Jesus, John could have used, ἐκεῖνο (*ekeino*) the neuter form of the demonstrative pronoun. Thus, the terms in these passages describe the Holy Spirit as a person, not a force.

One of the strongest arguments against the Spirit's being a force and not a person is the fact that the Father is a *pneuma*. *"God is spirit (pneuma), and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4:24)

No one argues that because God is a *pneuma* He is not a person.

Another important thing to consider is that Jesus commanded the disciples to immerse in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Thus, making no distinction in the Divinity of the members of the Trinity.

Although most biblical references to the Holy Spirit are somewhat indirect concerning His Divinity. One of the most direct is Acts 5:1-4.

But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,² and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

³ *But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land?"*

⁴ *"While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God."*

Note that Peter said to Ananias that he had lied to the Holy Spirit (verse 3). Then, he declared that Ananias had lied to God (verse 4). In this parallelism, we see the Holy Spirit described as God.

Because of the Old Testament background to Hebrews 10:15-17, it is clear that this passage presents the Holy Spirit as Divine. Recall that in the Old Testament it was Yahweh (colloquially, Jehovah, and usually rendered in English translations as LORD), who made the covenant with Israel.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,¹⁶ "This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, And upon their mind I will write them," He then says,¹⁷ "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Note that it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking, and He speaks of Himself as making the covenant with Israel, whereas the Old Testament describes Yahweh as making the covenant. This implies that all three persons, the Trinity, constitute the identity of Yahweh – including the Holy Spirit.

Scripture ascribes attributes of God to the Holy Spirit:

- Omniscience is intimated: *for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.*¹¹ *For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.* (1 Corinthians 2:10-11)
- He raised Jesus from the dead and can even give life to our mortal bodies: *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.* (Romans 8:11)
- He renews our minds and changes our lives: *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,* (Titus 3:5)

Conclusion Concerning the Divinity of the Holy Spirit

These and other passages that could be cited, cause us to conclude that the Holy Spirit is, indeed, Divine, and one of the constituents of the Godhead – The Trinity.

ARTICLE III: GOD AS THE CREATOR AND SUSTAINER

A. God as Creator

Several verses of Scripture address the subject of the Trinity's involvement in the creation. The first verses of the Bible state,

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.² And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. (Genesis 1:1-2)

Thus, the Bible begins with the Hebrew, *barasheth bara Elohim*. As noted earlier, the Hebrew term, *Elohim*, rendered as, *God*, is a plural term. Much comment could be made on the some of the subtleties of the Hebrew in these verses, but for our purposes, the important point is that the concept of the Trinity is compatible with the language of these verses. For example, when Genesis describes the creation of mankind, the language implies a plural identity of God.

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness;... And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* (Genesis 1:26-27)

The expression, *let Us*, and the plural personal pronoun, *Our*, implies a reference to more than one person. We know that God was not talking to the angels because man is made in the image of God. Thus, as was true of the plurality of *Elohim*, the language is compatible with the concept of the Trinity.

Concerning the role of the Son in creation, once again, the prologue to John's Gospel comes into play. John, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.... He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. (John 1:1-3, 10)

Later in the prologue, John identified the Logos as Jesus Christ.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.¹⁵ John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" (John 1:14-15)

Paul, describing Jesus Christ's role in the creation, wrote to the Colossians,

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.

¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him.¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:14-16)

B. God as Sustainer

This last phrase of this quote from Colossians, (verse 16) calls to mind the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews 1:1-3 declares, not only the Son's involvement in the creation but His ongoing role as sustainer of the creation.

*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, **through whom also He made the world.**³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, **and upholds all things by the word of His power.** When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

Paul also asserts this truth (Christ as both creator and sustainer) in his first Letter to the Corinthians,

yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. (I Corinthians 8:6)

These verses combined, tell us that the Father created through the Son, and it is the Son who now, *holds all things together* (Colossians) and *upholds all things by the word of His power* (Hebrews) and *we exist through Him* (I Corinthians).

Conclusion Concerning the Role of the Trinity in Creation and Its Role in Sustaining the Creation

Given the accumulative evidence that we have reviewed, the clear conclusion is that Scripture presents each member of the Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) as having a role in creating heaven, earth, and all that in them is. Therefore, we conclude that the creation is the result of the activity of the Trinity. Furthermore, Scripture states that the ongoing existence of the creation is because the creation is sustained by God.

ARTICLE IV: THE TRINITY'S ONGOING RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMANITY

The entire corpus of Scripture, from the first chapter of the first book, Genesis, to the final chapter of the final book, Revelation, has its central subject, God's involvement with humanity. The picture presented of God and man in Scripture is that of God's desire to have creatures made in His Image, with whom He will live forever. God's compelling love for mankind is demonstrated and declared time and again in Scripture.

A. God's ultimate goal for the race made in His Image is described in Revelation 21:1-4

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

² *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

³ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle.²⁰ of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them,*

⁴ *and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

God's ultimate goal for humanity, embodying His purpose in creating humans, is to have a people with whom He will spend eternity.

B. Scripture is the story of God's repeated efforts to bring this about

- Beginning with the creation of man in His image
- The tragedy of man's alienation from God through sin
- God's ultimate provision for an holy people, accomplished through the redemption of man, provided through the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God on the cross.

²⁰ The term, *tabernacle*, in the English Bibles is the result of Jerome's translation of the Scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. Jerome's translation, the Vulgate Version (*vulgate* is the Latin term meaning, *common*) was the prevailing version of the Scriptures until the Sixteenth Century.

When Jerome translated the Greek term, σκηνή (*skaynay*) and the Hebrew, מִשְׁכָּן (*miskan*) both of which mean, *tent*, he rendered these terms with the Latin term for tent, *tabernaculum*. When the translators producing the English Bibles encountered these terms in the Greek and Hebrew, especially when the reference was to a sacred tent, they rendered these terms with Jerome's Latin term, *tabernaculum*, hence, *tabernacle*. This is an important thing to remember, in that each time these terms are used, they indicate God's dwelling place. Thus, John 1:14, usually rendered as, *dwelt among us*, literally says that Jesus, *tented among us* and Revelation 21:3, rendered as *dwell among them*, literally states that He will *spread his tent among them*. In a sense, this could be paraphrased as, stating that God entered our encampment.

The narrative of God's actions to bring about His ultimate desire for humanity presents the following picture.

1. The narrative of God's involvement with humanity begins with the account of God's creation of mankind, made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:1). The image referred to is not mankind's physical appearance, because God is a Spirit (John 4:24).

It is relevant to note that in the Genesis description of the creation of animal life that God said, *let there be...* and the creatures came into being, without any hint of their not immediately being filled with life. With man it was not so. God took of the dust of the earth and formed man and then the God *breathed into man's nostrils and man became a living soul* (Genesis 2:7). The creation of the first woman also differs from the account of the creation the other living creatures (Genesis 2:18-23).

Scripture is replete with a description of creatures known as *angels*, but these are not created in God's image.

Thus, God created mankind, male and female, in His image, which refers to the spiritual life in each human, something that none of the other living creatures possessed.

2. God did not want robots who had no choice but to love Him and obey Him. So, among the trees and vegetable life of the Garden, God placed a tree which He named, *the tree of good and evil* (Genesis 2:9). God told the man that he could eat of every tree in the Garden, except this one tree and that if he did, he would die (Genesis 2:17). This began the pattern displayed in the ongoing narrative of God's involvement with humanity.

Because of His desire for those made in His Image to choose to have an exclusive relationship with Him, but not wanting robots who had no choice, God always extended to mankind the ability to choose Him for who He is, or to make some other choice.

3. Sadly, humanity began the pattern of choosing a path that did not honor and reverence God. The pattern began in the Garden, when the chief of the fallen angels, Satan, appeared to the woman as a serpent and told her that God had lied when He said that if they ate of the tree of good and evil that they would die. He told the woman that God did not want them to eat of the tree, because if they did, they would be like God (Genesis 3:1-5). Sadly, the woman believed the lie.

Looking at the tree, she saw that it was beautiful, that its fruit would be good to eat, and, if the serpent was correct, would make her wise. She took fruit from the tree, ate it, but she did not immediately die. She then gave some of the fruit to her husband, and he ate. Immediately, they became self-aware, as they had not been before (Genesis 3:6-7).

This act caused an immediate end to their relationship with God. Rather than freely enjoying His Presence, they became afraid of God. When God approached them in the Garden, they hid from Him (Genesis 3:8-10). In consequence they were expelled from the Garden with a promise that in coming generations one of woman's descendants would crush the head of Satan, but that in the process, Satan would bruise the descendant's heel (Genesis 3:15). This cryptic statement was the first proclamation of God's ultimate plan to restore the relationship between Himself and mankind.

4. Adam & Eve had two sons. In a fit of jealousy one son, Cain, killed his brother, Abel. Cain's descendants were very gifted, but they were not godly. In time, Adam and Eve

had another son, Seth, who was a godly man (Genesis 4:26). His initial descendants followed in his footsteps, but in time, they began to intermarry with the descendants of Cain and humanity strayed so far from God that every thought and intent of their heart was continually evil (Genesis 6:1-5).

God was greatly grieved that He had created mankind, and He planned to destroy all creatures with a great flood. However, because He desired to spend eternity with those made in His Image, He chose a man and his family to perpetuate the human race. All of humanity was destroyed in the great flood, except for the eight souls of Noah's family (Genesis Chapters 6-9).

The descendants of Noah multiplied and spread out throughout the world. In time, as had been true of the predecessors, they forgot the true God and began worshipping false gods.

5. Once again, God started over. He chose out of the human race, a man named Abram whose descendants would provide a family from which God could have a people for Himself. These descendants of Abraham received from God a covenant, that made them His special people. In time, the members of this nation once again were infected with idolatry and so pagan nations were allowed to invade their land and carry them off into exile. Two of the tribes of this nation were taken to Babylon, where they were interred for 70 years. By the end of the 70 years they were cleansed of idolatry, and they were allowed to return to their homeland. Never again was idolatry found in their land.
6. In their homeland, they became very legalistic. Among other flaws, they began teaching human traditions for the traditions of God. They became a people who worshipped God with their lips, but their hearts were far from God (Matthew 15:8; Mark 7:6). Once again, God started over with His final move to have a people for Himself.
7. In 4 BC, an angel appeared to a virgin in the city of Nazareth, informing her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, she would become pregnant, and give birth to a baby, who would, in reality, be the incarnated Second Person of the Godhead. At the age of thirty years, this incarnated being, was revealed to the world as the prophesied Christ, the Son of God. The incarnated Son of God lived a sinless life. In 30 AD, He who did not share humanity's curse of death, and being sinless, died as a representative of the human race. He became sin and thus, sin was crucified (II Corinthians 5:21). In this act He achieved a propitiation of the sins of the world. From that time onward, all who accept his atoning work, in the manner that God has prescribed, have become God's spiritual children, with whom God will spend eternity.
8. Thus, there is a people with whom God will *spread His tent*, and dwell among them for eternity (Revelation 21:3)
9. Most humans will not be among those with whom God will spend eternity. Our Lord Jesus Christ emphasized this truth.

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

C. The New Testament Scriptures record God's provision whereby humans may become one of those with whom God will spend eternity.

How does one find the gate that leads to life? Several Scriptures are relevant to the answer to this question. The first we note is the clear statement of Jesus,

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

² *"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ "And you know the way where I am going."*

⁵ *Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"*

⁶ *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (John 14:1-6)*

A second statement related to this question, are the words of Jesus recorded in John 6.

"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44 NAS)

"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. (John 6:37 NAS)

How does the Father draw a person to Jesus? Again, Scripture contains the answer. In dealing with whether or not the Jews have an access to God that the Gentiles do not have, Paul wrote the following,

for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him;

¹³ *for "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved." ¹⁴ How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"*

¹⁶ *However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:10-17)*

Thus, it is clear that by the proclamation of the Good News concerning the person of Christ, His atoning work, and His providing the way to heaven for us, one is called by God to come to Christ.

Also, in this same passage, Paul notes that not all who hear will respond as they should (verse 16). Thus, even though God calls through the preaching of the Gospel, those who hear are free to reject it. This continues the manifestation of God's desire for individuals to willingly obey Him, rather than His compelling them to do so.

In his first letter to Corinth, Paul summarized the contents of the Gospel, which is a proclamation of the events that make possible the redemption from sin and a person's having a place in that group with which God will spend eternity.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

²*by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

³*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures... (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NAS)*

Behind all of this is the beautiful statement that John penned,

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

ARTICLE V: GOD'S ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, "WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

This is the most important question that a person can ask, and its answer must be found in the New Testament (see ADDENDUM O for how contemporary denominations answer this question).

- The good news about Jesus, is rightly called *the Gospel message*, i.e., *the Good News*.
- The instructions as to how one is to respond to the Gospel, is *the salvation message*.

The Philippian jailor, having first been filled with terror, and then overcome by extreme gratitude, asked Paul and Silas the most important question that can be asked by any living human being, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

The question and its answer are of eternal import. Regardless of how long one's earthly sojourn might be, in comparison to the millennia that have gone before and the eternity that looms in the future, one's earthly life is no more than a twinkle of the eye. Physical death and what follows death is a reality that cannot be avoided. The writer of Hebrews declares with absolute finality, *... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment...* (Hebrews 9:27)

Although theatre goers may find some sort of satisfaction in the bravado displayed in Western films when a desperado facing certain death declares to his assailant, "I'll see you in hell," the prospect of entering into hell after being judged by God is too horrible to be accepted with stoic resignation. Although the question, *what must I do to be saved*, may spring from many motives, both noble and ignoble, avoidance of hell certainly is a rational and sane reason to ask that question. If for no other reason than the certainty of death and the judgment, getting the answer right is the sanest reason for being certain that one answers the question correctly.

Turning to Scripture, we find a number of different statements made concerning the answer to the question, *What must I do to be saved*, and what is required for one to be forgiven his sins. Taken as isolated statements, apart from the context, some of the statements seem to be contradictory. Here are some random examples:

Mark 16:15-16 *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.*

I Peter 3:21 *Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

Acts 22:16 *'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

Acts 16:31 *They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

Romans 10:10 *for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

Acts 2:38 *Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Matthew 10:32 *"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.*

Luke 13:3, 5 *"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish....⁵ "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

We could continue listing one verse after another, demonstrating the diversity of scriptural comments on the topic of salvation and forgiveness of sins. What are we to make of this; how can we make sense out of this confusion – which is so obvious in the varied answers offered by the different branches of Christendom.

In pursuing the answer, we will examine the post-Pentecostal apostolic response to the question.

The reason for turning to the post-Pentecostal record, rather than examining episodes in the Gospels is the fact that the episodes in the Gospels preceded the cross, and therefore were contingent upon that atoning sacrifice.

During His earthly ministry and prior to the sacrificial death, Jesus spoke forgiveness of sins upon individuals. One of the most noteworthy is recorded in Mark 2:1-12. Jesus was teaching in a house in Capernaum. Four men, who wanted their friend who was sick of palsy to be healed, sought to carry the man into Jesus' presence. They could not gain entrance into His presence because the crowd was so great, both inside and outside the house. So, they tore some tiles from the roof and lowered their friend to a spot right in front of Jesus.

And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?⁹ "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk '? "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins "-- He said to the paralytic,¹¹ "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."

And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this." (Mark 2:5-12)

Another memorable instance is Jesus words to the thief on the cross:

And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"⁴³ And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)

Can we look to these and other pre-Calvary and pre-apostolic episodes as models? Several answers could be given as to why we cannot do so, but Hebrews 9:14-17 should suffice:

how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

These verses point out that a will (covenant, testament) is not in force as long as the testator is alive. While the testator is alive, he can distribute his possessions in any manner that he wishes – but after his death, such distribution can be made only upon the conditions of his will. Thus, for Jesus' "will and testament" to be in force, He had to die. Prior to His death, Jesus distributed forgiveness and other graces totally apart from what His will decreed for the era after His death.

Today, we operate under the conditions of this New Testament (will or covenant), which became the authority after Jesus' death.

How can we know, clearly, the conditions of Jesus' will? We must look to the apostles and those who were of the generation immediately following the apostles for the answer to the question, *What must I do to be saved?*

Why should we trust the apostolic answer more than we trust the various answers given by sincere men such as Calvin, Luther, Wesley, and those of the Roman and Greek Catholic traditions?

There are four reasons why we look to the apostolic model as the answer to the question:

1. For more than three years, they had been instructed, daily, by the Lord.
2. They had the Great Commission.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."¹⁶ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)²¹

²¹ This portion of Mark (verses 9-20) apparently was not in the original document. However, the fact that these words were added early on, is testimony to the beliefs of the early church, and a record of what they experienced (the miracles, etc.), else, why would it have been added. There are four endings to the Gospel according to Mark in presently known manuscripts: (1) the last twelve verses

3. Jesus also had promised that after His departure, the Holy Spirit would guide them and lead them into all truth.

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)

"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."¹³ "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."¹⁴ "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. (John 16:12-14)

4. The statements in the Epistles concerning salvation were penned by the apostles. Certainly, the apostolic practices described in Acts would not have been done in contradiction to the doctrines they espoused in the Epistles. Therefore, their writings must be understood in harmony with their practices and the sermons recorded in Acts.

Because of these reasons, we conclude that the model displayed by the apostles and their instructions accompanying that model, is what Jude labeled, *the faith once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3).

The question thus becomes, *what was the apostolic answer to the question, "what must I do to be saved?"* To discover the apostolic answer, we will survey the Acts of the Apostles and learn whether or not there is a consistent or varied apostolic response to the question. We will take the random statements concerning salvation noted above and see which of these elements were present in each situation and which ones were absent in some instances and present in others.

There are nine reports of conversions in Acts that contain sufficient information and detail to aid us in our quest. There are seventeen episodes of which the account is so general or abbreviated that they do not provide sufficient information to assist us in searching for the answer to our question.²²

In order to give some order to our study, we will use the following table and build it successively from event to event.

are missing from the two oldest Greek manuscripts, from the Old Latin codex Bobienesis, the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, about one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (written about 897 and 913 AD), Clement of Alexandria and Origin show no knowledge of these verses. A number of later manuscripts that do contain these verses have notes indicating that the copyist considered them to be spurious additions to the document; (2) Several Uncial manuscripts of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries as well as Old Latin k, a marginal insertion in the Harclean Syriac, several Sahidic and Boharic manuscripts, as well as some Ethiopic manuscripts continue after verse 8 as follows, "but they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told; and after this Jesus Himself sent out by means of them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation." All but one of these sources then continue with verses 9-20. (3) The traditional ending of Mark, as displayed in the KJV, is found in the manuscripts that compose the Textus Receptus, from which the KJV was rendered. The Uncials of this group date from the fifth to the thirteenth century. (4) In the fourth century, according to Jerome, there was a very expanded form of the verses following verse 8, preserved today in one Greek manuscript, Codex Washingtonianus.

²² Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; 11:21; 11:24; 12:24; 13:12; 13:49; 14:1; 14:21; 16:5; 17:4; 17:12; 17:34; 19:18; 28:24; See ADDEMDUM P for an examination of these seventeen episodes and an explanation why each one is not included in our survey

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
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In each event we will list the elements in the following fashion:

- The element is clearly stated
- The element is strongly implied²³
- If neither of the above is true, the space will be left blank

Case Study No. 1 Acts Chapter 2

The first example before us is the proclamation of the Gospel in the inaugural event of the Church Age. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Peter indicted the Pentecost crowd of having killed Jesus – the one whom God had elevated and made *both Lord and Christ*.

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--²³ this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death....Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:22-23, 36)²⁴

Through Peter's Holy Spirit empowered preaching, the crowd was brought under conviction. We can only imagine the horror and fear that entered their hearts when they realized what they had done – they had murdered the Messiah! In desperation they cried out, *men and brethren, what shall we do!!!*

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

Peter's answer, combined with Luke's record of the crowd's response to Peter's instructions, present a paradigm that is displayed, to some degree, in the eight other case studies. For this reason, we will devote considerable space in the examination of this first case study, giving special attention to the terms and a full-orbed discussion of their meaning. The conclusions reached in these explorations are relevant to the remaining eight episodes.

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

The first word that catches our attention is the first word of Peter's response, *repent*.

What was Peter telling them to do when he told them to repent? The Greek term is μετανοέω (*metanoëo*), which strictly means *to perceive afterwards*,²⁵ but functionally means *to change one's mind*. Certainly, the concept of regret must have been present in their outcry, but what did Peter mean when he told them to change their minds? From the preceding context, it would seem that Peter was instructing them to change their minds about Jesus, i.e., *you executed him as*

²³ How strongly an unstated element is implied in the account may be debated. We will be conservative in our evaluation.

²⁴ All scriptural quotes in this paper are from the 1995 edition of the New American Standard Bible, unless noted otherwise.

²⁵ Friberg, Timothy and Barbara, *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Victoria BC Canada, Trafford Publishing) 2005 μετανοέω entry

a criminal and someone to be mocked, but now I exhort you to own Him as Lord and Christ. In other words, change your mind about who Jesus was and who He is.

This term expresses more than mere sorrow or grief resulting from one's actions. It expresses the appropriate action in response to that grief. There is another Greek term, also rendered as *repent* that expresses such sorrow and grief. That term is μεταμέλομαι (*metamelomai*). This is the term used for Judas' remorse.

Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse (metamelomai) and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!"⁵ And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5)

Remorse and grief over one's sin and one's sinful condition is appropriate, but it is not enough. Judas *metamellomai*ed and went out and hanged himself.

Paul contrasts the difference between remorse/grief and the repentance that leads to salvation in II Corinthians 7:9-10

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance (metanoeo); for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.¹⁰ For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance (metanoeo) without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.²⁶

Thus, the repentance that leads to salvation is a change of mind, and the change of life produced by having this new mind.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

Understood this way, the repentance that Peter was calling for is synonymous with belief/faith, i.e., *believe that Jesus is who I have declared Him to be – both Lord and Christ.*

Part two of Peter's instruction was to be baptized, every one of you.

Because contemporary churches display three different practices that they call, *baptism* (sprinkling, pouring, immersion), we must take the time to seek the definition that Peter, as recorded by Luke, would have given to the term. Is there a clear understanding concerning what both Jesus (in the great commission) and Peter meant when they spoke of *baptism*?²⁷

²⁶ The terms that Paul uses for sorrow and grief in this passage are the verb, λυπέω (*lupeo*), rendered as *sorrowful* in verse 9, the noun, λύπη (*lupe*), rendered as *sorrow* in verse 10.

²⁷ The English term, *baptism*, is an Anglicization of the Greek term, βαπτίζω (*baptidzo*). At least as early as the Sixteenth Century (Tyndale – 1534, Bishop's Bible - 1595, Geneva Bible - 1599, etc.) the practice of Anglicizing the term in English translations, rather than translating this term, had become a common practice. The motive for Anglicization, rather than translation, can only be guessed, but by creating this English term, the resulting ambiguity allowed the continuance of a variety of modes of *baptism* among English speaking church groups.

Quite naturally, the first place to turn seeking the answer would be Greek lexicons. The two most popular of these are Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*,²⁸ and Bauer, Gingrich, Arndt & Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (this volume is colloquially referred to as BGAD, referring to the names of the editors and translators of the English edition).²⁹ Both Thayer and BGAD give a number of examples of the use of these terms, and the outcome of their use. We will confine ourselves to those definitions given in these two volumes that are relevant to our pursuit.

Thayer, accompanied with citations gives the following definitions that are relevant to our study:³⁰

- Primary meaning: to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge
- To cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water
- Metaphorically: to overwhelm

BGAD, accompanied with citations gives the following definitions that are relevant to our study:

- Primary meaning: to dip, immerse, dip oneself, wash, plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm
- Jewish ritual washings
- Typologically of Israel's passage through the Red Sea

Why do these lexicons give these definitions to the term? Where do the authors and editors of these important reference books go to obtain these definitions? They arrive at these definitions by researching literature where these terms are used and seek to find those instances in which the action described is irrefutably defined.

Interestingly, all of the definitions cited above indicate some sort of immersion or being placed into, in the midst of, or under some element – whether it be water or emotional experience. The possible exception is BGAD's citation of *Jewish ritual washings* and Thayer's, *to make clean with water*. It must be determined how these ritual washings were conducted in order for this use of the term to be an exception to the primary understanding of the term (which both BGAD and Thayer describe as *immersion, dipping, plunging, etc.*). So, we will conduct a cursory examination of the use of the term, βαπτίζω [*baptidzo*], and its cognates.

A document in which there is no doubt as to the use of the term is an episode recounted by Flavius Josephus. Josephus describes how a jealous Herod assassinated the young Aristobulus whom Herod himself recently had made the High Priest. Aristobulus had been receiving praise of the people, which aroused Herod's jealousy. Herod determined to do away with Aristobulus. While Herod and Aristobulus were being entertained by Alexander at a party at Jericho, a situation developed that provided Herod the opportunity to eliminate Aristobulus. It was a very hot day and a number of men, friends and servants of Herod, had jumped into the fishponds to

²⁸ Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1896, Fourth Printing 2000.

²⁹ William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, a translation and revision of the fourth revised edition of Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsches Worterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der ubrigen urchristlichen Literatur* Second Edition (Chicago, University of Chicago Press) 1957, 1959

³⁰ BGAD and Thayer, as well as most lexicons, cite texts illustrating the use of the term (such as the baptism of martyrdom – Mark 10:38; Luke 12:50), but the definitions that related to the mode are the ones that are of interest to our quest.

cool off. As they were swimming about, Herod and Aristobulus watched the playful action until Herod persuaded Aristobulus to join in the fun. At Herod's instructions, some of his servants began to push Aristobulus under the water playfully, but then they got serious and immersed him until he had drowned. The term Josephus used to describe this action is, βαπτίζω. The form of the verb is the present tense participle, meaning that they immersed him, and immersed him, and immersed him, until he strangled.³¹

“...the young man at the instigation of Herod, went into the water among them, while such of Herod's acquaintance as he had appointed to do it, dipped him as he was swimming, and plunged him under water, in the dark of the evening, as if it had been done in sport only; nor did they desist till he was entirely suffocated.”³²

It would be quite a stretch to define the term in this passage in any other way than, *to immerse* or *submerge*.

Here are a couple of quotes from Greek literature:

- Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine (460 to 357 BC), describing the breathing of a patient who was afflicted with an inflammation and swelling of the throat, wrote, "And she breathed, as a man does after being dipped (βαπτίζω) over head and ear."³³
- Aristotle (384-322 BC) "They say that the Phoenicians who inhabit the city called Gades, when they sail outside the Pillars of Heracles, under an easterly wind for four days, arrive at certain desolate places, full of rushes and seaweed, and that these places are not covered with water, whenever there is an ebb, but, whenever there is a flood, they are overflowed (βαπτίζω)."³⁴

We would find the same use and definition of the term if we examined the host of other passages of literature in which the term is used describing some sort of immersion (sinking of a ship, dying a garment, etc.).

No one denies that this is the normal definition of βαπτίζω, but what are we to make of the instances in which the term is used for *ritual washings*, as cited by BGAD and Thayer's, *to make clean with water*? Two passages are cited by BGAD: Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38.

Are these passages exceptions to that definition? It is important for us to examine them to determine exactly what they say.

³¹ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 15, Chapter 3, section 3. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν ἑώρων τοὺς νέοντας τῶν οἰκετῶν καὶ φίλων, ἔπειτα προαχθέντος καὶ τοῦ μειρακίου τῷ καὶ τον Ἡρώδη παροξύναι, τῶν φίλων οἷς ταῦτα ἐπιτέτακτο σκότους ἐπέγοντος βαροῦντες ἀεὶ καὶ βαπτίζοντες ὡς ἐν παιδιᾷ νηχόμενον οὐκ ἀνᾶκαν, ἕως καὶ παντάπασιν ἀποπνίζαι. The term, βαπτίζοντες, in the above quote, is the nominative, plural, masculine, present, active, participle, of the verb, βαπτίζω.

³² Josephus *Complete Works*, William Whitson, AM, translator (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications) 1981, page 317. The translation of this passage by Whitson is a very free rendering.

³³ John Redman Coxe MD *The Writings of Hippocrates and Galen* (Philadelphia Lindsay and Blakiston) 1846 page 426

³⁴ *The Works Of Aristotle*, translated into English under the editorship of J A. Smith M.A. Fellow Of Balliol College W. D. Ross M.A. Fellow Of Oriol College (Oxford at the Clarendon Press) 1909 page 39

Mark 7:3-4 reads

For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders;⁴ and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing [βαπτίζω] of cups and pitchers and copper pots.

The versions that follow the *Textus Receptus* [Received Text] also known as the *Byzantine Text* (on which the King James Version is based), add to the list of things that are baptized, *tables* or as some read, *dining couches*. Thus, in this family of manuscripts, there are four things mentioned as being baptized: cups, pitchers, brazen pots, and dining couches (tables). However, because a host of other manuscripts omit this fourth item, versions based on modern scholarship either omit this fourth item or list it in brackets as questionable. If the fourth item is omitted, then to immerse the other three items would be the normal manner of washing. Prior to having indoor plumbing and running water, the usual method of washing dishes was to put them into dishpan or some other vessel, cover them with water, wash them, and then rinse them in another pan of water – in other words, - *to baptize them....twice* (I speak from years of washing dishes).

Literally, the Greek states in verse 3 that the Jews do not eat unless they first wash *with the fist* (which some versions render as *carefully wash*). The term rendered, *wash*, is *νίπτω* (*nipto*) which simply means, *to wash*.

Verse 4, as rendered in most versions, states that *when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they cleanse* [some versions, *wash*] *themselves* –. The term rendered as *wash* or *cleanse themselves* presents another textual challenge. Some manuscripts have the term, *ῥαντίζω* (*hrantidzo*), which means *to sprinkle*, and some have *βαπτίζω* (*baptidzo*).

Manuscripts that have an Alexandrian (western) origin have *hrantidzo* and those from some other regions have *baptidzo*. So, it's a toss-up as to which rendering is correct. Wescott & Hort and Eberhard & Irwin Nestle opted for *hrantidzo* but Aland, Metzger, and their associates opt for *baptidzo*. Regardless of which of these terms was in the original, the Greek text can be rendered as – *Unless they wash (sprinkle or immerse) what is from the marketplace, they do not eat it.*³⁵³⁶

In context, this rendering does make sense:

- They wash their hands thoroughly (with the fist)
- They wash (sprinkle or immerse) what they bring from the marketplace
- They wash (immerse in a dish pan) cups, pitchers, and copper pots.

If the above explanations are correct, and I believe that they are, there is nothing in this description of ritual washing that would require any other understanding of *baptidzo* than the usual meaning – *to immerse*.

³⁵ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* Mark 7:4.

Βαπτίζονται (United Bible Societies) 1971, page 93

³⁶ Literally, the Greek reads, *and from market, unless they....they eat not*. The translator must decide whether to render these words to mean what they bring from the market, or when they, themselves, come from the market.

The other passage cited by BGAD is Luke 11:38

When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.

There are no textual difficulties in this verse. The term rendered, *ceremonially washed*³⁷, is *baptidzo*. That being true, is there anything in this verse that would prohibit our understanding of *baptidzo* as something other than *to immerse*? Again, before the advent of indoor plumbing and running water, the custom followed in washing hands was to have a pan of water into which one immersed his hands and washed them (I speak from experience, having washed my hands in this manner in rural Oklahoma many times as a child, where water was drawn from a well or a spring and placed on a stand in which everyone washed his hands – immersing them, then wiping them off with a towel – everyone used the same towel). So, the fact that the term, *baptidzo* is used, would indicate how the washing occurred – the hands were dipped into a basin, even as a Roman Catholic priest dips his hands into a basin to be ceremonially clean. There is nothing in this passage to contradict the understanding of *baptidzo* as immersion. For that matter, I would argue that the use of the term, *baptidzo*, in this passage was deliberate, describing the method of ceremonial washing. Otherwise, the term, *νίπτω* (*nipto*), which simply means, *to wash* (used seventeen times in the New Testament to describe a washing) would have been used.³⁸

Even though lexical considerations are important they are not as important to us as is the testimony of the apostles and the early Church. Is there evidence that the early church understood immersion in water to be the rite of initiation into the Kingdom? Yes, there is.

First we note the testimony of the Roman Catholic Church. The footnote on Romans 6:3 in the *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*,³⁹ states,

“Ver. 3. St Paul alludes to the manner in which Baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive Church, by immersion. The descent into the water is suggestive of the descent of the body into the grave, and the ascent is suggestive of the resurrection to a new life. St. Paul obviously gives more than a mere symbol in the rite of Baptism. As a result of it we are incorporated into Christ’s mystical body and live a new life.”⁴⁰

³⁷ The term, *ceremonially*, is not in the Greek. The term was added by the NAS translators for clarification.

³⁸ The Modern Greek Bible uses the term *νίπτω* at this point in Luke 11:38

³⁹ *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*, Confraternity Edition, A Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version Edited by Catholic Scholars under the Patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Imprimatur: Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York (New York, Catholic Book Publishing Company) 1957, page 199

⁴⁰ Some sources state that at a Council in Ravenna, in 1311, whether to immerse or to sprinkle was declared to be indifferent. For example, see Carl Mitchell, *The history of How Sprinkling Replaced Immersion As a Baptismal Form* www.searchforbiblicaltruth.com, which cites some references, but all are secondary sources. I have not been able to discover any evidence for a Council of Ravenna in 1311, even though non-Roman Catholic writers frequently mention it (even authorities such as the *Edinburgh Cyclopaedia*, Vol. 33, pp. 245, 246). Roman Catholic sources contend that this was not a council but at best, no more than a synod of local bishops, and thus had no authority in the Church.

A second testimony is that of the Eastern Orthodox family of churches. Greek is the liturgical language of this family of churches, regardless of the nation in which the church is located. As noted in the beginning section of this paper, the Eastern Orthodox immerse infants, because you can't tell a Greek-speaking church that *baptidzo* means anything other than *to immerse*. The Eastern Orthodox Churches continued the ancient practice of immersion, whereas the Western Latin Churches began to tolerate, and in time, practice, sprinkling and pouring rather than to immerse.

It is significant that both of the most ancient institutional churches acknowledge immersion as the New Testament practice: Roman Catholicism by the footnote to Romans 6 and the Orthodox Church by continuing to immerse, rather than sprinkle or pour.

An ancient testimony relevant to our quest is found in the *Didache*, section VII. The *Didache* (the formal title is *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*) has been dated as early as 40-60 AD (J.A.T. Robinson).⁴¹ Dr. C. Bigg dated the document as late First or early Second Century, because the document allows for pouring, when circumstances prevented immersion – something he contended was not allowed until the late date – he also saw the practice of fasting prior to immersion as further evidence for its late date.⁴² Most recently the date of its composition has been considered to be around 120 AD.⁴³ Here is the section pertinent to our study:

“And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.”

This document clearly indicates that the manner of baptizing was by immersion, but if such water were not available (for example, a conversion that took place in prison), then do what is expedient – do your best to make it like an immersion by pouring water three times on the convert. Clearly, a tradition had arisen of making the baptism as near as possible to the outdoor baptisms of the New Testament. Fasting prior to baptism, also was a non-biblical tradition, but that is not relevant to our point.

Another evidence of immersion's being the manner of baptizing in the early church is the oldest church building discovered by archaeologists. In 256 AD, the city of Dura-Europas (located in modern day Syria), was attacked by the Sassanians. In order to prepare for the expected onslaught, the Roman garrison shored up the western city wall by filling with dirt and debris the street that ran along the inside of the wall. The buildings adjacent to Wall Street were covered to form a wider wall and the remaining buildings were leveled so that the garrison could defend the area more effectively. By doing this, they preserved one of the most important archaeological items related to the early Church. One of the buildings covered with dirt was a

⁴¹ John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (SCM Press 1976)

⁴² Bigg, C. (1904). "Notes on the Didache. I: On Baptism by Affusion". *The Journal of Theological Studies* (20): 579–84. doi:10.1093/jts/os-V.20.579. Bigg, C. (1904). "Notes on the Didache. II: On Certain Points in the First Chapter". *The Journal of Theological Studies* (20): 584–9. doi:10.1093/jts/os-V.20.584 Bigg, C. (1905). "Notes on the Didache". *The Journal of Theological Studies* (23): 411–5. doi:10.1093/jts/os-VI.23.411.

⁴³ <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didache.html>

church building. In 1928, Dura-Europos was excavated by a team of French and American archaeologists. In the process of their excavation, the team uncovered this church building. Three stages of development were found on the site: (1) a very early dwelling (2) a later house (3) the adaptation of the house to be used as a church building. The house had been adapted into a church building sometime between 232 and 256 AD (the year of the Sassanian onslaught).

Of special significance to the question of immersion is the baptistery. The north side of the assembly room contained a baptistery, set into the wall. The construction of the baptistery is identical to the manner in which baptisteries built today by churches that practice immersion. When looking at a photo of the Dura-Europos baptistery, one would think that he might be looking at a baptistery in a Southern Baptist or a Church of Christ church building. Clearly, the Dura-Europos Christians, before 256 AD, practiced immersion.⁴⁴

Interestingly, the first reliable record of anyone's being baptized by *aspersion* (sprinkling with water), is that of Novatus, reported by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, written in the time of Constantine (c325 AD).⁴⁵ Novatus was quite ill and all expected him to die – too sick to take to a pool for immersion - so, they bestowed clinical baptism upon him (sprinkling or pouring buckets of water on the patient). However, Novatus did not die – he recovered.⁴⁶ After his recovery, he aspired to be ordained to the office of bishop. He seems to have been an ambitious man. Many of the church members objected, and one of their main objections to Novatus' becoming a bishop was that he had not been immersed. They argued that one who had received only aspersion on his sick bed should not be ordained as a bishop – and Novatus refused to be immersed.⁴⁷ Eusebius agreed with those who objected, i.e., that only one who had been immersed should become a bishop. So, even in this document, it is clear that immersion was the understood manner of baptism, and the efficacy of clinical baptism, as expediency, was questionable to some.⁴⁸

The reformers understood the word to refer to immersion.

- **Luther, in his Works Vol XI p.76, 1551 edition:** *On this account I could wish that such as are baptized should be completely immersed into water according to the meaning of the word and signification of the ordinance... as also without a doubt it was instituted by*

⁴⁴ The architecture of ancient church buildings later than Dura-Europa attest to the fact that for 1300 years, immersion was the practice. Many of the beautiful ancient cathedrals, dating prior to 1300 either had baptisteries in them, or in some cases, a separate building which was a baptistery.

⁴⁵ The fact that Novatus, upon his sick bed was baptized by aspersion is evidence that the practice did exist during the Fourth Century.

⁴⁶ Novatus was one of the leaders who insisted that Christians who caved in under persecution should not be admitted back into the Church after Constantine ended persecution. He was one of the leaders of those known as the *Cathari*. (Eusebius page 265)

⁴⁷ Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book VI, Chapter XLIII (Grand Rapids, Baker Bookhouse) reprinted 1994, page 266

⁴⁸ The first theologian in the Roman Catholic Church that said that sprinkling was equal to immersion was Thomas Aquinas, who died in 1274. In his *Summa Theologica*, he argued against those who were contending that immersion should be the only form. Aquinas allowed for either immersion or sprinkling. *Summa Theologica*, 3rd Part, Question 66, Article 7

*Christ*⁴⁹ Philip Schaff, commenting on Luther's statements and actions, states, "Luther sought to restore immersion, but without effect."⁵⁰

- **Calvin, in his *Institutes Book IV, Chapter 15, section 19*:** *It is evident that the term, baptize, means to immerse and that this was the form used by the Primitive church.*⁵¹

It must be noted that even though Calvin recognized immersion as the meaning of the term, and that such was the practice of the apostles and the New Testament Church, he does not consider Christ's use of the term, nor the apostolic practice to be binding. He states, *Whether the person baptized is to be wholly immersed, and that where once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according the diversity of climates.*⁵²

- **Philip Schaff, noted Reform Church historian and scholar, in his *History of the Apostolic Church, page 568*:** *Finally, as to the outward mode of administering the ordinance; immersion, and not sprinkling, was unquestionably the original normal form. This is shown by the very meaning of the Greek words, βαπτίζω, βάπτισμα, βάπτισμός, used to designate the rite. Then again, by the analogy of the baptism of John, which was performed in the Jordan (ἐν Matt. 3:6, compare 16; also εἰς τὸν ἰορδάνην, Mk. 1:9). Furthermore by the New Testament comparisons of baptism with the passage through the Red Sea (I Cor. 10:2), with the flood (I Pet. 3:21), with a bath (Eph. 5:26. Tit. 3:5), with a burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:4. Col. 2:12). Finally by the general usage of ecclesiastical antiquity, which was always immersion (as it is today in the Oriental and also the Graeco-Russian churches); pouring and sprinkling being substituted only in cases of urgent necessity, such as sickness and approaching death.*⁵³
- **Wesley in his *Notes on the New Testament*,** commenting on Romans 6:3, wrote, *We are buried with him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion. That as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory – Glorious power. Of the Father, so we also, by the same power, should rise again, and as he lives a new life in heaven, so we should walk in newness of life. This, says the apostle, our very baptism represents to us.*^{54 55}

⁴⁹ *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, The Sacrament of Baptism, 3:23.* See also sections 2.58, 3:12, 3:15, 3.22

⁵⁰ Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church, Volume II* (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1858, 1996, page 251, fn. 3

⁵¹ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1989, 1994, page 524

⁵² Calvin, *In loc.*

⁵³ Philip Schaff, translated by Edward D. Yeomans *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History* (New York, C. Scribner) 1854, page 568

⁵⁴ Wesley Center Online: *Notes on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (<http://Wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesley-notes-on-the-bibl/notes-on-st-pauls-epist...>) Wesley wrote these notes in 1755, when he was 52 years of age. The following year, 1756, he wrote his *Treatise on Baptism* (footnote 53)

⁵⁵ During his tenure in Georgia, Wesley was so convinced that only immersion was permitted that he put his whole future at stake over the issue. In 1736, he was approached by a Mrs. Parker, the wife of the bailiff of Savannah. She brought her baby to Wesley to be baptized. Wesley, as was his custom, prepared to immerse the baby. Mrs. Parker protested and said that she wanted her baby sprinkled. Wesley refused, on the basis that immersion was the only way. In September 1737, Wesley was tried on a number of charges (ten charges were brought against Wesley) and one of these was that he had refused

In summary, it is clear that even though one might find instances in which βαπτίζω was used to describe some act of washing (as noted in the above discussion of Mark 7:3-4 and Luke 11:38), it is clear that the apostles and the early church understood that Jesus had commanded immersion. In obedience to Our Lord's command, from Pentecost onward, it was the universal practice to immerse converts – until clinical baptism emerged as an expedient substitute, when immersion was impossible – even then, it was questioned, until later centuries, when both Catholic and those Protestant Churches that came directly from Catholicism, began to practice sprinkling and pouring.

In the rest of this paper, we will, from time to time, substitute the term, *immersion* for the Anglicized term, *baptism*

Peter's next words were, *in the name of Jesus Christ.*

These words catch our attention because in most of our English Versions of the New Testament, Jesus commissioned the apostles to go and disciple all the nations and the manner in which that was to be done was *immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatever I commanded you.*

Was Peter disobeying Jesus by developing a new baptismal formula – *in the name of Jesus Christ*, rather than as Jesus had commanded, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*? In an effort to resolve this issue (because in some quarters it has become an important issue), we must, once again, conduct a detailed examination of the two passages.

Of signal importance is the use of prepositions in these passages.

Matthew 28:19 contains the preposition εἰς (*eis*) which, carries the idea of movement. In English, this is communicated by the preposition, *into*. Understood in this manner, Jesus commanded the apostles to make disciples of the nations, *immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 2:38 contains the preposition ἐπί (*epi*) with the dative case, which carries the idea, *on the basis of*.⁵⁶ Thus, Peter was urging them to be immersed on the basis of who Jesus is – in other

to sprinkle Mrs. Parker's baby (the charge, which was the fifth on the list, read, *By refusing to baptize Mr. Parker's child, otherwise than by dipping, except the parents would certify that the child was weak and not able to bear it*). He was forced to leave the colonies and return to England.

Later, in 1756, after Methodism was in full swing, Wesley wrote *A Treatise on Baptism*. In this treatise, (Section 1, paragraph 2), he contradicted his earlier position on immersion as the only form of baptism, *I say, by washing, dipping, or sprinkling; because it is not determined in Scripture in which of these ways it shall be done.* (personalpages.tds.net/~amiddlek/Theology/Treatise%20on%20Baptism.htm) Thus, he took one position in his firm stand in Georgia and his notes on Romans 6, but in his treatise, he espoused a contradictory position. All that can be said about this is that Wesley demonstrated ambiguity on the subject of the correct form of baptism.

⁵⁶ Greek prepositions convey different ideas with different cases. For example, ἐπί with the genitive case, means *over, on, or at the time of*; with the dative, it is understood as *on the basis of, or at*; with the accusative case, *on, to, against*. Thus, when rendering many Greek prepositions, the case of the noun or pronoun with which it is associated must be known, in order to render properly the preposition. Εἰς, which is the preposition in Matthew 28:19, occurs only with the accusative and has as its normal meaning, *into*.

words, based on the fact that you have changed your mind about Him, be immersed. This Greek construction also can be understood to mean that Peter, upon the authority of Christ and in obedience to Christ, was instructing them to be immersed. (Matthew 28:18ff)

This is in contrast to the use of εἰς in Matthew 28:19, which was speaking of the result of immersion – entering into a relationship with the Godhead. In essence, having one’s identity defined by one’s relationship with the Godhead, i.e. immersed *into*. Paul’s use of this construction in I Corinthians 1:12-13 illustrates this point.

Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in (εἰς - into) the name of Paul?

Paul used the same Greek pattern here that Jesus used in the Great Commission. The Corinthians were divided into camps, each camp bearing the name of one of the preachers. Paul asks them about their immersion – literally, *were any of you immersed into the name of Paul* (i.e., *into the Paul camp*)?

Thus, in the Great Commission, Jesus spoke of immersion as bringing the convert into the God Camp – into a relationship – belonging to – the Godhead.

Is there a New Testament immersion liturgy?

Understood this way, there is no conflict between Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38, but there is more to be considered. The New Testament does not contain any record of what was recited as converts were immersed. There is no record of a recited immersion liturgy, so we don’t know what, if anything, was said as converts were lowered into the water and lifted out to live in the newness of born-again life.

It is true that in the *Didache*, cited earlier, such a formula is presented. It also is of interest to note that later, in a discussion concerning who should and who should not partake of the Lord’s Supper, the *Didache* uses the same structure as Matthew 28:19, only with the Name of the Lord

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been immersed into the name of the Lord, for the Lord has spoken concerning this: "Do not give what is holy to the dogs."⁵⁷

Thus, in Section VII of the *Didache*, the instruction is to immerse *into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*, whereas here in Section IX the individual is immersed *into the name of the Lord*. Could it be that the Church in 120 AD did not make as big a deal out of this as some contemporary Christians have made of it?

Bill Sanders, recognizing this interesting situation, when immersing converts always recited, *In the name of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. That recitation recognized what Peter said on Pentecost and what Jesus said in the Great Commission.

⁵⁷ Μηδεις δε φαγετω μηδε πιετω απο της ευχαριστας υμων, αλλ’ οι βαπτισθεντες εις ονομα κυριου, και γαρ περι τουτου ειρηκεν ο κυριος. μη δωτε το αγιον τοις κυσι.

Peter's next words were, *for the forgiveness of sins.*

Once again, we encounter the preposition, εἰς - *into the forgiveness of sins* – or, as some scholars would render the preposition, *with a view toward*,⁵⁸ other scholars, *to the forgiveness of sins*,⁵⁹ and many *for the forgiveness of sins* (i.e. – purpose). The declaration is forward looking, not backward looking. Some would argue that one is to be immersed because he has been forgiven, i.e., he is saved and immersion is the response. This preposition, however, is forward looking, i.e., forgiveness of sins is the result of immersion, rather than immersion is in response to having been forgiven of sins.

Peter's promise to them was, *and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The term, *gift*, is δωρεά (*dorea*), which is the Greek term consistently used for the gift of the Holy Spirit, Himself,⁶⁰ not for the gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes. Thus, Peter promised that everyone who changed his/her mind about Jesus – that He is both Lord and Christ – and accepted Him as such - signifying that by being immersed - would receive the Holy Spirit.

The reception of the Holy Spirit into the life of the convert is the guarantee that he is saved.⁶¹

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (Romans 8:9)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,²² who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

Peter then declared that this promise was not just for the Jerusalem Pentecost crowd, but for all present and future generations that God would call to Himself.

for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. (Acts 2:39)

⁵⁸ Alfred Marshall, D.Litt, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament Acts 2:38* (London, Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited) 1959

⁵⁹ Jay P. Green, *Pocket Interlinear New Testament Acts 2:38* (Grand Rapids, Baker Bookhouse) 1983

⁶⁰ Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17

⁶¹ The seal in these passages refers to “branding.” When someone wrote a letter, wax was placed on the cover and the author would impress into the wax his personal seal – validating that it was from him – it was his letter. When the entrance to Jesus’ tomb was closed by rolling large stone over it, the Roman governor placed his seal upon it (Matthew 27:66), meaning that this was a Roman sealing of the tomb – it had the governor’s brand upon it. This is similar to the practice of branding cattle. When cattle graze in the open range, herds become mixed, but the ownership of each animal is established by noting the brand that has been burned on the hip. Thus, when one is saved, he receives the Holy Spirit as God’s brand – evidence that the believer belongs to the Lord and thus is assured of his/her place in the Kingdom of God.

The response was as Peter had commanded.

So then, those who had received his word were immersed; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41)

The Greek term rendered *received*, is ἀποδέχομαι (*apodexomai*) meaning, *to receive gladly or to welcome*. Thus, it is clear that they believed the word and acted upon it.

With this exploration behind us, we complete the first portion of our table.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X

Case Study No. 2 The Samaritans Acts 8:4-24

Prior to the persecution of the Church by Saul, the Gospel had been preached only to Jews. When Saul of Tarsus began his aggressive campaign against the Jerusalem Church, every member of the Church, except the apostles, left town (Acts 8:1). Every place that they settled, they preached Christ. Some even traveled north to settle in the despised region of Samaria.

The Jews considered the Samaritans to be a mongrel race. When the Assyrians captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they carried away most of the ten tribes that inhabited the region. They did leave behind farmers, tillers of vineyards, and others to keep the region productive. The Assyrians then imported into Samaria, captives from other nations.⁶²

Over the years, the remnants of the ten tribes intermarried with the Gentile immigrants, producing a mixed-breed race. Later, the Jews of the Southern Kingdom were carried into captivity in Babylon, but they remained ethnically pure. Thus, when the Judeans were returned to their native land, they came as a pure Jewish people. Because the Jews of the North (Samaria) had intermarried with Gentiles, the Judean Jews considered the Samaritans to be a ceremonially unclean race.

Jews avoided Samaria and Samaritans. For this reason, when Jewish Christians relocated to Samaria, it was a very significant event. One of those who went to very city of Samaria was Philip, a deacon in the Jerusalem Church. Upon his arrival, Philip began to proclaim Christ to the despised Samaritans. He had significant evangelistic success.

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. ⁶ The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.... when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. (Acts 8:5-6, 12)

⁶² II Kings 17:5f; 18:9f; Josephus, *Antiquities*, IX, xiv, 1; II Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:10

When the apostles, who had remained in Jerusalem, heard that Samaritans had heard the Gospel and that many had been converted, they sent Peter and John to visit the scene. We can see why it was important to send these two apostles, since, even though Jesus had said that they would be witnesses in Samaria (Acts 1:8), up to this point only Jews had received the Gospel.

As noted above, Jewish Christians would have trouble accepting mongrel-race Samaritans into the Kingdom. This was a watershed moment in the fulfillment of the Great Commission and needed to be credentialed by apostles – especially Peter to whom Jesus had given the keys to the Kingdom.⁶³ When Peter and John arrived, they discovered that even though the converts had been immersed in water, none had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Because of this they laid hands on them and they began receiving the Holy Spirit.

There is much ancillary material and questions about this episode that we could examine (for example, the nature of the reception of the Spirit), but we will confine ourselves to the pursuit of the answer to the question, *What must I do to be saved?* We construct the next portion of our chart.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X

Case Study No. 3 The Ethiopian Eunuch Acts 8:26-40

In some ways, the account of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch is one of the most unusual stories in Acts. Philip was in the midst of a very successful evangelistic crusade in Samaria, when an angel appeared, telling him to leave the scene and walk south to a spot fifty miles away, where he would intercept the Roman road between Jerusalem and Gaza. The place where he would enter the Roman road would be an uninhabited region.⁶⁴ No explanation was given to Philip as to why he was to make this trip, but he obeyed.

When he arrived at the designated location, almost immediately a chariot passed by and the passenger in the chariot was an Ethiopian reading a scroll. The Ethiopian, who was a proselyte Jew, was the royal treasurer of Ethiopia. This Ethiopian had been to Jerusalem to worship. As a

⁶³ It is significant that at each stage of the fulfillment of the Great Commission, Peter was Christ's agent to inaugurate or credential the next phase – at Pentecost (Jews), in Samaria (half-breed Jews), in the home of Cornelius (Gentiles). In Matthew 16:19, when Jesus said *I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven*, the *you*, is singular – i.e., *I will give to you, Peter, the keys....* Thus, It would seem that Peter was Christ's chosen agent to certify the presentation of the Gospel at each stage of development.

⁶⁴ The Greek term, ἔρημος, translated as, *desert*, does not necessarily mean a wasteland. It can refer to a relatively unpopulated district (see Matthew 14:15, 19; Mark 6:35, 39)

eunuch and a Gentile, he would have been barred from the inner portions of the Temple, but still he would have been able to send a sacrifice into the Temple to be offered in his behalf.⁶⁵

An angel had been dispatched to instruct Philip to leave Samaria and travel south, but it was the Holy Spirit who instructed Philip to approach the chariot. When Philip caught up with the chariot, he heard the Ethiopian reading aloud from the Septuagint scroll, Isaiah 53:7-8. Philip asked the Ethiopian if he understood the text. The Ethiopian admitted his inability to understand and asked Philip to get into the chariot and to explain the text. Philip used this text and others to preach Jesus to the Ethiopian.

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.³⁶ As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being immersed?"³⁷ And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."³⁸ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:35-39).

We must note that verse 37 (underlined above) is of questionable integrity. The earliest extant manuscript which contains these words is from the 6th Century AD. Earlier manuscripts do not contain this verse. However, as early as the Second Century there was a tradition that the Ethiopian had made this confession, since Irenaeus quotes part of it (*Against Heresies*, III, XII, 8).⁶⁶ Therefore, based upon Irenaeus' quote, and the succeeding events, we will assume that such a statement was made by Philip and responded to by the Ethiopian, even though the verse is very suspect.

⁶⁵ Even though emasculated individuals were shut out of the assembly of Israel – as were Gentiles – yet, both Gentiles and eunuchs, if obedient to the Law of God, were encouraged to worship God and to send in sacrifices with the assurance that they would be accepted (see Deut. 23:1; Isaiah 56:1-8).

⁶⁶ Erasmus published the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516. When Erasmus was constructing the Greek text of the New Testament, he chiefly depended on a late medieval manuscript for his text. The main manuscript that he had did not contain this verse. However, another one in his possession had it written in the margin, but not in the text. Erasmus inserted the verse into the text because he “judged that it had been omitted by the carelessness of scribes (*arbitror omissum librorum incuria*). Most scholars are of the opinion that there was no reason why scribes should have omitted this material, if originally it had stood in the text. For commentary on this question, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, page 358-359.

We proceed to complete our chart of this case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	

Case Study No. 4 **Saul of Tarsus** **Acts 9:1-18; 22:1-16; 26:12-18**

Saul of Tarsus was the hate-filled enemy of the Church. He was zealous for the Law of Moses and viewed the Church as a great threat to the Law. As a result, he persecuted Christians, voting for the death penalty when Christians were arrested and accused (Acts 26:10). When he learned that there were Christians in Damascus, he sought and received papers from the leading Jerusalem priests, authorizing him to take a contingent of soldiers and go to Damascus to arrest Christians. Not far from his destination, Saul had a divine encounter with Jesus.

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." (Acts 9:3-6).

The soldiers who accompanied Saul saw the light and heard the voice but they were not able to understand what was being said (Acts 22:9).

Blinded by the light, Saul was led into the city where he fasted and prayed for three days. On the third day, a Christian in Damascus, Ananias, was overwhelmed by a vision of the Lord. He prostrated himself and then the Lord said,

"Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." (Acts 9:11-12).

Of special interest to our quest is Our Lord's consistent use of human agents to deliver the answer to the question, *What must I do to be saved.* In the episode before us, Jesus sent Ananias to instruct Saul, rather than instructing Saul in the Divine vision (even as He had sent Philip to intercept the Ethiopian, rather than sending an angel to instruct the Ethiopian).

Ananias at first objected to the instruction to seek out Saul, because he knew of Saul's violent persecution of the Church. In response, the Lord told Ananias that this Saul was a chosen vessel who would bear the Gospel to Jews, Gentiles, even to kings. Ananias, in obedience, went to the

home of Judas, where he found the blind Saul of Tarsus. He laid his hands on Saul and Saul was healed of his blindness. There are three records of this event,⁶⁷ but only two of the accounts are relevant to our quest: Luke's description of the episode in Acts 9 and Paul's recounting of the episode in Acts 22.

So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was immersed; (Acts 9:17-18)

Now why do you delay? Get up and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.' (Acts 22:16)

Of significance is the Acts 22 account, because it is the record of Ananias instructions to Paul, instructing him what he must do to have his sins washed away, i.e. to be saved. Even though Acts 9 does not contain Ananias' instructions, 9:18 informs us that the episode concluded with Saul's being immersed, in harmony with the instructions of 22:16, *be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.*

We construct our table for this event.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X

Case Study No. 5 Cornelius' Household Acts 10

Case Study No. 5, is the third watershed event of the expansion of the Kingdom (the first two being: Pentecost in Jerusalem [Jews converted] and Samaria [half-breed Jews converted]). Once again, as in stages one and two, Peter is the one who certified this third stage of Gospel expansion.

Cornelius, even though a Gentile, had come to accept Jehovah as the true God, i.e., the God proclaimed by the Jews. He was a man of prayer and was very generous toward the Jewish population of Caesarea. Cornelius followed the Jewish custom of praying each day at designated

⁶⁷ Acts 9:3-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18

times. One day, while praying at the designated 3 PM prayer time, he was confronted by angel who gave him instructions that were both unusual and very specific (shades of Philip in Samaria!). He was to send some men to Joppa, and they were to find the house of a tanner named Simon – the house was located by the sea - a man named, “Peter,” was staying there - the men were to bring Peter to Caesarea.

At about the time that the men arrived at the specified house, Peter was on the roof praying while dinner was being prepared. Through a vision, God prepared Peter to enter the home of Gentiles - something an orthodox Jew would have considered unthinkable.⁶⁸ Cornelius’ messengers explained their mission to Peter, explaining that they had come because an angel had instructed their master to send for Peter. Peter accompanied them back to the home of Cornelius, where Peter found a sizable company of Gentiles waiting for him. Cornelius recounted his experience with the angel and Peter then stated,

"I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. (Acts 10:34-35)

Peter proceeded to preach the Gospel. While he was preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon the audience and they began speaking in tongues. This convinced Peter and the Jewish Christians who had accompanied him, that God now was ready to open the doors of the Kingdom to Gentiles, as well as Jews. Peter stated,

"Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be immersed who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days. (Acts 10:47-48)

It was the reception of the Holy Spirit that assured the Jewish Christians that it was acceptable to immerse Gentiles. It is obvious that this is the reason for this sequence of events. When Peter returned to Jerusalem and was taken to task for fraternizing with Gentiles, and for preaching the Gospel to them, he defended his action by describing this action of the Holy Spirit. This is what convinced the Jerusalem church leaders, as it had Peter and his Jewish companions, that it now was acceptable to immerse Gentile converts.

It also is noteworthy that the reception of the Spirit was not a substitute for immersion – nor did it make immersion unnecessary. Clearly, Peter considered immersion to be necessary for one to become a part of God’s saved company – the Church – even though they had experienced a personal manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Here, for the first time, we encounter the preposition, ἐν (*en*) ... *in the name of Jesus Christ*, as a declaration of the authority for immersing. This is similar to what a policeman might say, “Stop, in the name of the law.” The implication was that as representatives of Jesus Christ (upon His authority), Peter and the other Christians would immerse the Gentile converts.

We note that this is another example of Our Lord’s using a human agent, rather than some spiritual entity to deliver the salvation message. The angel who appeared to Cornelius did not instruct him concerning salvation, but told him to send for Peter who would instruct him.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Acts 11:1-3

⁶⁹ Acts 10:22, 33

We complete our table for the Fifth Case Study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>Questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X

Case Study No. 6
Lydia & her household
Acts 16:12-15

Paul, Silas, and Timothy, in response to a vision given to Paul, sailed from Troas to the Roman colony of Philippi. They stayed in the city for a few days, and when the Sabbath day arrived (Saturday), they went to a riverside to pray. It was a custom for Jews who were in a region devoid of synagogues to go the riverside to pray on the Sabbath. When the apostolic team arrived at the riverside, they found a group of women who were there for the same purpose. The men sat down and began speaking to the women about Christ. One of the devout women was a businesswoman named Lydia. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to the Gospel. She and her household were immersed.

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.¹⁵ And when she and her household had been immersed, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." (Acts 16:14-15)

We construct our chart for this very brief case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Immersion	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>Questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X
Lydia & her household Acts 16:12-15	X	X			X	

Case Study No. 7 The Philippian Jailor Acts 16:25-34

It seems that the apostolic band, and possibly the women, went daily to the riverside to pray (Acts 16:16). As the men traveled to the place of prayer, a slave woman who was possessed by a spirit of divination followed them every day, and kept crying out, "*These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.*" (Acts 16:17). This seems to have been some sort of demonic harassment, rather than a positive declaration.

In any case, after several days of this, Paul became annoyed and cast out the spirit (Acts 16:18). The owners of the slave girl had obtained much profit from her ability to tell fortunes, etc., and suddenly they had lost their income. So, they stirred up the crowd against the preachers, and as a result, Paul and Silas were beaten severely and then imprisoned. To make certain that they were secure, the jailor fastened their feet in stocks.

At midnight, Paul and Silas, in spite of their misery, were praying and singing hymns, when, suddenly a huge earthquake shook the prison. All of the prison doors were opened, and the shackles were loosed. If a Roman guard lost a prisoner, he was executed. The jailor, thinking that all of his prisoners had escaped started to kill himself, but Paul cried out, *Do yourself no harm, we are all here.*

The reputation of Paul and Silas was such that the jailor knew what they had been proclaiming before their arrest – that, after all, had been the stated reason for their arrest.⁷⁰ As noted at the beginning of this section of our study, his mood moved from horror to gratitude, realizing that he

⁷⁰ Acts 16:19-21

had witnessed the power of Divinity. Moved and convinced by the experience, he asked the question,

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in (ἐπί) the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. (Acts 16:30-33)

As noted earlier, ἐπί with the accusative (ἐπί τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν – *on the Lord Jesus*) is understood as indicating one of the following: *on, to, against*. In this passage, *on*, is the rendering that fits best the idea that Paul is conveying – the idea of *trust*, which is one of the ideas encompassed by the use of the term, πιστεύω (*pisteuo*). Paul declares that trusting in the work of Christ is the condition required for salvation. In order for the jailor and his household to come to that point of faith/trust, Paul and Silas preached the Gospel to them and then immediately immersed them.

We construct the chart for this case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X
Lydia & her household Acts 16:12-15	X	X			X	
Philippian jailor Acts 16:25-34	X	Implied V 31			X	

Case Study No. 8 **Corinthians** **Acts 18:8**

When Paul first arrived in Corinth, he stayed with two Jewish tent-makers, Aquila and Priscilla. Paul was a tent-maker by trade and so he partnered with the couple in their business. There was a Jewish synagogue in Corinth. Paul went to the synagogue every Sabbath and sought to persuade the members of the congregation (Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism) that Jesus was the Messiah. When the rest of the apostolic team, Silas and Timothy, arrived in Corinth, Paul

stopped making tents and devoted himself, fulltime, to the proclamation of the Gospel to the Jews. When the Jews resisted, Paul shook out his garments and declared,

"Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."
(Acts 18:6).

Paul abandoned the synagogue and began preaching in the house next door to the synagogue, the home of a man named, Titus Justus. Some of the Jews came to the house to hear Paul preach and one of them, Crispus, who was the leader of the synagogue, became a convert. Many of the Corinthian Gentiles also became believers.

Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. (Acts 18:8)

Again, we explore the interesting and revealing terms used in this verse.

- *Crispus...believed in the Lord.* There is no preposition to be rendered as *in*, preceding *the Lord*. The reason for inserting that term is because the case of *the Lord*, is dative – a direct object of the past tense of the verb, *believe*. Thus, the idea of the Greek is *trusted in the Lord*.⁷¹
- *Were believing and being baptized.* There is nothing complicated about this construction. They believed what Paul had preached and in response were immersed.

So, we construct the table related to this case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X
Lydia & her household Acts 16:12-15	X	X			X	
Philippian jailor Acts 16:25-34	X	Implied V 31			X	
Corinthians Acts 18:8	X	X			X	

⁷¹ See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1996, page 172

Case Study No. 9
Disciples of John the Immerser
Acts 19:1-5

The final case of conversion, in which sufficient detail is given to make it relevant to our quest is the episode involving disciples of John the Immerser.

After spending time at home-base in Antioch, Paul traveled through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples. Eventually, he arrived in Ephesus. Upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul met some disciples, in whom he detected an inexplicable deficiency – something just didn't seem right about them. Puzzled, he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. It turned out that they were disciples of John the Immerser and had not heard the Gospel message in its entirety. Thus, they replied that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit.

Because the usual pattern⁷² was for a convert to receive the Holy Spirit when he is immersed, Paul asked them, *Into what then were you immersed?* They replied, *Into John's immersion.* Paul instructed them concerning the temporary nature of John's immersion, i.e. that the purpose of John's ministry had been to prepare people for the soon to be revealed Messiah – and that Jesus is that Messiah. In response,

When they heard this, they were immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus.⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. (Acts 19:5-6)

They received the Holy Spirit and with that reception there were manifestations, removing any doubt that there was a difference between the immersion of John and the immersion of Jesus.

⁷² We used the term, *normally*, because God in His Sovereignty is free to alter that order, of events. This He did in the case of the Samaritans and the household of Cornelius – for obvious reasons in both instances.

We create our chart for this final case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>Questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X
Lydia & her household Acts 16:12-15	X	X			X	
Philippian jailor Acts 16:25-34	X	Implied V 31			X	
Corinthians Acts 18:8	X	X			X	
Disciples of John Acts 19:1-5	X	Implied			X	X

Summary, Analysis, and Conclusions

- **Hearing** and **immersion** are stated clearly in each instance.
- **Believe** is stated clearly in four instances, implied in four and the testimony is uncertain in one.
- **Receiving the Holy Spirit** is mentioned in five of the episodes.
- **Repenting** is mentioned once.
- **Confession** of one's faith occurs only once, in a questionable text

It would seem that the apostolic model is clear, as far as hearing, believing, and immersion are concerned. This, of course, rules out infant baptism.⁷³

- Yet, we must not conclude that because repenting is mentioned only once and confession is mentioned only once does not mean that they did not occur in each instance – they just are not mentioned in the summary record of the particular episode.
- Neither does this mean that in four of the examples, the converts did not receive the Holy Spirit after being immersed – as noted earlier, the epistles testify to the necessity of that

⁷³ The issue of the salvation of those who die in their infancy or early childhood is not within the purview of this paper. However, those who believe that the doctrine of original sin includes guilt, must find a way to remove that guilt, and thus those who hold this belief practice infant baptism.

presence in the heart of all who are saved. For that matter, I Corinthians 12:13 informs us that in some manner, the Holy Spirit is involved in one's immersion – the event that makes one a part of the Church – God's Redeemed Community.

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

What this data does reveal is that most denominations and the evangelical movement (especially evangelical para-church organizations) have substituted humanly developed procedures for the biblical model. Many have assumed the right to replace Christ's command to immerse and the apostolic example of immersion, with sprinkling. The evangelical movement has made the "sinner's prayer," the terminal act of salvation, whereas the apostles, in obedience to Christ, made immersion the terminal act.

Some have argued that Mark 16:15-16 nullifies the apostolic model.

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."⁷⁴ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)

Those who take this position, point out that verse 16 states that those who disbelieve will be condemned, but does not say that those who are not baptized will be condemned. Thus, according to this view, the apostolic model cannot be binding. In other words, Jesus considered belief to be the terminal act.

Two responses to this argument seem rather obvious.

- As noted earlier, this is a very questionable text (Mark 16:9-20) and thus should not be the basis for any doctrine. The only appropriate role for these disputed verses is to substantiate truths present in clearly authentic texts.
- It also is obvious that if one did not believe, he would not be baptized. The Mark 16:16 statement is made in the same way that one might say to a person desiring an M.Div degree from a seminary, "If you enroll in our graduate program and complete the requirements, we will award you an M.Div degree. Of course, if you don't enroll in our program, then we won't award you an M.Div degree." Enrollment is the gate, whereas completing the requirements is what causes the degree to be awarded. Thus, in Mark 16:16 belief is the gate, whereas immersion completes the process.

Conclusion

What do we conclude from the apostolic example, the command of Jesus in the Great Commission, and the points made by the Old Testament examples?

In stating the following conclusion, a word of caution is in store. Are we to conclude that all of those who have been told that all that they have to do is pray the "sinner's prayer," and from that moment on they are saved – really are not saved? Is every person who was "christened" by sprinkling in infancy going to hell? No one has the right to make such a pronouncement – we are not God. Advocates for the New Testament pattern don't know what God is going to do

⁷⁴ The Greek term is rendered either as *creature* or *creation*. The term, κτίσις, refers to God's creative action and either of these renderings is correct. The context must determine which rendering is the best.

about all of the aberrations of the apostolic pattern - involving millions of souls - aberrations that for the most part began in the Fourth Century - including the development of Roman Catholic soteriology, the partial adjustments to Roman Catholicism among the various Protestant denominations, and the contemporary evangelical disdain for the necessity of any external element in the plan of salvation.

Rather than our becoming exercised over what others are doing and as a result embarking upon a crusade to condemn these aberrations and acts of disobedience, the New Testament Church assumes the responsibility for its doctrine and practice, without passing judgment on those who deviate from these patterns (see ADDENDUM Q for the biblical argument for the importance of being faithful to God's commanded patterns).

Conclusion Concerning the Question, “What must I do to be saved.”

In answering the question, *What must I do to be saved*, the 21st Century New Testament Church will be faithful to the command of Christ and the apostolic model:

- Preach the Word
- Call people to repentance/belief
- Joyously hear their confession of faith
- Bury the old man in the waters of immersion and raise the convert to live in the newness of life
- Rejoice as we observe the evidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling the new believer as we teach him to observe all things, whatsoever Our Lord has commanded us.

ARTICLE VI: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Our Lord chose the label, ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) as the name for those who responded positively to the Father's calling and thus, became a part of that company of souls that will spend eternity with God (the term occurs 115 times in the New Testament). In most English versions of the New Testament, this term is rendered as *Church*.⁷⁵

It is important for our purposes to be guided by the term Our Lord and the apostles used, *ekklesia*, because the term carries important information about God's New Testament people.

The origin of the term is in the Greek city states. The Greek city states were completely democratic. Decisions concerning the city were not made by elected officials, but by the entire

⁷⁵ The origin of the term, *Church*, has been debated. Some argue that it is from the Greek, κυριακός (*kuriakos*), meaning, *the Lord's*. However, that is improbable because the term was in use in Celtic societies before Christianity reached these cultures. *The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, commenting on the term, states, “No doubt the word means ‘a circle’. The places of worship among the Germans and Celtic Nations were always circular. Compare Anglo-Saxon ‘Circe’ – a small church – with ‘Circol’ – a circle.” The term was used in the 1611 King James Bible, because King James gave fifteen rules that were to govern the translation. In reaction to the Puritans who were seeking accurate translation of the Scriptures, one of King James' rules was to not translate, *ekklesia*, by the term, *congregation*, but to use the word, *church*. Thus, this became the prevailing term used for the assembly of Christians.

citizenry. There was a citizen who was the presider/overseer of the meeting. When some decision concerning the city had to be made, a town-crier was sent throughout the city, calling the citizens to a meeting. In each city there were slaves, merchants from other places who were in the city to sell their wares, and other travelers who were in the city for a season, but they were not citizens and so they were not called to the meeting. This is the origin of the term, which means, literally, *the called-out ones*.

The *ekklesia* were the ones called out of the general public, but they also were called to something – *the meeting*. Thus, in time, the term came to refer to an assembly of a specific people. The term is so used in Acts 19 (five times in this chapter: verses 30, 32, 33, 39, 41).

Thus, we must understand the term. *Ekklesia*, to refer to those who are called out of the general public into an assembly – either an assembly that is

- local, or
- a world-wide and eternal spiritual assembly.

The first occurrence of the term in the New Testament is Matthew's quote of Jesus statement in reference to the eternal group that has been called out of the general public into membership in a spiritual group that encompasses all of the ages.

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church [ekklesia]; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. (Matthew 16:18 NAS)

Hebrews 12:17-23, contrasting the mountain where Israel encountered Yahweh, with the reality of Christian's encounter with God, uses the term, *ekklesia*, to describe the reality of the eternal assembly – those on the earth and those who have died and are with Christ are united in that eternal spiritual assembly,

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,²³ to the general assembly (the Greek term, πανήγυρις [panygyrus] refers to a festal assembly) and church (ekklesia) of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, (Hebrews 12:22-23)

Although the New Testament uses the term to describe the world-wide and eternal *Ekklesia*, it's most frequent use is in reference to a local assembly (of the 115 times that the term occurs in the New Testament, 85 refer to a local church).

Conclusion concerning the identity of the Church

The church consists of those individuals, who out of the general public, responded positively to God's call through the preaching of the Gospel and demonstrated that response by obeying the salvation message. The Church exists as assemblies in various locations, but also is a world-wide and eternal brotherhood. The members of the Church will spend eternity with God.

ARTICLE VII: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT IN THE CHURCH

Our Lord has blessed the Church with individuals whom He has ordained and equipped to lead and care for the church. These individuals function as Christ's representatives in the various roles that He has assigned to them. Some of these gifts are trans-local in nature – they are not limited to a particular congregation but are for the building up of the Church at large. Describing these roles, Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:8-13)

The Number of the Gifts

An important point concerning the list is that there are four gifts listed. Frequently statements are made in reference to the five-fold gifts. This is an error.

In Greek, when making a list and desiring to distinguish between the items in the list, the *μεν...δε* (*men...de*) pattern is used. The list will begin with the postpositive participle, *μεν*. Then, *δε* is placed between the separate items on the list. The *μεν...δε* pattern is used in Ephesians 4:11. Here is the verse and the occurrence of the pattern:

*and He gave some as apostles (tous **men** apostolous), and some as prophets (tous **de** prophetas) and some as evangelists (tous **de** euangelistas), and some as prophets (tous **de** prophetas), and some as shepherds and teachers (tous **de** poimenas **kai** didaskalous)..⁷⁶*

Observe that a *δε* occurs between apostles and prophets and evangelists and shepherds, but not between shepherds and teachers. Between the terms, *shepherds* and *teachers* is the conjunction, *και*. This pattern indicates there is a single group of individuals who will function in the role of shepherding and teaching the flock.

Notice how the various English translations have sought to convey this distinction:

KJV: And he gave **some**, apostles; and **some**, prophets; and **some**, evangelists; and **some**, pastors and teachers;

NAS: And He gave **some as** apostles, and **some as** prophets, and **some as** evangelists, and **some as** pastors and teachers,

NIV: was he who gave **some to be** apostles, **some to be** prophets, **some to be** evangelists, and **some to be** pastors and teachers,

⁷⁶ Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, (*Ephesians 4:11 BGT*)

The Longevity of the Leadership Gifts

Some have argued that since the term, *gave*, in Ephesians 4:11 is past tense,⁷⁷ then that means that the giving of the apostles and the other ministry gifts happened only once and when those individuals died that the gift died with them. Many statements in Scripture and in the ongoing experience of the Church, make it evident that God intended for these gifts to be present in each generation of the Church. Two Scriptural facts that immediately come to mind are:

- An important point in Paul's statement is that these roles will be in place in the Church *until we all attain....* Certainly, anyone who is honest about, even the most godly of humans, must admit that none of us, much less, the collective group known as, the Church, has reached he described state. Therefore, it is God's intent that these roles still be in place and that God still is giving these chosen individuals as gifts to His Church.
- The qualifications for those chosen to be elders (below we demonstrate that this term refers to the shepherd/teachers) was given to Timothy (I Timothy 3) and to Titus (Titus 1) in their roles of setting things in order in the churches. The fact that such qualifications are given for the ongoing choosing of men for these roles, indicates that the gift of shepherd/teachers is an ongoing gift to the Church. This being true of shepherd/teachers, then there is no reason to believe that it is not true of the other gifts.

Thus, we conclude that the gifts were not just for the first generation of believers. There is no biblical authority for the view that any of these gifts to the Church ended with the first generation.

The Identity of the Gifts

An important point to note is the fact that God did not give *offices* to the Church. He did not give the Church the office of apostle, the office of prophet, the office of evangelist, etc. He gave certain men to the Church who were expressions of these gifts. Thus, for example, if God has not given an apostle to a group of churches, then that group does not have an apostle. There is no such thing as an unoccupied office for someone to fill.

God knows who, when, and where, what is needed for His Church and supplies that need in each place. One of the problems in some Church circles is the assumption that God gave an office and so there must be someone to fill it – the result often being very tragic for the local church, or in some instances for a group of churches.

We will examine each of these gifts and their on-going roles in the Church

Apostles

The term rendered as *apostle* means, *one commissioned to fulfill a purpose*. The emphasis of the term is not the fact that one is sent, but that one is commissioned to do something.⁷⁸ So, the first question to be asked of an apostle is, *What is your commission, what are you sent to do?*

⁷⁷ The term is ἔδωκεν (*edoken*), the indicative, aorist, active of the verb, δίδωμι (*didomi*), meaning, *to give*

⁷⁸ Some have erroneously defined apostles as, *sent ones*, the emphasis being on their being *sent*. Should that be the emphasis, a different Greek term would have been used, such as some form of the Greek verb, πέμπω (*pempo*), which means, *send*.

An example of a general use of the term is Paul's applying the term to Epaphroditus, whom the Philippian Church sent to deliver money to Paul while he was imprisoned. Paul was preparing to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi when he wrote,

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger (Greek: Apostolos) and minister to my need; (Philippians 2:25)

But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. (Philippians 4:18)

Thus, Epaphroditus' apostleship/commission was to deliver money to Paul.

Apart from the general use of the word, is the use of the term in Scripture to refer to a specific class of individuals and their commission. The apostles referenced in Ephesians 4:11, certainly would include those whom Our Lord had called out of the community of disciples and commissioned to a special role in the Kingdom.

And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

¹⁴ *Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew;* ¹⁵ *and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;* ¹⁶ *Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*

¹⁷ *And He descended with them, and stood on a level place; and there was a great multitude of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, (Luke 6:13-17)*

As He drew near to the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus promised His twelve apostles that after His departure, the Holy Spirit would come to them, and that He would,

- remind them of all that He had said
- give them understanding of what they had not understood
- reveal to them important truths that He had not spoken while with them.

"These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. ²⁶ "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:25-26)

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. (John 16:13)

Thus, an apt title for these apostles of Jesus is, *revelatory apostles*.

The revelation and truth that they imparted to the Church, is described by Jude as *the faith for all delivered to the saints*.

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 1:3)

Paul later was added to the list of those classed as a *revelatory apostle* – one who received direct Divine revelation, rather than learning the truths of the Gospel and its ramifications.

Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), (Galatians 1:1)

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:11-12)

In short, it was through these Divinely chosen apostles that the Holy Spirit would communicate God's saving message and the truths associated with it. The commission of these apostles was to communicate *the faith once for all delivered to the saints*.

Other individuals to whom the New Testament applies the term are

- Matthias (Acts 1:26)
- James, the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19)
- Barnabas (Acts 14:14)
- Apollos (I Corinthians 4:6-9)
- Two unnamed brethren (II Corinthians 8:23)⁷⁹
- Silas and Timothy (I Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6)
- Jesus (Hebrews 3:1)

Each of these had a specific commission to fulfill in their apostolic role.

Prophets

The Greek term rendered as, *prophet*, is προφήτης (*prophetes*). Literally, the term means, *one who speaks forth*. In Scripture, the term always refers to one who speaks forth what has been given to him by the Holy Spirit. Those who speak something not given by the Holy Spirit are labeled, *false prophets*.⁸⁰

A number of individuals are listed in the New Testament as, *prophets*.⁸¹ Some of these are

- Unnamed prophets from Jerusalem (Acts 11:28)
- Agabus (Acts 11:29; 21:10)
- Antioch leadership council: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul (Acts 13:1)
- Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32)
- Philip's virgin daughters (Acts 21:9)

Paul's reasoning with the Corinthians, concerning the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the service, assumes the ongoing presence of prophets.

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. (1 Corinthians 14:29)

Although the role of prophets is not the same as the role revelatory apostles, true prophets do receive words from God, but always in agreement with Scripture.

⁷⁹ Although most English versions render the term as, *messengers*, or, *representatives*, the Greek term is *apostolos* i.e. *apostles*.

⁸⁰ Matt. 7:15; Matt. 24:11, 24; Mk. 13:22; Lk. 6:26; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 4:1

⁸¹ The term occurs 149 times in the New Testament

- The revelatory apostles presented Divine truths, *once for all*, that are unchanging and abiding truths for the Church.
- Prophets speak to current situations or to individuals.

The terms, *prophet* and *prophecy*, do not necessarily refer to predictions although predictions of the future may be given to prophets. The essential nature of this gift is speaking forth what comes from the Holy Spirit, not what comes through study or reasoning. In some sense, Holy Spirit-directed and inspired preaching fits the definition of prophesy.

Evangelists

Evangelists are those who have a special Spirit-empowered ability to present the Good News and to call people to respond to the message. Interestingly, this is the one trans-local gift that even Cessationists consider to be present in every generation. Not only do evangelists have a special anointing for presenting the Gospel, but evangelists are driven by a passion to deliver the lost from the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of Light. Some evangelists are gifted preachers, while others are more gifted in personal, one-on-one, presentations of the Gospel.

Of interest is the fact that the only person named in the New Testament as an *evangelist*, is Philip.⁸²

Paul does exhort Timothy to do the work of an evangelist,⁸³ but the label never is applied to him.

Shepherd/Teachers

Most English versions render the final ministries in Ephesians 4:11 as *Pastors and teachers* (the ESV is an exception, rendering the terms, *shepherds and teachers*). The Greek term rendered as, *pastors*, is, ποιμήν (*poimen*), which simply means, *shepherd*. Thus, Paul wrote that God had given some men to the Church to be *shepherds* and *teachers*.

Why do most English versions render the term here as, *pastor*, rather than translating the term as, *shepherds*? Once again, the answer is the Latin Vulgate, which was the authorized version of Scripture prior to the modern era.⁸⁴ When Jerome translated the Greek term into Latin, he naturally used the Latin term for shepherd, which is, *pastor*.

A well- established church system of clergy was in place when the when the 1611 King James Bible was translated. By using the Vulgate Latin term, the clerical role of *Pastor*, was validated.

There are teachers who are not shepherd/teachers. These are individuals gifted in teaching, but are not called to a governing, oversight, role in the Church.

The shepherd/teachers clearly are the elders. The three other ministry gifts may be trans-local, but the shepherd/teachers function within a given congregation. Paul clearly described the role and responsibility of elders, as well as stating what qualifications a man must have before he is considered for that role.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them,..."Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He

⁸² Acts 21:8

⁸³ II Timothy 4:5

⁸⁴ Jerome began the translation in 382 and finished it 23 years later.

purchased with His own blood.²⁹ "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; (Acts 20:17-18a, 28-29)

The New Testament is consistent in its reference to elders as the overseer/shepherds of the local church. Here are some examples:

And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:21-23)

For this reason, I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, (Titus 1:5)

When a dispute arose in Antioch, concerning the appropriateness of receiving uncircumcised converts into the Church, the Antioch church sent Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to meet with the church leaders there, in order to achieve a resolution to the issues. This was during the period when most of the apostles were still in Jerusalem, but already, they were beginning to surrender leadership roles to the elders. Acts 15 records this fact.

And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. (Acts 15:2)

And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. (Acts 15:4)

And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. (Acts 15:6)

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,²³ and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. (Acts 15:22-23)

Later, in his general epistle, Peter addressed the elders throughout the Church.

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he addressed the letter to the entire church, including the elders/overseers and the deacons.

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: (Philippians 1:1)

From these passages, it is clear that elders are overseers and shepherds of the local church.

The ability to teach is given as one of the qualifications for eldership, in the list that Paul gave to Timothy.

*An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**, ... (I Timothy 3:2)*

Thus, from these and similar considerations, it is clear that after the departure of the apostles, each early local church was led by a group of men who were shepherd/teachers

No New Testament Church was led by a pastor, but by a council of elders. For that matter, there is no ecclesiastical hierarchy in the New Testament Church, such as bishops, arch-bishops, etc. Only the trans-local leadership of apostles and the local leadership of elders is seen in the Post-Pentecostal New Testament Church.

Servants and Managers in the Local Church

When the Jerusalem Church had grown to considerable size, and both Jewish and Gentile converts constituted the Church, a problem arose. Since the church had a common purse, widows who had no source of income were supported by the church. The controversy arose when the Hellenistic Jewish converts began to complain that their widows were not being cared for in the same manner as were the native Jewish converts. The apostles, who at time were the only church government, admitted that they were so busy in prayer and teaching that they were not overseeing this ministry as it should be overseen.

They proposed to the church that seven men be selected to administer this important business of the church. The church agreed and after these men were chosen by the church, the elders prayed over them and laid hands on them, thus ordaining them to the ministry of deacons. From this time onward, deacons were found in each church. As noted earlier, when Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, he addressed the letter,

Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: (Philippians 1:1 edited).

Who are the deacons? They are not overseers, but they do have managerial and implementation duties. An examination of the term helps us to understand their role.

The English term, "deacon," is an Anglicization of the Greek term, *diakonos* (διάκονος). The verbal form of the word is *diakoneo* (διακονέω), and is one of several Greek verbs used in the New Testament to describe the act of serving. Each of the Greek words meaning, *to serve*, has a particular emphasis:⁸⁵

douleuo (δουλεύω) emphasizes subjection

therapeuo (θεραπέω) emphasizes willingness to serve

latreuo (λατρεύω) emphasizes the motive of serving, i.e., for wages or a reward

leitourgeo (λειτουργέω) is used for service rendered to a community (church)

hupertheo (ὑπερτέω) emphasizes the relationship of the servant to the master

diakoneo (διακονέω) emphasizes the relationship between the server and the one being served

⁸⁵For an extended discussion of the material in this section, see Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume II (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1964, pages 81-93

Both secular and biblical Greek use the term, *diakoneo*, at three levels:

- The restricted meaning, "to wait at table."
- An extended application, "to provide or to care for."
- Comprehensively, "to serve."

As we have seen with other terms, a confusion has been caused by the Anglicization of the Greek term, rather than translating it. King James instructed the committees that produced the King James Version to produce a version that would be in harmony with the theology and ecclesiology of the Church of England. The practice of Anglicizing, rather than translating, allowed the committees to skirt controversy.⁸⁶

We can see how the Greek term, *diakonos*, would pose a special problem for the translators. First of all, there was an ecclesiastical office of *Deacon* in the Church of England. The translators could not produce a version that did not accommodate the office. Furthermore, the term, *diakonos*, often is used in Scripture to refer to servants in general. For example, in John 2, this is the term used for the servants who filled the water pots at the wedding feast in Cana.

The KJV committees attempted to walk the fine line between translation and interpretation. When they considered the passage to be referring to an ecclesiastical office, they either used the Latin term, *minister*, or Anglicized the term as *deacon*. When they considered the term to refer to something other than an ecclesiastical office, they translated the term with the English, *servant*.

Interestingly, in many modern churches, these two terms, *minister* and *deacon*, refer to two different offices. *Minister* tends to be used for clergy. *Deacon* tends to be used for a non-clerical office in Protestant churches. Through the use of these terms, the English language reader is led to believe, erroneously, that different terms are used in the Greek.

Based on the above cited facts we conclude that in each New Testament Church there will be those individuals to whom elders delegate ministerial responsibility. These men are not general overseers/shepherd/teachers, but they are servant/managers of specific areas of ministry. These individuals will be prayed over and ordained to the particular tasks assigned to them. This conclusion is based on the following:

- the meaning of the term,
- the origin of the role in Acts 6
- Paul wrote to Timothy concerning the qualifications for deacons
- the biblical evidence that there were deacons (servants) in ministerial roles in the existing New Testament Churches

Qualifications for Elders and Deacons

Paul wrote both to Timothy and to Titus, concerning the qualifications for Elders. Only to Timothy did he write concerning the qualifications for deacons. We first will examine the qualifications for elders and then those for deacons.

⁸⁶ The KJV committees did not originate this practice. For example, Tyndale's 1534 version followed this practice.

Paul wrote to Timothy:

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, (Greek: “desires overseeing”) it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be

- *above reproach,*
- *the husband of one wife,*
- *temperate,*
- *prudent,*
- *respectable,*
- *hospitable,*
- *able to teach,*
- *not addicted to wine*
- *or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious,*
- *free from the love of money.*
- *He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?);*
- *and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.*
- *And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:1-7)*

Paul wrote to Titus:

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man be

- *above reproach,*
- *the husband of one wife,*
- *having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.*
- *For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward,*
- *not self-willed,*
- *not quick-tempered,*
- *not addicted to wine,*
- *not pugnacious,*
- *not fond of sordid gain,*
- *but hospitable,*
- *loving what is good,*
- *sensible,*
- *just,*
- *devout,*
- *self-controlled,*
- *holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Titus 1:5-)*

It is significant that these lists are almost identical and the statements, for the most part, are quite clear. One of the qualifications that is relevant in contemporary American culture is that elders must be men. The statement that the elder must be the husband of one wife, clearly displays this. In Greek there are two words that are translated as, *man*. One term, ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*).

This term can refer to any human. For example in Matthew 4:4, *Man shall not live by bread alone*, the term rendered as man is ἄνθρωπος.

The other term is ἀνήρ (*aner*), meaning a male, as distinguished from female. This is the term used in both Timothy and Titus, which is rendered as *husband*. In Greek there is no term for *husband* nor for *wife*. The general terms for male ἀνήρ, and female γυνή (*gune*), are the only terms to indicate husband and wife. Greek reflects the English colloquialism, *He is my man...She is my woman*, referencing a husband or a wife. Literally, the Greek of both Timothy and Titus read, *he must be a one-woman man*. Paul clearly indicated that there are no female elders.

Concerning the qualifications for deacons, Paul wrote

Deacons likewise must be

- *men of dignity,*
- *not double-tongued, or*
- *addicted to much wine or*
- *fond of sordid gain,*
- *but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.*
- *And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.*
- *Women (their wives – ESV, KJV, NIV, NLT) must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.*
- *Let deacons be husbands of only one wife (same Greek terms as those applied to elders),*
- *and good managers of their children and their own households.*
- *For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:8-13)*

There is some controversy about whether or not the term γυνή rendered as *women*, in the NAS, but as, *their wives*, in all other English versions, is the correct rendering. The reasoning behind rendering the term as, *their wives*, is that one of the qualifications is that a deacon *must be the husband of one wife*. This qualification seems to demand that the qualification concerning women be rendered as *their wives*.

The only argument for female deacons (deaconesses) is in Romans 16:1

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;

The term rendered, *servant*, in this passage is διάκονος. As pointed out earlier, the term often is used in the general sense of *servant*, and not indicating a role for which one is ordained in the Church. Since this would be the only exception to the consistent presentation of deacons as male, then all versions have rendered the term in Romans 16:1 as, *servant*.

Therefore, we must conclude that leadership in the local church is male. This is consistent with Paul's additional statement found in I Timothy 21:2

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

Interestingly, the term rendered, *exercise authority* (KJV *usurp authority*; NIV, NLT, NKJ, *have authority*) is the Greek term, ἀὐθεντέω (*authenteo*). This the only time that this term is used in

the new Testament.⁸⁷ The first portion of this term, *auth*, indicates *self*.⁸⁸ Thus, it would seem that the term, in this passage, indicates that a woman who exercises authority over a man is doing so without valid authority. She has taken the role on herself, and, doing so inappropriately.⁸⁹

ARTICLE VIII: THE FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. (Matthew 16:13-18 NAS)

This exchange between Jesus and Simon is foundational for the Church. Let it be noted that Jesus spoke Aramaic. In Aramaic, there is only one word for rock/stone. The word is *kephas*. Thus, when Jesus spoke to Simon (Matthew wrote his Gospel, years after this event. By the time Matthew wrote his Gospel, Simon had become known by the label Jesus had given him, i.e. Simon Peter), He said, "you are "*kephas*." Then, pointing to Himself, He said, "upon This *kephas*, I will build My Church." The reason we understand this exchange to have been in this manner is because Matthew witnessed it and when Matthew translated Jesus Aramaic into Greek, he sought to display the difference between what Jesus said to Simon and then ,what He said about Himself.. To distinguish between what Jesus had said to Simon and what He said about Himself, Matthew used two different Greek terms to make this distinction.

- Matthew renders Jesus' statement to Simon, as, "You are πέτρος (*petros*)
- Matthew renders Jesus' statement concerning Himself, as, "Upon this πέτρα (*petra*) I will build My *Ekklesia*."⁹⁰

It is important for the Church to understand the nature of this rock upon which it is built – the person of Jesus and the truths concerning His identity, His purpose, and how He has achieved that purpose. Concerning His Divinity, that has been affirmed in Article II of this creed.

⁸⁷ The other terms are ἀρχή which refers to primary authority – a being who is answerable to no one; and ἐξουσία, which refers to delegated authority.

⁸⁸ Example, αὐθάδης (*authedes*) refers to one who is *self-satisfied, self-willed* (Titus 1:7; II Peter 2:10)

⁸⁹ In some situations (notably in China), when there are no men who meet the qualifications, but there are mature, spiritual women who have paid the price for many years of faithfulness, some adjustment must be made.

⁹⁰ Some Lexicons (for example, BGAD) indicate that πέτρα refers to a stone ledge or some such massive stone into which a tomb is cut (see such usage in Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:46; Matthew 27:51, etc.). Whereas πέτρος, is of ambiguous meaning other than referencing some sort of a rock.

The first truth that must be affirmed is His virgin birth.

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth,²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.²⁸ And coming in, he said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be.³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.³¹ "And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.

And Mary said, "Behold, the slave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-31, 34-35,38)

Luke Chapter 2 and Matthew Chapters 1-2 record the birth of the baby Jesus.

The second truth to be affirmed is His growth from infancy to manhood as a normal child.

This is seen in the comments that follow the events that happened when He was a twelve-year-old boy.

And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:51-52)

Later, when Jesus began ministering in Nazareth, the citizens had trouble accepting Him as more than just man who was a member of their community.

"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? (Matthew 13:55)

Even though He was Divine, as demonstrated in Article II, He was equally man and experienced the temptations and vicissitudes of life as does any human.

Prior to His beginning His public ministry, He experienced an onslaught of temptation in the wilderness. This episode is recorded in Matthew 4:1-11. In each instance of temptation, Jesus did not respond as one who was Divinity, but as a human, He responded with Scripture – *it is written* (Matthew 4:6, 7, 10)

Describing Jesus, the writer to the Hebrews wrote,

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

He knew hunger.

Now in the morning, when He returned to the city, He became hungry.¹⁹ And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it, and found nothing on it except leaves only... (Matthew 21:18-19)

He experienced thirst. While on the cross, he said

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty." (John 19:28)

He knew sorrow. The shortest verse in the Bible states, *Jesus wept.*

Jesus wept. (John 11:35)

He knew the inner anguish of compassion.

And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)⁹¹

These and many other statements made about Him, demonstrate that Jesus, even though Divine, went through all of the experiences of life, as does any human. He was exempt from none of them. Furthermore, as states in Hebrews 4:15, He was without sin.

As a sinless being, he was crucified, and died a death, as any human. In his crucifixion, this sinless being took on the identity of sin.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (II Corinthians 5:21).

To fully grasp this truth is beyond the ability of any human being, yet it is one of essential truths concerning this one who is the foundation of the Church.

He was buried and arose from the grave on the third day.

And when it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given over to him.⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. (Matthew 27:57-60)

There are a number of accounts of the events on the day that Jesus was resurrected. Here is Luke's account.

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared.² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.⁴ And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel;⁵ and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"⁶ "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee,⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."⁸ And they remembered His words, (Luke 24:1-8)

During the forty days after His resurrection, he appeared to many individuals and groups.

To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

⁹¹⁹¹ The term rendered as compassion is the verb *σπλαγχνίζομαι* (*splanchnizomai*) Noun, related to this verb is *σπλάγχνον* (*splanchnon*), which refers one's inner parts – the entrails. Thus, the verb refers to a deep compassion that one feels within himself.

Paul summarized the events of this forty-day period in his First Letter to the Corinthians.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;⁸ and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

Jesus promised that at an unspecified future time, He would return. He did not know when that would happen and so He did not give any details whereby the date of that return can be predicted, even though there will be *signs of the times*.

and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.³¹ "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."³² "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;³³ even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. (Matthew 24:30-33)

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (Matthew 24:36)

When He does return,, there will be a resurrection of all Christians who have died, and those who are still alive will be transformed. All of God's Church will spend eternity with Him, in glorified resurrected bodies.

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them;¹¹ and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. (Acts 1:9-12)

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. (1 John 3:2 NAS)

Conclusion Concerning the Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, and Return of Jesus

Jesus was born when the Holy Spirit impregnated the womb of a virgin named Mary. He grew to manhood and experienced all of the things that any human being experiences in this life. When He was thirty-years of age, He began a ministry that extended over a 3 ½ year period, following which He was crucified, was dead, and was buried. On the third day, He arose from the grave and for forty days appeared to selected individuals. After the forty days he ascended into heaven, from which He will return at the Father's appointed time. When He returns, all of His Church will be given glorified bodies and will spend eternity with the Godhead.

ARTICLE IX: GOD IMPARTS GIFTS TO MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

There are two categories of Divinely imparted gifts:

- Functional Gifts (sometimes called, *grace gifts*)
- Charismatic Gifts

Paul references the functional gifts in Romans 12. This cannot be considered an exhaustive list. For example, in making his point he includes the ascension gift of prophecy. Paul is merely using random examples to make his point, that we should be functioning in the roles for which God has gifted us – and that they should be exercised in a Christ-like spirit.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

⁶*And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; (Romans 12:4-10)

There is little need to comment on the identity of these gifts. The terms are self-explanatory. Also, in each generation others could be added to this list of gifts. **The point that Paul makes is that every Christian is to be diligent in using his God-given abilities to serve the Church, and thus, to serve God.**

Another important point is that there is no hierarchy of gifts. Neither are the gifts a reason to feel important or should they be in competition with one another. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, who were boasting in their various gifts,

For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? (1 Corinthians 4:7)

Those who have the various gifts should view one another as being complementary, and function accordingly.

This is in the spirit of what Paul wrote to the Philippians,

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Paul presents a rather lengthy treatise on the charismatic gifts in I Corinthians Chapters 12-14.

Among the many points that Paul makes in these chapters two need to be acknowledged before considering the identity of the gifts:

- The Holy Spirit chooses who will be given which gifts
But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:11)
But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. (1 Corinthians 12:18 NAS)
- None of the gifts are possessed by everyone
All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?³⁰ All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? (1 Corinthians 12:29-30 NAS)

NOTE: In these two verses, Paul is asking a rhetorical question. When asking a rhetorical question in Greek, the questioner indicates whether he anticipates a negative or a positive answer by the term with which he begins the question. If the questioner intends for the answer to be, *yes*, the question is begun with an οὐ (*ou*),. If the questioner expects a negative answer, the question is begun with a μή (*meh*). In each of the rhetorical questions asked in verses 29 & 30, Paul begins the question with a μή. Thus, Paul is saying that not everyone is an apostle, not everyone is a prophet, not everyone is a teacher, not everyone works miracles, not everyone receives gifts of healings, not everyone speaks in tongues, not everyone interprets tongues, etc. This is an important point because it flies in the face of some Pentecostal and Charismatic teaching.

We will not exegete these chapters,⁹² but will make the relevant point that the Holy Spirit does impart gifts for the upbuilding of the Church. With a variety of illustrations in I Corinthians 14, Paul argues that the purpose of the gifts is for the edification of the Church. This, of course, is the same argument that he presents concerning the functional gifts in Romans 12. Paul concludes the argument concerning the purpose of the Charismatic gifts with this statement,

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

In ARTICLE VIII, we will explore the manifestation of the charismata in the gathered local Church.

⁹² For an exposition of these chapters see, <http://www.tulsachristianfellowship.com/doulos-press.html>, click papers at this link, and download *Paul's Letters to the Church at Corinth*.

ARTICLE X: THE WEEKLY MEETING OF THE CHURCH⁹³

In this study, we will explore what took place when the New Testament Church gathered for what the contemporary church describes as, "the worship service." For the purposes of this study, we will simplify the matter by using the term, *The Meeting*. PART ONE will examine the relevant post-Pentecostal New Testament texts. PART TWO will be an examination of documents from the first half of the Second Century (documents produced after the middle of the Second Century describe a church that had become more formalized and structured). Thus, through an examination of the New Testament and the early post-biblical documents, we will explore The Meeting as it is described during the first 120 years of the Church's existence.

PART ONE: THE NEW TESTAMENT RECORD

There is no single passage of the New Testament that instructs us concerning what should be included in The Meeting. The historical record of Acts uses the broadest of terms to describe The Meeting, or describes only certain elements of The Meeting. The same is true of the corrective and instructional material in the epistles. Even so, by examining the passages that do describe some aspect of The Meeting, we can get a fairly accurate picture of what took place in the gathered local church. In PART ONE, we first will examine the historical material in Acts, then we will turn to the epistles.

80The First Church

Acts 2:42-47

The first forty-one verses of Acts 2 describe the birth of the Church on Pentecost Sunday. The final six verses of the chapter present a cursory description of the infant Church.

Verses 43 - 47 describe the daily life of the believers:

And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Verse 42 describes the focus of the community.

And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

⁹³ The material in this portion of our creed is an adaptation of the James W. Garrett paper, *The Meeting*, presented at the 1999 Conclave of New Testament Elders, available at <http://www.tulsachristianfellowship.com/doulos-press.html>, papers at this link.

The verb translated, *devoting*, in verse 42, προσκαρτερέω (*proskartereo*), indicates constant attention. Its meaning is heightened by the use of the present tense in this verse, προσκαρτεροῦντες (*proskarterountes*), from which comes the sense of *continually devoting*.⁹⁴

As we progress in our study, it will become apparent that in every locale, the core elements of the Meeting, in every place, were, “the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.”

The use of the definite article with each of these four elements indicates that each of these terms refers to very specific items. Literally, the verse reads,

*And they were continually devoting themselves to **the** teaching of **the** apostles and to **the** fellowship, to **the** breaking of **the** bread and to **the** prayers.*

- Thus, *the teaching of the apostles* refers to a specific body of instruction imparted by a particular set of apostles. Obviously, the expression refers to the activity of the Twelve. They were living up to the role of New Covenant scribes.

Matthew 13:52 And He said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old."

As noted in ARTICLE V, they were able to fulfill this role because they were experiencing the fulfillment of the unique promise that Jesus had given to the Twelve (John 14:26; 16:13-15; John 15:14-16, 26-27).

An example of the Holy Spirit refreshed memory is recorded in John 2:19-22.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.

The apostles' role in the Church was to impart this revelation concerning Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven. Their role outside of the Church was to give testimony that Jesus had come forth from the tomb.⁹⁵

F. F. Bruce accurately describes the situation described in Acts 2:42.

“Luke presents in this paragraph an ideal picture of this new community, rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. The community, the apostolic fellowship, was constituted on the basis of the apostolic teaching. This teaching was authoritative because it was the teaching of the Lord communicated through

⁹⁴ In my opinion, "devoting" [RSV, NAS, NIV, et al.] is not a good term to use in rendering προσκαρτερέω in this passage. They were "devoted" to Christ, not to those things that were instruments or expressions of Him. It seems to me that a better rendering would be "continually gave their constant attention to," or "spent their time listening to the apostles' doctrine, participating in the fellowship, ..." JWG

⁹⁵ Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32, et al.

the apostles in the power of the Spirit. For believers of later generations, the New Testament Scriptures form the written deposit of the apostolic teaching. The apostolic succession is recognized most clearly in those churches which adhere most steadfastly to the apostolic teaching.”⁹⁶

The apostles understood their role. Acts 6:4 records their understanding of what the Lord intended for them view as their ministry priorities.

But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Our examination of other scriptures and post-biblical writings will demonstrate that **the** teaching of **the** apostles always had a prominent place in The Meeting.

- *And to **the** fellowship*, as stated already, must refer to something definite, because of the definite article. It could not mean that these Jerusalem believers were devoted to the experience of fellowship, or just to fellowship in general. For one thing, the expression describes every member’s commitment to the local body of believers, the community of the saints.

The term rendered as, *fellowship*, is *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*). Interestingly, Paul used this term in reference to the collection of funds and their distribution to those for whom they had been collected.

*Romans 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a **koinonia** [contribution] for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.*

*2 Corinthians 8:4 begging us with much entreaty for the favor of **koinonia** [participation] in the support of the saints,*

*2 Corinthians 9:13 Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your **koinonia** [contribution] to them and to all,*

*Hebrews 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and **koinonia** [sharing]; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

Of signal interest is Paul's use of *koinonia* in his letter to the Philippians.

*Philippians 1:3,5 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ... in view of your **koinonia** [participation] in the gospel from the first day until now.*

The correct rendering of the Greek expression in Philippians 1:5 (εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον [*eis to euangelion*]).⁹⁷ is not, *in the Gospel*, but rather, *into the Gospel*, or, *toward the Gospel*. The preposition, εἰς, indicates motion. Thus, it is apparent that the *koinonia* referred to in this verse was the money they had collected and sent to Paul so he could give himself fully to the preaching of the Gospel (cf. Philippians 4:15-16).

In the light of the verses that follow Acts 2:42 (44 & 45), the collection and distribution of money and goods for the needy must be included in the meaning of *the fellowship*. The

⁹⁶ Bruce, F.F., *The Book of Acts in The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988) p. 73

⁹⁷ Lightfoot, J.B., *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Hendrickson Publishers, third printing 1995 [original 1868]) page 83

collection and distribution of gifts is one of the chief means of being devoted to *the fellowship*. This understanding of *koinonia* continued in the early church.

- *The breaking of the bread* again refers to more than sharing a meal. "To break bread," (without the article, *the*, preceding *bread*) is an euphemism for eating a meal (cf. Verse 46). However, a definite event is signified by *the breaking* and a definite bread is signified by *the bread*. This expression became an euphemism for the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 10:16 *Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?*

It should be noted that the early post-biblical church considered some of the passages where the definite article was missing also to refer to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper also is another expression of *koinonia*: *...the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing [koinonia] in the blood of Christ? ... the bread which we break a sharing [koinonia] in the body of Christ?* This is why the Lord's Supper also is called "communion."

- *And to the prayers*, refers to definite prayers. This is does not refer to one who is "devoted to prayer," as is mentioned in Acts 1:14; 6:4; etc. The definite article infers that there either were set times of prayer, which would be consistent with those who were of Jewish background (Acts 3:1 *Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer*), or that there were prescribed prayers, a lectionary, as would be followed in a synagogue. In the Jewish lectionary, certain Psalms were recited as prayers at prescribed times. Since the synagogue seems to have been the model for The Meeting, the practice of following a lectionary could have been carried over from the synagogue. Following a lectionary is a practice that is followed in many 21st Century contemporary churches.

In all probability, the expression, *the prayers*, refers to the prayers that were offered in the corporate gathering of the Church. These inaugural believers were faithful to be present when the church met for prayer.

These four elements, described in Acts 2:42, constituted the activity of the gathered Church:

1. The teaching of the apostles
2. The sense of community, including the reception of an offering for the community
3. The Lord's Supper
4. The Prayers

As stated above, an examination of post-biblical record confirms that these four elements continued to be the core elements in the Church's regularly scheduled meetings.

The Church at Troas **Acts 20:5-11**

But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. And we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the windowsill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead. But Paul went down and fell upon him and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him."

And when he had gone back up, and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.

By this time, the Church was approximately twenty-five years old. Established routines had developed under the guidance of the apostles. One of these was the practice of meeting regularly on the first day of the week. Note that Paul and his company had arrived in Troas on Monday. Even though they were on their way to Jerusalem, they chose to remain at Troas for seven days so that they could join the church at its weekly meeting, the following Sunday. The meeting began after the close of the workday and lasted all night. Paul and his company left early Monday morning, without any sleep. The Meeting was important to them.

The meeting was held late Sunday night, since Sunday was a workday for everyone. It was not until the reign of Constantine that Sunday became a day off. Constantine made this change in Roman society so that Christians would not have to work on their day of worship. Where there is a record of the time of The Meeting (pre-Constantine), it was early Sunday morning before the workday began, or in the evening. In some places, it was both.

The first day of the week had great significance for the Church. This was the day that Christ had come forth from the grave. Several of Christ's appearances were on the first day of the week. The Church was born on Pentecost, which was the first day of the week. Thus, the first day of the week became the day for the Church's regularly scheduled meeting.

It is interesting to note how Paul mentions the first day of the week in I Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

This passage addresses Paul's gathering of an offering from the Gentile churches to be given to the Christians in Judea. Note that Paul already had instructed the Galatian churches to do what he now was requiring of the Corinthians. On the first day of each week, each individual was to take stock of his money and put some of it into a private hoard, which he would release upon Paul's arrival. The Greek participle in this passage (θησαυρίζων *thesauridzon* - "storing up") indicates that each individual himself is to save up the money until the designated time. The believers were not instructed to bring the money to a church service and put it into an offering, week by week.

Since this was to be done as a private act, why did Paul instruct them to make this transaction on the first day of the week? We must not assert more than the passage states. However, we can make passing comment. Gordon Fee points out that since Paul mentions this day at all, rather than saying, "once a week," implies significance to the day. This was not the day on which people were paid, so there must have been another reason. The only possibility is that this is the Christian's special day.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Fee, Gordon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians in The New International Commentary on*

By the time that the Apocalypse was written (95-99 AD), the first day of the week had become *the Lord's Day* (Revelation 1:10). This is the name for the first day of the week that often was used in the Post-Apostolic era.

Note that the purpose of The Meeting was to *break bread* (verse 7). Verse 7 must be understood in the light of verse 11, which speaks of Paul's breaking *the bread*.

*And when he had gone back up, and had broken **the** bread and eaten*

The church had gathered for an *agape* feast -to *break bread*. The Lord's Supper was the central event of the *agape* feast. Thus, in verse 11, Paul is pictured as participating in the Lord's Supper (*breaking the bread*), then snacking at the *agape* feast (the word translated, "eaten," [γευσάμενος - *geusamenos*] literally means, "to taste") while continuing to discourse with the brothers.

Three of the Acts 2:42 elements in The Meeting are mentioned, therefore, in this passage:

1. The Lord's Supper
2. The Teaching of the Apostles (Paul's speech).
3. The Fellowship (the *agape*)

There is no mention of The Prayers in this account, although Paul did pray for Eutychus.

Excursus: The Agape Feast

The *agape* had its origin in the shared meals in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem communal meals came into existence because of the need for a communal existence in the embryonic Church. Poverty in Jerusalem always had been very great, but a new element was added when many of the Jews from the Diaspora accepted the Gospel. As noted in Acts 2, the audience for Peter's Pentecost sermon included Jews and proselytes from fifteen nations or regions. They had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. Many of these accepted the Gospel message and remained in Jerusalem to be a part of the newly formed Jerusalem Church. This is evident from the Acts 6 record of the conflict between Palestinian Jewish Christians and those from the Diaspora. These former pilgrims had no place to stay, no income, and their resources quickly were exhausted.

As the Holy Spirit shed love abroad in the hearts of the new converts (Romans 5:5), those with means surrendered their possessions for the use of the corporate body (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 37; 5:2). Hospitality became a necessary means of survival. Believer's homes became boarding houses with free room and board. Those with property sold their assets and gave the money to the apostles for the provision of food for the common meals. These shared meals came to be called, "*agape* feasts," after a period of time, since they were an expression of the love for Lord and for the brethren. The terms, "brother" and "sister," had real meaning. They were family.

By the time that the Acts 6 controversy arose, there seems to have been an adjustment to the pattern. In Acts 6, food is distributed to the widows, rather than having them share in a communal meal provided by the common purse.

When the need for the communal meal ceased, the *agape* continued as a tradition in many quarters. The continuance of this tradition probably was enhanced by the fact that Jesus

instituted the Lord's Supper in conjunction with a sacred meal. In some regions, the *agape* became regular part of The Meeting (perhaps even the heart of The Meeting).

It should be no surprise to us that the *agape* was observed among many of the Gentile churches. Most religions of the Gentiles included feasts in the pagan temples as a part of their religious expression. Thus, when these pagans became Christians, the *agape* was a very natural transition. A study of the churches of the New Testament and their respective cultures cause us to conclude that in each locale, the culture did effect what happened in The Meeting.

The Lord's Supper and the Abuse of the Agape in Corinth

I Corinthians 11:17-34

But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you.

Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.

For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.

The verses before us in I Corinthians 11 constitute a key passage concerning the regular gathering of the local church. First is the language that Paul uses in verses 18 and 20.

For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it... Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

The phrase, *when you come together* in verse 18, and *meet together*, in verse 20, are renderings of the Greek term, συνέρχεσθε (*sunerchesthe*). This term is repeated five times in verses 17-22

and 33-34. It is used the same way in 14:23 and 26. The word had become a semi-technical term for the "gathering together" of the people of God for worship (The Meeting).

The expression, *as a church*, is a rendering of ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (*en ekklesia*) – See ARTICLE V.

Thus, informal gatherings in their homes or other impromptu meetings are not described in this passage. This passage refers to what in our tradition is the Sunday morning worship service. It was The Meeting.

In Corinth, the *agape* had gotten out of hand. The purpose of the Sunday gathering should have been to partake of the Lord's Supper. Instead, the Corinthians were focusing on the *agape*, and had become very self-indulgent at the meal.

In order to understand the scene, we must pay attention to the place of The Meeting. The Sunday meetings were held in the more spacious homes of prosperous Corinthian Christians. The New Testament records two and possibly three such homes among the converts of Corinth.

- The first possibility is the home of Titius Justice, whose house was next to the synagogue. This is where the church gathered after being excluded from the synagogue.⁹⁹
- The second house would be that of Gaius (I Corinthians 1:15), whom Paul described as *host to me and the whole church* (Romans 16:23, written from Corinth).¹⁰⁰
- A third possibility would be the home of Crispus, the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue (Acts 18:8). A person of this high status in society would have had a fine house.

The architecture of these houses helps to understand some of Paul's comments. The average Corinthian house contained a dining room, called the *triclinium* (the term, *triclinium*, refers to a three-sided table at which the diners reclined while eating), which could accommodate 9 to 12 diners (average size of a *triclinium* was about 18 x 18 feet) and an *atrium* (a large entry courtyard), which would accommodate 30 to 50 guests. Thus, the host and those whom he invited, would eat in the *triclinium*. The majority of the church would eat in the *atrium*.

Gordon Fee states,

“In a class-conscious society such as Roman Corinth would have been, it would be sociologically natural for the host to invite those of his/her own class to eat in the triclinium, while the others would eat in the atrium. Furthermore, it is probable that the language, "one's own supper," (v. 21) refers to the eating of private meals by the wealthy, in which at the common meal of the Lord's Supper they ate either their own portions or perhaps privileged portions that were not made available to the 'have-nots.'"¹⁰¹

It seems that the Corinthians had become very insensitive to the poor among them. Note that Paul did not eliminate the social distinctions as such. They still would have their

⁹⁹ Acts 18:7

¹⁰⁰ Bruce suggests that Gaius and Titius Justice are the same person (Bruce, F.F. *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible [London, 1971]. Thus, his full Roman name would have been Gaius Titius Justice. This is plausible, but there seems to be no reason to take this position.

¹⁰¹ Fee, Gordon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians in The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987) p. 534

houses in which to eat their private meals (vv.22-23). What he did speak against was the insertion of these social distinctions into the meeting. Their conduct in the Meeting should have displayed the truth that God had made them one, as signified by their eating the *one loaf* of the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 10:17 *Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*¹⁰²

Paul's statement, that they could eat at home, places the *agape* in the realm of tradition, but not a necessary one. The Lord's Supper, however, was another matter. It was sacred and should have been the focus of their gathering.

The main point that Paul makes in this passage is that the Lord's Supper should have been the focus of their meeting. Instead of that's being true, the Lord's Supper had become just another element in a common meal.

Their irreverence toward the loaf and the cup of the Lord's Supper made their partaking an empty gesture. More than that, it made them *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27).

We find two elements in this passage that are relevant to our study:

- *Koinonia* (although *koinonia* was aborted by the Corinthians' behavior) in the *Agape* feast (which Paul said was optional)
- They partook of the Lord's Supper

The sacredness of the elements in the Lord's Supper, the wine and the unleavened bread, must be acknowledged.

When instituting the Lord's Supper, Our Lord stated, concerning its observance,

*And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*²⁰ *And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. (Luke 22:19-20 [also in Matthew 26:26ff; Mark 14:22ff; I Corinthians 11:24ff])*

Since our Lord declared the elements to be His Body and His Blood, in some sense they must be that to us – not merely symbols. By faith, the New Testament Church receives these elements as the sacred elements that Our Lord declared them to be.

¹⁰² The Greek term translated, 'bread,' in this passage is ἄρτος (*artos*), which means "loaf."

Charismata in The Meeting in Corinth I Corinthians 14:26-33

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

The three chapters, Twelve through Fourteen of First Corinthians, speak to the problem of spiritual manifestations in Corinth. In these chapters Paul gives correction concerning the abuses of tongues and prophecy that were present in the Corinthian Church. For the purposes of our study, only verses 26-33 (especially verse 26) are relevant.

First, we must state that outside of this passage, there is no mention of charismatic activity in a worship service until the Montanist movement in the last quarter of the Second Century. That movement, incidentally, was very heretical (see ADDENDUM R).

The only manifestations of the Holy Spirit mentioned in post-biblical documents is the ministry of prophets. One of the post-biblical documents, *The Didache*, instructs the church to give the prophets, which were itinerant, freedom to speak in the meeting (see ADDENDUM S). However, in none of the post-biblical documents' descriptions of the Sunday Meeting, is there any record of the sort of activity described in I Corinthians 12 -14.

It is important to note that Paul was not exhorting the church to include these gifts in the meeting, but he was giving guidelines for their use, if they are present. He was *proscribing*, not *prescribing*.

It is no surprise to learn that these manifestations were taking place in Corinth. The Corinthians had been won to Christ out of religions in which this sort of activity took place in the temples. That is why Paul wrote, *Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

In some of the Corinthian cults, "inspired utterances" (including tongues) were a part of the worship, in spite of the fact that the adherents were worshipping mute idols. The inspired utterances in the pagan worship probably came from demons (I Corinthians 10:20-21). Therefore, when tongues began to be manifested in the gatherings of the Corinthian church, some wanted to forbid them. They were seen as an intrusion of the demons from the pagan religions. One of the noteworthy differences between the prophetic and inspired utterances of the pagans and that of the Christians was the matter of ecstasy. In ecstasy, the worshipper has no control over himself. He is "beside himself." The servant of Christ, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, never loses the ability to choose his behavior.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ The only recorded possible exception to this axiom was when classes of individuals had an initial encounter with the Holy Spirit (Jews in Acts 2; Gentiles in Acts 10; and disciples of John

1 Corinthians 14:32 *and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;*

Throughout this section, Paul speaks of order, which is not possible in the presence of ecstasy, but very necessary in a meeting that has the approval of God.

1 Corinthians 14:33 *for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

The expression, *each one* (verse 26), describes a service in which there is a general participation. This verse (26) as well as verse 23, and 11:2-16 (in which women are praying and prophesying in the assembly), indicate that there was general participation by all members and that there was considerable expression of the more spontaneous gifts of utterance. Paul spoke no word of disapproval of this type of a meeting, as long as it was regulated. For instance, he regulated the demeanor of women who were involved in such public expressions (11:2-16).

One evidence of the congregational participation is the "amen" (14:16). Everything that took place should involve the whole congregation. Every prayer should be intelligible so that every member could respond by saying, "Amen."

The elements which Paul sought to regulate but to allow in the service were singing (chanting), instruction, revelation, messages in tongues, and interpretation of tongues. The phrase, *when you come together each one has*, implies that at least some of these items had been prepared before arriving at the service.

- *Each one has a psalm.* The Greek word, ψάλλω (*psallo*), originally meant, "to touch," then came to mean, "to pluck" the string, referring to the string of a bow. Very early, the term also came to refer to plucking the strings of a musical instrument. The term occurs forty times in the Septuagint, always referring to playing a stringed instrument, sometimes including a song that is sung. In some instances in the New Testament, the term refers to one of the Old Testament psalms. In the passage before us (I Corinthians 14:26) the term would refer to a song that someone has composed to be sung that he/she wanted to present in the worship service.
- *Has a teaching* is difficult to define. Perhaps certain ones had insight into Old Testament scriptures that they wanted to elucidate. Testimony may have been involved here.
- *Has a revelation* would refer to prophecy. This is seen from the use of the term in verses 29 & 30.
- *Has a tongue, has an interpretation* are a unit. In 14:5 & 13, the tongues speakers are urged to seek the gift of interpretation. So, someone could have received a tongue with an interpretation during the week. On the other hand, if someone has a tongue without the interpretation, and there is no known interpreter present, he is to keep silent. This language goes against the common practice in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in which a word

the Baptist in Acts 19). The manifestation in each case was praising god in a language unknown to the speaker and in one instance (Acts 19), prophesying. Although it is not stated, some would understand the recipients of the Spirit in these three passages to be speaking in tongues apart from their will to do so. The case could be argued, however, that this is not the necessary meaning of the language of the text.

in tongues is given and then there is a pause to see if anyone has the interpretation. Verse 28 clearly indicates that tongues messages should be given in the service only if the presence of an interpreter is known in advance of the delivery of the tongues message. The implication of this is that those who had the gift of interpretation were known for having that gift and were so identified.

The purpose of all activity at The Meeting should be to build up the corporate body as well as to encourage individual believers in holy living.¹⁰⁴

1 Corinthians 14:26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, ...let all things be done for edification.

Hebrews 10:23-26 addresses this purpose of The Meeting.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

This passage from Hebrews is one of several in the epistle that warn against apostasy and/or backsliding. The main concern is that no believer falls back into willful sin. The prescription for avoiding this is for believers to stimulate and to encourage one another in godly living. The setting for this edifying activity is in *The Meeting of ourselves* (literal translation).¹⁰⁵ Thus, a primary purpose for The Meeting is for the mutual encouragement of believers. Hebrews does not spell out how that is to be done.

The concept of mutual encouragement is a remote concept in many church gatherings today. This passage describes something far different from a meeting in which church members enter the building, sit down as spectators, and listen to professional singers, professional choirs, and a professional orator, then go home. It's not that having musicians and speakers is wrong, but if the structure of the service does not allow for some interaction between believers, before, during, or after The Meeting, *stimulating one another* and *encouraging one another* just can't happen.

The one exception to this statement is attendance itself. Just being present in a meeting is an encouragement. To miss a meeting is to discourage. All of us have experienced the difference between the encouragement of a full room, and the discouragement of empty seats. Every believer should feel the need to be present in the meeting, because his presence is uplifting to the church.

¹⁰⁴ "The building up of the community is the basic reason for settings of corporate worship; they probably should not be turned into a corporate gathering for a thousand individual experiences of worship" (Fee, Gordon, *1 Corinthians* NICN)

¹⁰⁵ The Greek terms here are very rich in meaning. We must avoid the temptation to pause and consider them, because this would not be relevant to the theme of this paper

I Corinthians 14:26 is key to this activity. When the Holy Spirit gives individual members songs, words, and prophecies, there should be a place in an orderly service for these blessings to be bestowed upon the body, within the numerical limits set by Paul in verses 27 and 29,

If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; ...And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

Exhorting one another in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Song Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-20

Two other passages that relate to mutual edification are Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-20

Colossians 3:16 *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Ephesians 5:18-20 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father...*

There is much similarity between these two passages. First we will note the distinctives and then the material that they have in common.

- *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.* The Greek term, *of Christ*, is subjective genitive, indicating that Christ is the speaker of the word. There doesn't seem to be any reference to any specific body of truth, either written or oral, but the idea is that the word spoken by Christ should be in the heart of the believer as an inner monitor. Over the centuries, the expression usually has been interpreted as Scripture.

The exhortation is, *richly dwell **within** you*, not ***among** you*. The Greek term is ἐνοικέω (*enoikew*), which means to "indwell." Therefore, this is an exhortation to the individual Colossians, not just to the corporate body. Lightfoot renders this phrase, "richly dwell in your hearts."¹⁰⁶ Parallel passages are I John 1:10; 2:14b.¹⁰⁷

1 John 1:10 *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and **His word is not in us.***

1 John 2:14b *I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the **word of God abides in you**, and you have overcome the evil one.*

¹⁰⁶ Lightfoot, J.B., *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philippians* (Hendrickson Publishers, reprint of 1875 edition, reprinted in 1995) page 224

¹⁰⁷ Acts 18:5 is another possible parallel: *But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word [literally, "was pressed by the word], solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*

- *Be filled with the spirit* [literal translation - *keep on being filled with the Spirit*], is a statement contrasting two states: one is the result of the excitement of wine and the other is the result of the inspiration and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The Colossian letter's exhortation to allow the Word of Christ to dwell richly in the heart, and this exhortation to remain filled with the Spirit, encompass the two sources of spiritual life for the believer: the Word (Scripture) and the Spirit. Because the exhortation is to *keep on being filled*, the assumption is that every Christian is filled with the Spirit, but can lose that filling (I Thessalonians 5:19).
- *With all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...speaking to one another.* This brings to mind Paul's description of his role as preacher, *And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ* (1:28).

Here, he states that not only is it the preacher's responsibility to admonish and teach, but it is the responsibility of the entire congregation to be so engaged. "Teaching and "admonishing" are opposite sides of the same activity.

- *with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* This is how the teaching, admonishing, and speaking to one another is to take place, through the positive action of reciting psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, couched in a spirit of thanksgiving. There is nothing here of "speaking into one another's lives." Instead, through our singing, we should create an atmosphere in which teaching and admonishing are the spiritual air breathed by our redeemed spirits.
 1. *Psalms* may be restricted to Old Testament Psalms, but this is improbable, here. Psalms would be more formal compositions.
 2. *Hymns* are songs or poems sung or recited to God in praise of God. Very few songs in "the hymnal" are hymns. Most are psalms or spiritual songs. Whereas psalms and hymns are terms used exclusively for religious songs or poems, the term translated *songs*, both in the Ephesian and the Colossian passages, is a general word for any type of song.
 3. *Spiritual songs* are songs that are neither psalm nor hymn, but still are uplifting songs, and spiritual in nature. This would include, but not be limited to, spontaneous songs given by the Holy Spirit.

The import of these verses is that whether a psalm, a hymn, or a spiritual song, each one should be the vehicle of instruction, admonition, and encouragement of thanksgiving to God.

Neither of these passages (Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-20) can be restricted to being a description of only what happens in The Meeting. This is an exhortation concerning the general conduct and attitude of believers. However, these passages do describe singing as one means of *stimulating one another* and *encouraging one another*. They fall within the parameters of The Meeting, as described in Hebrews 10:23-26 and I Corinthians 14:26.

The question arises, "Were musical instruments used in The Meeting?" This is an age-old question that often has divided the Church. This question was a source of conflict in almost every denomination in America, during the early years of our nation's history. Various groups spun off from the parent denominations as a result of the debate. For example, there still is a small group of Presbyterians that are "non-instrumental." The largest contemporary group of non-instrumentalists are the Churches of Christ. In some southern and western areas of the U.S.,

there are more non-instrumental Churches of Christ than any other type of church. Most of them are relatively small. In the northern and eastern states, various Anabaptist groups are acapella.

The Prayers in Colossae Colossians 4:2-3

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

The Greek terminology here is the same as Acts 2:42. Literally, the passage reads, *In the prayer, all of you continue, watching in it with thanksgiving, praying together also concerning us...*

The definite article, *the prayer*, and *praying together*, indicate a prayer meeting of the church. This is not just an exhortation to individuals to be “devoted to prayer.” Again, it is an exhortation to faithfulness to the times of prayer in the church, when they are together.

Reading Apostolic Letters in Colossae & Laodicea Colossians 4:16

Colossians 4:16 And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.

Tychicus was Paul's companion and fellow laborer. He was with Paul in Rome, where Paul was a prisoner awaiting judgment before Caesar. Epaphras, a member of the Church at Colossae, visited Paul and Tychicus and reported on the strange heresy that was spreading at Colossae and the surrounding churches. From the statements in the Colossian epistle, the heresy seems to have been a mixture of Judaism and Gnosticism. Paul's distress was extreme. He responded immediately by writing four letters (or three, see footnote).¹⁰⁸ The first was to Colossae and a second to Laodicea. A third letter, Ephesians, probably was written as circular letter for the churches of Asia (Ephesus was the leading city) which Tychicus would carry from church to church.

Onesimus, a fugitive slave from Colossae, had come to Rome, hoping to find anonymity there. Through some unknown means, he met Paul and became a Christian. Since Tychicus was traveling to Colossae with the letters, he took Onesimus with him, planning to return him to his master, Philemon. Tychicus was greatly respected as Paul's companion fellow laborer. He could provide protection from Philemon's anger toward Onesimus, but Paul did not leave it at that. He wrote a letter to Philemon.

Paul assumes that his Colossian letter will be read in The Meeting. He urges the church also to read the Laodicean letter. The circular letter, Ephesians, also would have been read at Colossae. Thus, The Teaching of The Apostle(s), the apostolic epistles carried by Tychicus, would have been read in The Meeting.

¹⁰⁸ The Laodicean letter has been lost, unless this title refers to the Letter to the Ephesians. There is an argument that can be made for the view that Ephesians is the letter coming from Laodicea, since Tychicus would have visited Laodicea before he came to Colossae and would have read the Ephesian circular letter there. If this is true, then Paul wrote only three letters, instead of four.

Paul's Instructions to Timothy

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote that the reason for his writing the epistle was to give instruction on proper behavior in the church.

1 Timothy 3:15 *but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

The epistle contains a number of instructions relating to church life, including qualifications for leadership, proper conduct in meetings, the behavior of women believers, etc. Some statements are relevant to The Meeting. Two exhortations concerning The Prayers are relevant:

1 Timothy 2:1-2 *First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.*

1 Timothy 2:8-9 *Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments;*

Two exhortations concerning The Teaching of The Apostles are relevant:

1 Timothy 4:13 *Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.*

1 Timothy 4:16 *Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*

Thus, Paul instructed Timothy on the proper conduct of two elements in The Meeting:

1. The Teaching of The Apostles
2. The Prayers

PART TWO: POST BIBLICAL TEXTS

The post-apostolic period was a time of transition for the Church. Problems no longer could be solved by an authoritative answer from an apostle. The Church had to deal with various subtle teachings that began to arise in certain quarters. Respected leaders and others, who are anonymous, produced documents that sought to bring order and stability (in some instances, uniformity), to the maturing Church. Some advocated a single overseer in each local church, who would be authorized to pronounce judgment on truth and error. As the decades progressed, some began advocating a hierarchy in which a single overseer had authority over certain geographical districts. Indeed, this is what happened and territorial overseers (bishops) became the norm by the Third Century.

A number of documents from the Second Century and early in the Third are available for our study. One thing that immediately grabs the attention of the unbiased student is how quickly after the passing of the Twelve, *religion* began to infest the Church. As an example, we cite the previously mentioned document, *The Didache*. In the New Testament, when someone accepted Christ as Savior, he immediately was immersed. There was no prolonged period of teaching or probation. He was immersed in water and received the Holy Spirit. This was considered a

given.¹⁰⁹ The apostles and their companions trusted the Holy Spirit to renew the convert's mind and to transform his inner spirit.

However, by the time that *The Didache* was composed, immersion had become a religious event. It no longer was a transaction between the new convert and Christ, but it had become a transaction between the convert and the increasingly formalized Church. In the *Didache* section on immersion (Chapter 7), water seemed to have sacramental value and immersion must be preceded by fasting (both the one being immersed and the one doing the immersing). A period of instruction was required between the time the convert confessed Christ and his immersion.

And before the immersion, let the one immersing and the one who is to be immersed fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be immersed to fast one or two days beforehand.

Another example from the *Didache*, advances a salvation by works:

Do not be someone who stretches out his hand to receive, but withdraws when it comes to giving. If you earned something by working with your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins.¹¹⁰

The point is that in reading the early post-biblical documents, we must be wary. It is important to note the practices that are consistent with the New Testament, and those which are not. However, there is great value in reading these documents. They did come from the age closest to the Twelve and many of the documents were produced by those who had heard the apostles or who were students of those who were companions of the Twelve. They flesh out for us some of the areas in which the New Testament gives only a glimpse. We will move through our study by beginning with the earliest documents referring to The Meeting.

An Ancient Christian Sermon

The most ancient Christian sermon in existence has been erroneously labeled, *The Second Letter of Clement*. It is not a letter, nor was it written by Clement. It is a sermon, based on Isaiah 54:1, urging repentance. The preacher is an unnamed elder. It is a call to repentance, purity, and steadfastness. It is rather lengthy. Some scholars date the sermon at around 100 AD, and some as late as 140 AD. This is a sermon that would have been delivered in The Meeting. In one passage, it speaks of the elders' admonishing the congregation and urges the believers, after they go home from the service, to not forget what the elders said and urges a frequent return to the place of The Meeting.

And let us think about paying attention and believing, not only now, while we are being admonished by the elders, but also when we have returned home let us remember the Lord's commands and not allow ourselves to be dragged off the other way by worldly

¹⁰⁹ The one exception is in Acts 8, in which the Samaritans believed and were baptized, but did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came to Samaria. It is apparent that the reason for this exception was the necessity of giving credibility to the admission of Samaritans into the Church. Up to this point, only Jews had been admitted. With the sanction of Peter and John, there was not question as to the validity of the Samaritan Church.

¹¹⁰ *The Didache*, Chapter IV

desires, but let us come here more frequently and strive to advance in the commandments of the Lord, in order that all of us, being of one mind, may be gathered into life.¹¹¹

A few lines later, the preacher comments on the judgment day fate of those who do not heed the elders.

...saying, "Woe to us, because it was you [Jesus], and we did not realize it nor did we believe; and we did not obey the elders when they spoke to us about our salvation."¹¹²

Here we have an example of a sermon that was preached in The Meeting and reference to the elders' preaching in The Meeting. Preaching or exhortation was a part of The Meeting at the opening of the Second Century. This is consistent with the picture that we have seen in the New Testament.

The Letters of Ignatius

Ignatius' writings (composed around 110 AD) are the first occurrence of the idea of a single overseer [bishop] with authority over a geographical area. His letters reveal that he was committed to enforcing a three-level church government in each locale: (1) a single overseer who was like Christ Himself in authority; (2) a council of elders, which was like the apostles in authority; (3) deacons, who were to be honored as the servants of Christ. This is a sharp departure from the two categories (elders and deacons) that are pictured in the New Testament and in all documents that precede Ignatius.¹¹³

His letters inform us of his anxiety over the growth of false teaching that is moving through the churches. He defines the overseer as the person responsible for declaring false teachers as heretics and that any who did not agree with the overseer were not in harmony with Christ.

Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch in Syria. For some unknown reason, he was arrested and transported to Rome in the custody of ten soldiers (whom he called, "leopards") to be executed. At a fork in the road, probably near Laodicea, the soldiers decided to take the northern route through Philadelphia to Smyrna, thus bypassing the churches that lay along the southern route. Delegations from the southern churches met Ignatius along the way and he responded by writing letters to each of the churches. He also sent a letter ahead to Rome, alerting the church of his pending arrival there. Later he sent two letters back to Philadelphia and Smyrna and a letter to his friend Polycarp. His letters reveal that three things were on his mind: (1) the struggle with false teachers within the churches; (2) the unity and structure of the churches; (3) his impending death.

In his **Letter to the Ephesians**, he describes the prayers that take place in The Meeting and urges the Ephesian Christians to attend The Meeting and participate in the prayers.

Let no one be misled: if anyone is not within the sanctuary,¹¹⁴ he lacks the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two has such power, how much more that of the bishop together

¹¹¹ Translated by J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers, Greek Texts and English Translations of their Writings* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1992) page 125

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Some documents that are contemporary with Ignatius and some that came later, reflect the elder/deacon pattern of leadership, rather than the three tiers advocated by Ignatius.

¹¹⁴ The term, "sanctuary," is used in reference to the Church, the *ekklesia*. There were no church buildings at this time, so the term could not refer to the auditorium in which the local church

with the whole church! Therefore whoever does not meet with the congregation thereby demonstrates his arrogance and has separated himself, for it is written: "God opposes the arrogant."¹¹⁵

Later he urges,

Therefore make every effort to come together more frequently to give thanks and glory to God. For when you meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are overthrown and his destructiveness is nullified by the unanimity of your faith.¹¹⁶

At the end of this letter, he addresses the sustaining power of the Lord's Supper.

...with an undisturbed mind, breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ.¹¹⁷

In Ignatius' **Letter to the Magnesians**, he likewise urges the importance of gathering for prayer.

Do not attempt to convince yourselves that anything done apart from the others is right, but, gathering together, let there be one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope with love and blameless joy, which is Christ Jesus, than whom nothing is better.¹¹⁸

In his **Letter to the Philadelphians**, he urges faithfulness to the Lord's Supper (frequently called "the Eucharist" in early Christian writing).

Take care, therefore, to participate in one Eucharist, for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup which leads to unity through His blood... in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God.¹¹⁹

In the **Letter to the Smyrnaeans**, Ignatius condemns those who hold heretical opinions, one of which is the denial of the appropriateness of the Lord's Supper

Now note well those who hold heretical opinions about the grace of Jesus Christ which came to us; note how contrary they are to the mind of God...They abstain from the Eucharist and prayer because they refuse to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father by His goodness has raised up.¹²⁰

The letters of Ignatius mention two elements in The Meeting:

1. Prayer
2. The Lord's Supper

gathered.

¹¹⁵ Lightfoot and Harmer, *Apostolic Fathers* page 141

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* page 145

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* page 151

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* page 155

¹¹⁹ *ibid.* page 179

¹²⁰ *ibid.* page 189

The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles (the *Didache*)

We have made frequent reference to this document in earlier sections of our creed. Although the document was known from references to it in ancient literature (some even used it as Scripture), no copy was known to exist before 1873.¹²¹ There are a number of quotes and references to the *Didache* in documents from the First through the Fifth Centuries.

Even before the Bryennios discovery, various leaders, responding to quotes found in other ancient writings, were influenced by the *Didache*. For example, Wesley required Methodist preachers to follow the quotes from the *Didache* on fasting. The Pharisees fasted on Mondays and Thursdays, because those were market days and more people would notice their fasting. So, the *Didache* forbade fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, because those were the days that hypocrites fasted. The *Didache* prescribed fasting on Wednesday and Friday. Wesley felt so strongly about this matter, that he refused to ordain anyone to Methodist ministry who did not fast on those two days.

The *Didache* appears to be a compilation of documents written by various individuals. We cannot determine with certainty when the compilation was completed. Some have argued for as late as 150 AD, but most students of the document would date it much earlier. 120 AD is a general peg on which to hang the date of the compilation.

The *Didache* is divided into two parts:

1. Instruction about the "Two Ways," which is a summary of basic instruction about the Christian life to be taught to those preparing for immersion and church membership;
2. A manual of church order and practice, which includes instructions about food, immersion, fasting, prayer, the Eucharist, and various offices and positions of leadership.

There are several things in the *Didache* that refer to The Meeting.

The *Didache* has a high view of preachers:

My child, night and day remember the one who preaches God's word to you, and honor him as though he were the Lord. For wherever the Lord's nature is preached, there the Lord is. 4.1¹²²

Confession of one's sins in the meeting is commanded:

In church you shall confess your transgressions, and you shall not approach your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life 4:14^{123 124}

¹²¹ The existence of a copy of the *Didache* was unknown until its discovery by Philotheos Bryennios—a Greek Orthodox metropolitan bishop of Nicomedia—inside a monastery in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in 1873 and later published in 1883.

¹²² *ibid.* page 255

¹²³ *ibid.* page 257

¹²⁴ This command in the *Didache* is very consistent with the other witnesses. Sin was not considered a private matter in the early Church, but it was something that destroyed the unity of the *koinonia*. Early on the debate took place about restoring backsliders. Believing that all of one's sins were washed away in immersion, the Christians struggled

Specific prayers are to be prayed at the Lord's Table:

“Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks as follows.

First, concerning the cup:

We give you thanks, our Father,
 For the holy vine of David your servant,
 Which you have made known to us
 Through Jesus, your servant;
 To you be the glory forever.

And concerning the broken bread:

We give you thanks, our Father,
 For the life and knowledge
 Which you have made known to us
 Through Jesus, your servant;
 To you be the glory forever.
 Just as this broken bread was scattered
 Upon the mountains and then was
 Gathered together and become one,
 So may your church be gathered together
 From the ends of the earth into your kingdom;
 For yours is the glory and the power
 Through Jesus Christ forever.

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been immersed into the name of the Lord, for the Lord has also spoken concerning this: "Do not give what is holy to the dogs." 9:1-5¹²⁵

about what to do about one's sins afterward. Three sins in particular- sexual immorality, murder, and denial of the faith (apostasy) - were considered to be forgivable by God but not by the Church. The penalty for anyone of these was exclusion from the *koinonia* and the deprivation of the Lord's Supper. Most believed that communion was a source of divine grace and withholding it put a person's salvation in peril. The first leader to accept repentant sinners as a matter of policy was Callistus, who was the overseer in Rome during the years 217-222. He readmitted penitent sinners who had been guilty of adultery. He argued that the church is like Noah's ark, containing both clean and unclean animals. The debate continued to be intense. In time the most stringent opposition to re-admission came from Novatian, an elder and respected theologian in Rome. Novatian lost the day. The Roman Catholic sacrament of penance for sins following immersion grew out of this controversy.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* page 260-261

Following the Eucharist, another long prayer of thanksgiving is prescribed, with the following note at the end:

But permit prophets to give thanks however they wish.10:7¹²⁶

In one paragraph, apostles are called prophets, so there is some overlapping in the rules. These, however, were traveling ministries that would speak in The Meeting.

Faithfulness to The Meeting is urged, as well as reconciliation before partaking of the loaf. The Lord's Day was the designated day for The Meeting.

On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who has a quarrel with a companion join you until they have reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the sacrifice concerning which the Lord said, "In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is marvelous among the nations."¹²⁷

In the *Didache*, we find the following elements in The Meeting:

1. Preaching & teaching (preachers, apostles, and prophets)
2. The Lord's Supper
3. Prayer
4. The confession of sin (which relates to preserving the life of The Fellowship)

Justin Martyr

Christian theology seemed to be the utmost nonsense, to most educated and cultured Greeks and Romans. The moral sobriety and devotional piety of Christians made them appear unconventional, even politically dangerous. In the Second Century several apologists arose to defend and explain Christianity. Justin was one of the foremost. He was a Greek, born in Flavia Neapolis, near ancient Shechem. He was trained as a teacher of Platonic philosophy. He came to the Christian faith through - not in spite of - the philosophic traditions of his day. Wearing the philosopher's garb, he opened the first Christian school in Rome. His defense of Christianity was very rational. Tradition says that he was beheaded during the reign of Marcus Aurelius for refusing to offer token sacrifices to the Roman Gods. Justin's writings are dated c.150 AD.

These selections are from Justin's **First Apology** (NOTE: In the following translation, the term rendered as, *president*, is the Greek term, *πρόιτημι* (*proistemi*) which means, *the one standing before*. No doubt this referred to the elder presiding at the service).

Section 61 (this is a section on immersion. We begin the reading at the place where the new convert is taken into The Meeting to participate in the Lord's Supper) On finishing the prayers we greet each other with a kiss. Then bread and a cup of water and mixed wine are brought to the president of the brethren and he, taking them, sends up praise and glory to the Father of the universe through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanksgiving at some length that we have been deemed worthy to receive these things from him. When he has finished the prayers and the thanksgiving,

¹²⁶ *ibid.* page 263: i.e., The prophets did not have to follow the written prayers, but could pray freely.

¹²⁷ *ibid.* page 267

the whole congregation present assents, saying, "Amen." "Amen" in the Hebrew language means, "So be it." When the president has given thanks and the whole congregation has assented, those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the consecrated bread and wine and water, and they take it to the absent.

Section 66 This food we call Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or as common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God's word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus. For the apostles in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, thus handed down what was commanded them: that Jesus, taking bread and having given thanks, said, "Do this for my memorial, this is my body"; and likewise taking the cup and giving thanks he said, "This is my blood"; and gave it to them alone (Mark 14:22-24; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). This also the wicked demons in imitation handed down as something to be done in the mysteries of Mithra; for bread and a cup of water are brought out in their secret rites of initiation, with certain invocations which you either know or can learn.

Section 67 After these [services] we constantly remind each other of these things. Those who have more come to the aid of those who lack, and we are constantly together. Over all that we receive we bless the Maker of all things through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites [us] to the imitation of these noble things. Then we all stand up together and offer prayers. And, as said before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the congregation assents, saying the Amen; the distribution, and reception of the consecrated [elements] by each one, takes place and they are sent to the absent by the deacons. Those who prosper, and who so wish, contribute, each one as much as he chooses to. What is collected is deposited with the president, and he takes care of orphans and widows, and those who are in want on account of sickness or any other cause, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers who are sojourners among [us], and, briefly, he is the protector of all those in need. We all hold this common gathering on Sunday, since it is the first day, on which God transforming darkness and matter made the universe, and Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturday, and on the day after Saturday, he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught them these things which I have passed on to you also for your serious consideration.¹²⁸

This is the most important document from the post-apostolic era, concerning The Meeting. Because it was written as an "apology," it carries much weight in that it is a part of a document in

¹²⁸ *Readings in Christian Thought*, Hugh T. Kerr, Editor (Abingdon, Nashville, 1978) pages 25-26

which Justin is arguing for a fair hearing from the Emperor. In this lengthy *First Apology*, he was careful to describe Christianity in detail, so that the Emperor would know in depth what Christians were about.

Several things arrest our attention in these selections. **First is the fact that the Church met "on the day called Sunday."** Note that Justin used the Roman name for the first day of the week, since he was writing to a Roman Emperor.

There seems to have been a break in the service, an informal time, in which they greeted one another with a kiss. The kiss following the prayers had an important part in the service of the early Church. In time, this practice came to be known as "The Kiss of Peace." This certainly would be an expression of *koinonia*.

The memoirs of the apostles or the writing of the prophets are read. The "memoirs of the apostles" were the Gospels. The "prophets" was a standing designation among Christians for the entire Old Testament. However, the Old Testament prophets had special appeal to the early Christians because so many prophecies concerning Christ are found therein. There was not a set length for the reading, but it was "as long as time permits."

The presiding brother then delivered a sermon. It was an expository sermon, based on the scripture reading of the day.

The congregation stood for prayer and sent up "prayers." Standing for prayer was the customary posture for prayer in The Meeting. Other texts and paintings from this era confirm this. Standing for prayer meant that one had special privileges to come to God the Father through Christ. To stand before the Father meant that one was accepted by God and had the right to speak freely. The prayer seems to have been a corporate free prayer. Earlier in his *Apology*, Justin describes the content of their prayers:

We praise the Maker of the universe as much as we are able by the word of prayer and thanksgiving for all the things with which we are supplied... Being thankful in word, we send up to him honors and hymns for our coming into existence, for all the means of health, for the various qualities of the different classes of things, and for the changes of the seasons, while making petitions for our coming into existence again in incorruption by reason of faith in Him.

Justin uses the common post-biblical name for the Lord's Supper, the "Eucharist" (the term, εὐχαρίστας [*eucharistas*], means, *thanks*). He presents this as a central element of The Meeting. The water and wine used in the Eucharist was the common table drink of that era. Wine was diluted with water. The loaf and the cup were sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer. The overseer's thanksgiving (*eucharistas*) made the bread and mixed wine no longer common bread and common drink. They now were set apart i.e. *holy*.

Note that the description of the Eucharist in the *Didache*, and the description in Justin have some minor differences. In the *Didache*, the cup was prayed for first. In Justin, the loaf is first. In Justin, the wine is mixed with water. In the *Didache*, there is no mention of such mixing.

The weekly reception of the Eucharist was so important to spiritual life, and to the sense of *koinonia*, that the deacons took it to those who were not able to attend the meeting. Thus, every member of the congregation expressed his oneness with the *koinonia* by individually partaking of the loaf and the cup each week.

An offering was received from those who were able and inclined to give. The purpose of the offering was for benevolence. There is no mention of tithing for the support of the local church, as is urged in most evangelical churches today.

Note that in Justin's description, the four elements of Acts 2:42 are described, no more and no less:

1. The apostle's doctrine (reading Scripture and preaching)
2. The Fellowship (including an offering)
3. The breaking of the bread
4. The prayers

This was what The Meeting consisted of in Rome, 140 AD

Because music is so important in contemporary Christianity, we naturally would ask, "Where's the music?" If it did exist in The Meeting, it would have been included in the prayers. Chanting prayers was the practice in the synagogue and there is strong evidence that the synagogue was one of the models for early Christian worship. An example of this in Justin's description of the service is the "Amen." When an individual offered a prayer in the synagogue, the congregation chanted loudly, "Amen." It is interesting that the synagogue so influenced the church that this Hebrew word was taken over into the church and used by Greek speaking and Latin speaking Christians in Rome.

To quote Dr. Everett Ferguson, "It is commonly said that in the medieval church the Mass was emphasized at the expense of other activities of worship, and that in the Reformation (I would add Evangelicalism - JWG) preaching was highlighted at the expense of the rest of worship. The worship described by Justin brings us back to fundamentals."¹²⁹

Pliny

The Roman Emperor, Trajan, had commanded persecution of the Christians throughout the Empire. The Roman governor of Bithynia seems to have been troubled by this. He arrested Christians and thoroughly investigated Christianity. Torture was one means of interrogating Christians. He could not find any crime with which to charge them. Wanting to remain faithful to Roman law, he didn't know what to do. In 112 AD, he wrote to the Emperor for guidance in how to conduct the persecution. The following is an excerpt from his letter to Trajan.

...maintained that the amount of their fault or error had been this, that it was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and recite by turns a form of words to Christ as a god; and that they bound themselves with an oath, not for any crime, but not to commit theft or robbery or adultery, not to break their word, and not to deny a deposit when demanded. After this was done, their custom was to depart, and to meet again to take food, but ordinary and harmless food.

We have to wonder how much Pliny understood what really went on in The Meeting, but we do see that the practice of Christians in Bithynia was to gather at a set time. The "recitation by turns" probably referred to some sort of responsive Scripture reading, a common practice in the synagogue. Furthermore, in the synagogue model, Scripture and

¹²⁹ Dr. Everett Ferguson, *How We Christians Worship*, in *Christian History Magazine*, Issue 37, Vol. XII, No.1, page 10

prayer were combined as they prayed Scripture. The food may have been the Lord's Supper or an *agape*.

In this fragment, the elements of Acts 2:42 seem to be present:

1. The apostles doctrine
2. The fellowship (including the meal)
3. Possibly but not certain: the breaking of the bread
4. Prayers

There are many other documents that could be studied from the second half of the Second Century and the first half of the Third Century. However, desiring to stay as close to the New Testament as we can, we limit our study to those documents from the first half of the First Century.

Conclusion

What do we conclude from a study of the New Testament and these post-biblical documents? What should constitute The Meeting in a contemporary New Testament Church? We must avoid the legalism of those who would restrict our meetings to include only those things that are recorded in these documents. In every age and in every place the Holy Spirit will lead humble elders to design and oversee services that are appropriate for the health of the church in every setting. However, the fact that the Church,

- under the direct oversight of the apostles;
- followed by the Church of the sub-apostolic period;
- followed by the Church of the post-apostolic period;
- demonstrated consistency in what constituted The Meeting, must, to some degree, be our norm.

To neglect any of the four core elements in The Meeting:

- The Teaching of The Apostles,
- The Fellowship,
- The Breaking of The Bread,
- The Prayers,

is to fail to be a New Testament Church.

ARTICLE XI: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS A PRAYING CHURCH

It would not be far afield to say that a New Testament Church considers prayer to be like breathing - life cannot be experienced without it. Through prayer, things are changed, and the Church hears from God.

Acts records the Church's consistent prayer life.

On every occasion of triumph or concern, the Church prayed.

- The Church was born in a prayer meeting.(Acts 1:14 - 2:4)
- The Church was continually devoted to prayer. (Acts 2:42)
- The Church prayed with rejoicing and intercession for boldness when Peter & John were released from prison (Acts 4:23ff)
- The apostles, Peter and John prayed for the reception of the Holy Spirit upon the first non-Jewish converts and the Gentiles acceptability to God was credentialed by God's bestowing the Holy Spirit upon the Gentile converts (Acts 8:15-17)
- Upon Peter's imprisonment, the Church began an uninterrupted prayer meeting until his release (Acts 12:5-12)
- It was the custom to pray when bidding farewell to traveling trans-local ministries (Acts 20:36; 21:5)
- The inception of new ministries always was accompanied by prayer.
- Prayer preceded the choosing and installation of the first *deacons* (Acts 6:1-6)
- Prayer preceded the launching of the first apostolic team (Acts 13:1ff)
- Prayer preceded the installation of the first elders in Gentile churches (Acts 14:23)
- The Apostles considered prayer and teaching to be their main priorities. (Acts 6:2-4)
- Prayer was the means whereby healing was ministered. (Acts 9:40; 28:8; see James 5:13ff)
- Daily prayer was the practice of apostolic teams. (Acts 10:9; 16:16; 16:25)

The Epistles provide abundant evidence that prayer was a vital part of New Testament Church life

The Epistles contain many exhortations to prayer. Here are three examples:

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *pray without ceasing;*

Philippians 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Ephesians 6:18 *With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,*

CONCLUSION

If prayer is not a "way of life" in a local church, then that church is not a New Testament church.

ARTICLE XII: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH PRAYS IN CONFORMITY WITH THE PATTERN OF PRAYER DEMONSTRATED IN THE PRAYERS RECORDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

New Testament Churches not only are characterized by consistent prayer, but those prayers will be prayed according to the New Testament instructions and pattern of prayer. The Apostolic Church modeled a consistent pattern of prayer; the epistles shed light on that model through elaboration and instruction. This model is the standard for church-life in all succeeding generations.

SECTION ONE:

NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER IS ADDRESSED TO THE FATHER

Both John the Baptist and Jesus were known for their prayer life. Both taught their disciples how to pray. Jesus repeated His teachings, as He spoke to various audiences in different places. He usually tailored the emphasis of a particular teaching to fit the need of the audience. Because of this, the four Gospels record similar, but slightly different, lessons taught by Jesus in various settings and at different times in His ministry.

Jesus teaching to His disciples

There are two records of the model prayer that Jesus taught His disciples. The first is in Matthew, during the early Galilean ministry, as a part of the Sermon on the Mount. Here, Jesus presented the model prayer in contrast to the prayer patterns of the Pharisees.

And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name...' (Matthew 6:5-9)

Two years later, during his later Judean ministry, Jesus taught the model prayer to another group. Luke began his report of this incident by stating that after Jesus had finished a season of prayer, one of His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. This request may have been inspired by Jesus' lengthy communion with the Father, something that they were unable to achieve. If so, the terse model that Jesus presented to them becomes all the more impressive. Quality rather than quantity is the measure. Here is Luke's record of this event:

And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come...' (Luke 11:1-2)

We must not conclude that Jesus taught the disciples to pray this way because He was then on the earth, and the Father was in heaven. Jesus clearly stated that even after his ascension, the Father, not Jesus, was to be the object of prayer. In response to their queries about Jesus'

statements concerning His pending departure, and their sorrow as they contemplated it, Jesus painted a picture of how things would be after His departure. He told them that their privileges and endowments would be better than having Him with them in the flesh. One thing that they would have was an open avenue of prayer to the Father.

And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father. (John 16:23-27)

You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. (John 15:16)

This pattern is consistent in all of the teaching that Our Lord gave concerning prayer. Prayer is to be addressed to the Father.

The Post-ascension Church

The New Testament record of the post-ascension Church describes prayer as being offered to the Father. Interestingly, the Holy Spirit never is addressed or worshipped in the New Testament. Contemporary prayers, such as, "Come Holy Spirit," or "Holy Spirit, You are welcome in this place," have no precedent in the New Testament and to a degree violate the New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament record, Jesus is spoken to, after His ascension, only when He appears in a vision (technically termed, an "epiphany). There are five such episodes.

- Stephen's vision of Christ as he was being stoned to death (Acts 7:54-60)
- Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6)
- Paul's vision in the Temple (Acts 22:17-21)
- Ananias' vision concerning Saul (Acts 9:10-16)
- Peter and the vision of clean and unclean animals (Acts 10:10-16)¹³⁰

NOTE: In the many visions contained in the Revelation of Jesus Christ Jesus is addressed. For example, the paean of praise in Revelation 5:8-9. This, however, is outside of the historical life of the Church.

¹³⁰ Although the heavenly speaker is not identified, in Peter's vision of the clean and unclean animals, the visionary pattern of the New Testament would lean toward the speakers' being Jesus Christ.

What about Acts 4:24-29; to Whom is this prayer addressed?

Because the powerful prayer of Acts 4:24-29 is addressed to the "Lord" (vs 24 & 29), many assume that it is a prayer to Jesus. A careful reading of the prayer makes it clear that the term, "Lord," in this prayer, refers to God the Father.

*And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is Thou who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the **Lord, and against His Christ.**' "For truly in this city there were gathered together against **Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint**, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through **the name of Thy holy servant Jesus.**" (Acts 4:24-30)*

Note the language of verse 26, "against the Lord and His Christ;" verse 27, "Thy holy Servant, Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint;" verse 30, "and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy Servant Jesus." This language makes it clear that the term, *Lord*," is applied to God the Father, in this prayer.¹³¹

The only possible exception to prayers being addressed to God the Father

The only possible exception to the pattern of addressing prayer to the Father, is Paul's statement in I Timothy 1:12.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service;

We would expect Paul to direct his gratitude to Christ Jesus, because it was Christ Jesus who appeared to him in a vision on the Damascus road. In expressing his gratitude to *Christ Jesus Our Lord* for putting him into the ministry, was Paul referring to a prayer or referring to that attitude in his heart? Since there is this one possible exception to the pattern of praying to the Father, we must say that it is not wrong to thank Jesus, when He clearly is the expression of the

¹³¹ It is important to note that the title, *Lord*, (Greek, κύριος) is a generic term of respect. It is equivalent to the English, *mister*, which is a contemporary variant of *master*. The Spanish term, *senor*, enjoys the same usage in that language. So, *lord*, may be used as a courteous expression of respect for any individual, human or divine. When the term, *Lord*, is used for a member of the Godhead, the context must be examined to determine whether the one to which the term refers is God the Father or God the Son. The term is used generously for both of them throughout the New Testament. However, after Pentecost, the term always is used in the third person, when applied to Jesus (the exceptions being noted above, i.e., when Jesus appears in a vision). With reference to God the Father, *Lord*," is used in both the second and third person. (NOTE: another Greek term, *despotes* (δεσπότης), meaning, *one who owns slaves*, often is loosely translated, *lord*. δεσπότης, is the *lord* of verse 24. Κύριος, is the term translated, *Lord*, in the rest of the passage).

Godhead that it is appropriate to thank. However, praying to Jesus is the rarest of exceptions (only this one instance) It is not the pattern of New Testament prayer.

Throughout Church History, there have been those who prayed to Jesus. Some of the Mystics of Roman Catholicism, for example, prayed to Jesus. Many of the revival songs written in the 19th Century are addressed to Jesus. Prayers in the "Jesus Only" wing of the Pentecostal Movement would be addressed to Jesus. The "Jesus Movement" (late 1960's and early 1970's) and the "conversational prayer" movement, led by Rosalind Rinker (early 1970's), modeled prayer to Jesus. These last two movements had great impact on the Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. Thus, prayers addressed to Jesus have become a general custom. "Dear Lord Jesus, we just ask you...and we just ask you...and we just ask you..." is heard often in our present day prayer meetings. This is not the biblical model, as recorded for us by the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament formula for prayer

A careful reading of the New Testament, reveals a pattern that is formulated in Romans 1:8.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all,...

Jesus, Our Great High Priest, is the one through whom we pray, but the destiny and object of the prayer is God the Father.

For a note concerning the use of the terminology, "Abba, Father," see ADDENDUM T.

SECTION TWO: THE NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN OF PRAYER IS PRAYING TO GOD THE FATHER IN JESUS' NAME.

The main activity of Jesus today, seems to be intercession.

Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (Romans 8:34)

Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

In addition to the blessing of Jesus' intercession, our own personal prayers go directly to the Father because of the completed work of Jesus. We again look at John's record of Jesus discourse on the benefits that the disciples would have after the ascension.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. (John 15:16)

And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father. (John 16:23-24, 26-27)

This does not mean that we should tack on the end of our prayers the customary incantation, "In Jesus Name, Amen." Certainly, there is nothing wrong with closing our prayers in this manner

and it is very meaningful when spoken in the right spirit. However, adding these words at the close of a prayer does not mean that the prayer has been offered in Jesus Name.

We recall the seven sons of Sceva who used the expression, "in the name of Jesus."

And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:11-16)

This episode teaches us that it could be dangerous to use the Name of Jesus as an incantation. One has the authority to do something, "in Jesus Name," only when he is in Christ and Christ is in him and what is being done is in according to the will of God.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' (Matthew 7:21-23)

Yet, we have this glorious promise,

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:7)

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. (John 15:10)

Thus, when we are in Christ, and His word is in us, producing a Christ-like life, we can approach the Father in prayer. We have no right to come to the Father apart from our standing in Christ... and our prayers must reflect the will of the Father.

When we are in Christ and He is in us, we have taken His Name upon us. His Name upon us gives us the same access to the Father that Jesus has, because we wear His Name. Over the years, this truth has been illustrated by a check written on a bank account. If I write you a check, and sign it, you can take it to the bank and cash it, because I have money in that bank and because my signature is on the check. My signature gives you the same authority that I have over a portion of my assets. The bank is responsible to make certain that I have assets in the bank, that the signature is genuine, and that you are who you say you are. Although all analogies break down when pressed on every detail, this is a good illustration of the proper use of Jesus Name by those who are His.

**SECTION THREE:
THE FATHER IS ADDRESSED IN JESUS NAME
AS WE "PRAY IN THE SPIRIT"**

It is important that we recognize the difference between "praying *in* the Spirit," and "praying *with* the spirit." First, we note Paul's language in I Corinthians 14:14-16.

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.

Notice that Paul speaks here of the human spirit and the human mind (i.e., *my spirit, my mind*). He states that when he prays in a tongue, that his human spirit is praying. When he prays in a language that his mind understands, his mind is involved in the prayer.

Notice that there is no mention of the Holy Spirit in these verses. The key terminology here is, "with." Paul prays *with* his spirit and *with* his mind. He makes the same statement about singing. In the next verse [16] speaks of blessing "in spirit." Since the definite article is missing, and this is in the context of the previous two verses, it is obvious that Paul is speaking of a prayer of blessing in tongues.

The terminology in Jude 1:17 -21 reinforces this point.

But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

Jude contrasts those who are devoid of the Holy Spirit and those are not devoid of the Holy Spirit. Jude then states that praying *in* the Holy Spirit is one of the activities related to our remaining strong and faithful in the faith. The terminology here, clearly refers to "praying *in* the Holy Spirit. The human spirit is not referenced here. Neither is there any reference to praying *with* the human spirit, i.e. in tongues, as referenced by Paul in I Corinthians 14.

The third passage that is relevant to our study is Ephesians 6:18.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

This is the concluding exhortation in Paul's discussion of the Christian armor. Paul states that all prayer and petition (all kinds of prayer) are to be prayed *in* the Spirit. This clearly refers to the Holy Spirit, because of the use of the definite article and the preposition, *in* (consistent with the exhortation of Jude). Since all prayer at all times is to be prayed in the Holy Spirit, and since Paul spoke of praying with the human spirit (in tongues) and praying with the mind (known language), then prayer *in* the Spirit may be in tongues (praying by the human spirit) or in one's natural language (praying by the human mind).

The important thing is that whether in tongues or English, our prayer should be in the Holy Spirit, even to the point of whether we should pray in tongues, or in English.

In my own case, I have felt rebuked by the Holy Spirit, on occasion, when I was praying in tongues. I felt the spirit tell me to, "shut up," because I was praying a cheap prayer that took no involvement on my part. I knew that the Spirit wanted me to pray in English because He wanted all of me, including my mind and will, to be involved in the prayer.

We must not devalue tongues, but, on the other hand, the elevation of tongues to some special level of spiritual power also is unwarranted.

Praying *in* The Spirit, however, is of vital importance.

**SECTION FOUR:
PRAYER TO THE FATHER, IN JESUS NAME, IN THE SPIRIT,
MUST BE PRAYED IN FAITH**

Hebrews 11:6 states clearly that faith is the *sine qua non* for those who would draw near to God and receive from Him.

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

The two elements defining, *faith*, in this verse, are

- belief in the existence of God;
- belief that God will reward those who seek him.

New Testament prayer, therefore, cannot be prayed with the attitude, "I'll pray, just in case someone up there is listening." New Testament prayer must be prayed out of conviction.

James addresses this in his discussion of asking God for wisdom.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-8)

Even though our generous God gives to us, gracefully, His generous heart does not respond to doubting hearts.

The power of a believing heart was described by Jesus.

*And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. And being reminded, Peter *said to Him, "Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered." And Jesus *answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you. "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. (Mark 11:20-25)*

Even though this passage has been terribly abused, we must acknowledge that the clear point of Jesus' statement is that faith or the lack thereof is a key to effective prayer, especially, prayers of petition.

The constant prayer urged by Paul (I Thessalonians 5:17) and persistent prayer described in the parable of the widow (Luke 18:1ff) are an expression of faith.

Where does New Testament faith come from, how can it be resident in our hearts? Most of us are like the father of the demon possessed boy, who pled with Jesus to heal his son at the bottom of the Mount of Transfiguration. The man said to Jesus, *If you can, do anything, take pity on us and help us.* Jesus replied, *If you can! What do you mean, 'If you can.' Believe! All things are possible to him who believes!* The man responded, *I believe, Lord, but help Thou my unbelief* (Mark 9:22-24). All of us have been in this place. We believe, but we know that our faith still is lacking. In such situations, it is appropriate to ask God for a deeper faith, even to ask Him for the *gift of faith*. (I Corinthians 12:9).

**SECTION FIVE:
PRAYER TO THE FATHER, IN JESUS NAME, IN THE SPIRIT, IN FAITH
REQUIRES A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL**

One cannot have faith about the specific outcome of a prayer, without a certainty of God's will. James, in an effort to encourage faith, cites Elijah, "a man of like passions like we are," as an example of faith.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit. (James 5:13-18)

What gave Elijah such faith in his prayer for a drought and then prayer for rain? Look at the record. Like a thunderbolt, bursting from the sky without warning on a clear day, Elijah burst on the scene in I Kings 17:1. There is no previous record of this man. Claiming as his credentials that he is a spokesman for the Living God, *before whom I stand*, Elijah declared that from that moment forward it will not rain until he, Elijah, declares that it will rain. Indeed, it did not rain for three years.

Reading the verses that immediately follow this announcement, it is clear that Elijah is not a man who just dreamed up things. He was not a man who persisted in "positive thinking" until he had convinced himself that something was certain and true. Elijah was led by specific words from God. I Kings 18:1 records what happened at the end of three years.

Now it came about after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."

Elijah believed with all of his heart that rain was coming, because God had told him that rain would come after he showed himself to Ahab. After the extended time of prayer a real gully washer came upon the land.

Since James presents this as a model of a prayer of faith, we conclude that a prayer of faith requires a knowledge of God's will. In my opinion, the greatest contribution that John Wimber

gave to the church, was the emphasis on praying first for a knowledge of what the Father is doing. Only after that is done, are we free to pray for people to be healed, etc. Thus, John the apostle writes,

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:14-15)

Although some have ridiculed those who pray, "Father, if it is your will...." such a prayer is exactly right. In the model prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy will be done." When the clear will of God is not known, when God has not spoken, then the caveat, "if it is your will," whether spoken or just assumed, is not lack of faith.

Furthermore, when Jesus fervently prayed to the Father, in the Garden, He prayed,

And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39)

SECTION SIX: NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER IS HONEST PRAYER

Philippians 4:6 urges us,

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

We must be honest with God about what is on our hearts. As noted above, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed that the Cup of Calvary might be delivered from Him, then prayed, *Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine, be done.* Jesus was honest in Gethsemane. He knew the will of God the Father, but honestly said that he dreaded what was ahead and even asked if there were a way to save men apart from the cross ("if it be possible").

Three times, Paul asked God for the "thorn in the flesh" to be removed. He was willing for God's will to be done, but there was nothing wrong with asking for relief.

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (2 Corinthians 12:7-9)

Effective prayer involves an honesty with ourselves and, with God. When we lay our true feelings on the table, where we and God openly see them, the Father is able to work change in us, even while we pray. For example, if we are angry with God, we must not lie about it. God knows our heart. Denying our true feelings only results in a delay in dealing with issues.

**SECTION SEVEN:
NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER REFLECTS A LIFE
THAT HAS INCORPORATED TIME WITH GOD**

When Jesus cast the demon out of the boy at the base of the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples were troubled. They had cast out demons before, but this one they were powerless to expel. They asked Jesus why He was able to cast out the demon, when they had not been able to do so. He replied,

And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer." (Mark 9:29)¹³²

Note that Jesus did not pray before casting out the demon. He spoke a word and the boy was delivered at once. Jesus must have been referring to His own constant prayer life. He arose early in the morning to pray. On some occasions, He prayed all night. He constantly was seeking an opportunity to withdraw from ministry to pray. It was his constant prayerful communion with the Father that enabled Him to cast out this demon that had resisted successfully the efforts of the disciples.

A sensitive reading of the New Testament reveals that the New Testament Christians lived to pray. Prayer is what they did and all else grew out of their prayers. Thus Paul urged the Thessalonians, *Pray without ceasing* (I Thessalonians. 5:17)

He wrote to the Colossians, *Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving* (Colossians 4:2)

**SECTION EIGHT:
EFFECTIVE NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER
COMES FROM A RIGHTEOUS HEART**

James states the importance of righteousness on the part of those who would pray effective prayers.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.(James 5:16)

In diagnosing why the people of his day prayed ineffective prayers, Isaiah declared,

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

Peter warned that the absence of a Christ-like spirit in marriage would hinder prayer.

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (I Peter 3:7)

¹³²"and fasting" included in the KJV of Mark 9:29 does not enjoy manuscript integrity. The same is true of Matthew 17:21, which seems to have been a late scribal addition (note that this verse is missing in the NIV)

Paul wrote to Timothy,

Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. (I Timothy 2:8)

Peter urged the church to exercise sound judgement, and sober, for the purpose of prayer.

The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (I Peter 4:7)

Prayer was so important to New Testament Christians, that they sought to do everything that could do to increase the effectiveness of their prayers. They also sought to remove from their lives anything that hindered their prayers.

NOTE: Our righteous standing before God, achieved through faith in the atonement, allows us into God's presence. The effective outworking of that station is determined to a major degree by how much our character has caught up with our legal position before God.

CONCLUSION

The pattern of prayer in the New Testament Church is clear:

- Prayers are prayed to God the Father
- In the Name of Jesus, and thus, through Him
- At the leading, direction, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit
- In harmony with the Will of God
- In faith
- With honesty
- From a pure heart
- Out of a life lived intimately with God

ARTICLE XIII: THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

During the forty-day period between his resurrection and ascension, the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples, which by extension, is a commission to the Church. This is referred to as *The Great Commission*.

The New Testament Scriptures contain five accounts of the giving of that commission:

Matthew 18:18-20 *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Mark 16:15-16 *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."¹⁶ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."*

Luke 24:46-47 *and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day;⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."*

John 20:21-23 *Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."²³ "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."*

Acts 1:8 *but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

The most complete record of the commission is in Matthew 18:18-20. Thus, the other, somewhat abbreviated, accounts must be understood in the light of Matthew 18:18-20.

The pattern displayed in these accounts is:

- the Church's reception and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, which enables the Church to preach the Gospel;
- Those who respond to the Gospel message are to be immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;
- Those who respond to the Gospel and are immersed are forgiven of their sins;
- After being immersed, the converts are to be taught the commands of Christ;
- Christ, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, will be with the Church throughout this present age.

Conclusion concerning the mission of the Church

The Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is to preach the Gospel to every nation and to every culture. Those who respond positively to the Gospel message are to be immersed into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. These then are to be instructed in the commands of Christ. Christ, through the Holy Spirit, will be with the Church in these endeavors.

ARTICLE XIV: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Scripture clearly states that civil governments are to be respected and their laws honored, as long as they do not conflict with the commands of Christ. Romans 13:1-7 presents one of the strongest Scriptural statements on this subject.¹³³

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;

⁴for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.

⁵Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:1-7)

¹³³ Also, see Titus 3:1; I Peter 2:13ff

There could not be a clearer statement that this one penned by Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Christians are to be obedient to the laws of the society in which they live, they are to respect and honor those in positions of authority, and they are to pay their taxes.

However, should the civil authorities begin to pass laws that require a Christian to disobey the clear command of God, or which seek to replace God as the arbiter of morals, then the Christian must respectfully disobey civil authority.

Such respectful disobedience was modeled by the apostles. The first account of such disobedience is recorded in Acts 4. Peter and John had come to the temple to pray, when they encountered a man who had been crippled all his life. Peter, in the name of Jesus Christ, healed the man. This caused the crowd who witnessed the event to rush to Peter and John, who began to proclaim Jesus Christ to the crowd. The Jewish authorities, wanting to put an end to the apostles' preaching, arrested them and put them into jail overnight. The next day, they interrogated Peter and John.

The authorities could not deny that a miracle had taken place, but they wanted Peter and John to cease preaching about Jesus. While being interrogated, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and he began to preach a Gospel message to the court. Peter and John were taken from the courtroom while the court officials deliberated about what to do with the apostles. Finally,

And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;²⁰ for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."²¹ And when they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which they might punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; (Acts 4:18-21)

The second recorded event is in Acts 5. All of the apostles were in the Temple portico, preaching Christ and performing miracles of healing. Amazingly, when Peter passed by a sick person on the streets, and Peter's shadow fell on the sick person, he was healed. The popularity of the apostles became so great that, out of jealousy, the Jewish governmental officials had the apostles arrested and put into jail. An angel came and released them, and once again, they began preaching in the temple and once again, the Temple guards were sent to arrest them. The guards made the arrest, but while doing so, they were afraid of being stoned by the people, because the people were siding with the apostles.

Again, the apostles did not create disorder, which they could have done; they submitted to arrest, without incident. When the apostles were brought before the council, they were ordered to stop preaching Christ.

But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men, and then they gave a short summary of the Gospel. (Acts 5:29-32)

The apostles were removed from the room, while a Pharisee named Gamaliel cautioned against rash action. The apostles were brought back into the room where they were whipped and ordered to stop talking about Jesus. (Acts 5:34-40)

The apostles submitted to the arrest and punishment without causing an incident, *rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple*

and from house to house, they right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:41-42)

Thus, the apostles modeled respect for civil authority, but when that authority demanded something in opposition to the will of God, they respectfully disobeyed and accepted the consequences.

This is the model of how New Testament Christians must conduct themselves. When possible, every civil law is to be obeyed. Every tax is to be paid. However, when civil government seeks to impose something that conflicts with the will of God, then the New Testament Church must respectfully disobey and joyously accept the consequences.

**ARTICLE XV: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH
ASKNOWLEDGES THAT EVERY HUMAN BEING WILL
SPEND ETERNITY IN HELL OR IN THE GLORIOUS
PRESENCE OF GOD**

A judgement day is coming.

And as it is appointed from men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him. He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Hebrews 9:27-28)

So, then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12)

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who will render to every man according to his deeds: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. (Romans 2:5-8)

Yet, even those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life, will be imperfect and thus, guilty of sin, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

As stated in earlier articles of this creed, the Son of God came to earth in the form of a human being, lived a sinless life, and then was crucified for the sins of the world. However, not everyone has or will accept the truths concerning Christ and thus, they reject the message of His atonement.

All who do respond to the Gospel message, as outlined in previous articles, have their names transcribed in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Book of Life as the roll of the righteous redeemed is mentioned eight times in Scripture – six of these are from the Apocalypse.

Psalm 69:28 *May they be blotted out of the book of life, And may they not be recorded with the righteous.*

Philippians 4:3 *Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Revelation 3:5 *'He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.*

Revelation 13:8 *And all who dwell on the earth will worship him (the Satanic beast and dragon), everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.*

Revelation 17:8 *"The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.*

Revelation 20:12 *And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*

Revelation 20:15 *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 21:27 *and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

The picture given of the Great Judgment Morning, is one in which those whose names are written in the Book of Life will be judged on a different basis than those whose names are not in the Book of Life (note Revelation 20:12, 15 above) .

Those whose names are not recorded in the Book of Life will be judged on the basis of what is recorded in their individual journal – the implication is that a biography of each person is recorded in a book, which will be the basis of their judgment. Since *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23), those whose sins are not covered by the blood of the Lamb and had their names inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life, will be *thrown into the lake of fire*.

Those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will not be judged, as to whether or not they should be cast into the lake of fire. Those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life will be judged in order to determine the degree of their heavenly reward (the heavenly reward is mentioned in 13 passages in the New Testament.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Matt. 5:12, 46; Matt. 6:1f, 5, 16; Matt. 10:41f; Mk. 9:41; Lk. 6:23, 35; 1 Co. 3:8, 14; 1 Co. 9:17f; Col. 3:24; Heb. 10:35; Heb. 11:26; II Jn. 1:8; Rev. 11:18; Rev. 22:12

Those who are among the redeemed, will spend eternity in the Presence of God

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:23)¹³⁵

but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20-21)

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. (I Thessalonians 5:9)

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tent of God is among men, and He shall spread His tent among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them," (Revelation 21:3)

This is but a sample of the many passages that speak of the saved's spending eternity in the Presence of God.

Those whose names are not in the Lamb's Book of Life will spend eternity in hell

The KJV made no distinction between two Greek words, ᾗδης (*hadays* i.e. hades) and γέεννα (*gehina*). The first word, ᾗδης, refers to the temporary place of spirits awaiting the judgment day¹³⁶. The second word, γέεννα, is the name of the garbage dump outside of Jerusalem. This is the term used for the eternal state of the damned, i.e. *hell*.¹³⁷

In Mark 9:43-48, hell is described as a place where, *their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched*.

More than once the Lord Jesus spoke of outer darkness and a furnace of fire, where there will be wailing, weeping, and gnashing of teeth in Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28.

The Book of Revelation describes the fate of the damned as *a lake of fire burning with brimstone*" (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8). Into the lake of fire will be thrown the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 10:20; 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8). Ultimately, Satan himself will be thrown into the lake of fire along with death and hades and all those whose names are not written in the Book of Life. *And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* (Revelation 20:10b).

Whether or not a literal fire is being described in these verses, the prospect for the unredeemed is as horrible as human language can describe.

¹³⁵ The Greek term consistently rendered as *eternal, forever, etc.* is αἰώνιος (*aionios*). The term refers to an unbounded or undetermined time. It is used in the sense of, *age*, in Matthew 28:20.

¹³⁶ This term occurs eleven times in the New Testament: Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; I Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14

¹³⁷ This term occurs twelve times in the New Testament: Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6

ARTICLE XVI: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AFFIRMS THE REALITY OF ANGELS

The English term, *angel*, is an Anglicization of the Greek term, ἄγγελος (*angelos*). This Greek term is a translation of the Hebrew מַלְאָכִים (*malak*). Both the Hebrew and Greek terms mean, *messenger*.

Wayne Grudem has stated,

“For centuries, artists have portrayed angels as beautiful humans with wings and glowing light, complete with halos, harps, and flowing white gowns (or perfectly sculpted bodies). But is that really what angels look like? Angels have inspired all sorts of imaginative stories and depictions, but what’s left when we separate fact from fiction? In order to know the truth, we have to ask, what does the Bible say about angels?”¹³⁸

The Bible gives much information concerning angels, but also leaves some questions. The following is a collection of scriptural facts concerning angels.

Angels are created beings

Thou alone art the LORD. Thou hast made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. Thou dost give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before Thee. (Nehemiah 9:6)

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16)

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. (Genesis 2:1)

Angels do not exist in the same manner as humans. They are “spirits”

But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet " ?¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:13-14)

When Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, to assure them that His physical body had come forth from the grave, he challenged them to touch Him, then stated that “spirits” don’t have bodies

"See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." (Luke 24:39)

Angels usually can’t be seen, but from time to time they take on bodily form, manifesting the appearance of humans.

Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground. (Numbers 22:31)

¹³⁸ Wayne Grudem, video on Systematic Theology, MasterLectures, Zondervan Academic, December 13, 2017. This ARTICLE loosely follows Grudem’s outline, omitting that which seems to be irrelevant.

So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:17)

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, (Luke 2:13)

And the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. (Matthew 28:5)

Referencing the time that angels visited Abraham, prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18), the author of Hebrews wrote, *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2)*

Three types of God's angels are mentioned in Scripture

Cherubim

- They guarded the entrance into the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24)
- God is enthroned above them (Ezekiel 10:1ff)
- God "rides" on them (Psalm, 18:10)
- Two golden figures of cherubim were on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, a symbol of God's dwelling with His people (Exodus 25:18ff)

Seraphim

- Mentioned only once, where they are described as continually worshiping the Lord, crying out *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory (Isaiah 6:3)*

Living Creatures around God's throne

- It is possible that these are Seraphim, because they also worship God continually, never ceasing to sing, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come! (Ezekiel 1:5-14; Revelation 4:6-8)*

In addition to these plural designations, there appears to be a special angel, *The Angel of Jehovah*, who has a special role. The appearances of the "angel of the Lord" often are presented as *theophanies*, appearances of YHWH himself, rather than a separate entity acting on YHWH's behalf. Seventy-five verses of the Bible mention this angel. Here are three examples of such activity.

- In Genesis 31:11–13, "the angel of God" says, "I am the God of Beth-el".
- In Exodus 3:2–6 "the angel of Yahweh" appeared to Moses in the flame of fire, and then "Yahweh" said to him: "I am the God of thy father".
- In Judges 6:11–22, the angel appears to Gideon, and then, later in the narrative, the angel is called, "God.". At times the angel of the Lord speaks in such a way as to assume authority over previous promises (see Gen. 16:11 and 21:17).

There is an hierarchy of angels

- Michael is an *archangel*, a title that indicates rule or authority over other angels (Jude 9)

- Michael also is called, *the chief of princes*, (Daniel 10:13)
- Michael leads God's angelic army, *And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war,⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. (Revelation 12:7-8 NAS)*
- The voice of an archangel will precede the Lord's return (I Thessalonians 4:16). Whether or not there are archangels other than Michael we are not told.

The Bible lists the names of only two angels¹³⁹

- Michael, in the Scriptures listed above
- Gabriel, who always is described as bringing a message to one of God's people (Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19; Luke 1:26-27)

Unlike God, angels are not omnipresent. If they were omnipresent, they would not be sent, they already would be in the location to which they were sent

- The angel Gabriel was sent to a city in Galilee (Luke 1:19, 26)
- The angel Michael was sent to withstand the evil spirit controlling Persia. (Daniel 10:12-14)

The bible does not declare how many angels exist, but clearly, there are many of them

- On Mt. Sinai, *God came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at His right hand.* (Deuteronomy 33:2)
- *The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands* (Psalm 68:17)
- We worship in the presence of *innumerable angels* (Hebrews 12:22)
- John says, *I heard around the throne and the living creatures and elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands* (Revelation 5:11)

Angels do not marry

- *"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (Matthew 22:30 NAS)*
- *And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage,³⁵ but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage;³⁶ for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. (Luke 20:34-36 NAS)*

Angels minister to those who have been saved

- *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?* (Hebrews 1:14)
- As noted in some of the passages cited above, they bring God's messages to people
- Scripture implies that it is not wrong to ask God to send us angels to help us in time of need. *No evil will befall you, Nor will any plague come near your tent.¹¹ For He will*

¹³⁹ In the apocryphal book of Tobit (included in the Roman Catholic canon), an angel named Raphael is named (Tobit 5:17 in the Douay-Rheims American Edition 1899. In other versions the verse numbers are different).

give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways.¹² They will bear you up in their hands, Lest you strike your foot against a stone. (Psalm 91:10-12)

Angels are not to be worshipped

- In Revelation 19:10, when John the apostle fell before an angel to worship him, the angel rebuked John, *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* (Revelation 19:10)
- Angels are not to be prayed to, for only Jesus is our mediator *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1 Timothy 2:5 NAS)*
- Paul warned the Colossians to avoid being deceived by those who claimed to be worshipping angels *Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, (Colossians 2:18)*

Conclusion concerning angels

Angels are created spiritual beings who serve God and, at His direction, serve those who are among the saved. There are times when these spirit-beings have manifested themselves in human form. In spiritual battles, they oppose Satan and his angels (see Article XVI). Angels are not to be worshipped nor should we address our prayers to angels.

ARTICLE XVII: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGES THE REALITY OF AN EVIL SPIRITUAL EMPIRE, LED BY SATAN

Both the Old and New Testaments often refer to this being. In Scripture he is known as *Satan*, *the Devil*, and *The Accuser*.

- *Satan*, is from the Hebrew verb, שָׂטַן (*satan*), *to lie in wait*, hence, *an adversary*.¹⁴⁰
- The New Testament Greek Hellenizes the term, Σατάν (*Satan*), Σατανᾶς (*Satanas*).
- This being also is known as διάβολος (*diabolos*), *adversary*, or, *accuser*
- Κατήγορ (*kategor*) used once in Revelation 12:10, *accuser*
- A number of other names deserved noting: Tempter (Matthew 4:5; I Thessalonians 3:5); Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24); Enemy (Matthew 13:39); Evil One (Matthew 13:19, 38; I John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18) Belial (II Corinthians 6:15); Deceiver (Revelation 12:9) Dragon (Revelation 12:3); Father of Lies (John 8:44); Murderer (John 8:44) Sinner (I John 3:8).

This evil being is mentioned 83 times in the New Testament and in 70 of the references, either *the Devil* or *Satan* is used to identify him.

The Scriptural doctrine of Satan is not systematically developed. What can be known about Satan is dependent upon scattered and incidental references. No doubt this is because the writers

¹⁴⁰ This term is applied in its general meeting to God (Numbers 22:32). It also used in the general sense of *adversary* In I Samuel 29:4; II Samuel 19:22; Psalm 109:6, etc.

of Scripture, led by the Holy Spirit, were interested primarily in God. Only when the evil powers became a part of the narrative do they enter into the Sacred Pages.

C.S. Lewis wisely commented,

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”¹⁴¹

The Bible never explicitly states when or where Satan originated.

Even though his origination is not described in Scripture, it is obvious that God created him. The Scriptures that demonstrate that God created angels also apply to Satan (Genesis 2:1; Nehemiah 9:6; Colossians 1:16-17; Romans 11:36; I Corinthians 8:6).

God did not create Satan as evil being, because God did not create evil. Concerning the character of God’s creations, Paul wrote, *For everything created by God is good...* (1 Timothy 4:4). This echoes the constant statement in Genesis, concerning what God created, *it was good* (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

Since God did not create evil, from whence did evil originate?

This question must remain unanswerable. Clearly, it originated in Satan, himself, but since he was created *good*, how did evil arise within him? This is somewhat of a philosophical question that we cannot answer.

From whatever source the evil came, Satan was the first sinner and *has been sinning from the beginning*. (I John 3:8)

Sin first entered the human race through the subtle temptation presented by a serpent (Genesis 3:1ff). Revelation 12:9 identifies this particular tempter/serpent as Satan.

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Revelation 12:9)

We surmise that Satan, as God’s adversary, has as his goal the enticing of humanity away from God. By doing this, he is attempting to deprive God of realizing the fulfillment of His desire to spend eternity with those made in His Image.

The first mention of Satan in the Bible (as noted above) is the account of his luring Eve, then Adam, into a revolt against God (Genesis 3).

Satan knows that his eternal fate is the lake of fire. All whom he can entice into turning away from God or not turning to God in the first place, will spend eternity with Satan in the lake of fire. Thus, all who are cast into the lake of fire will not spend eternity with God.

As the enemy of God, Satan is the enemy of those made in God’s image.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8 NAS)

¹⁴¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (originally 1942; Harper Collins, 1996) ix

Satan is a wily adversary. Thus, Paul wrote, ... *in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.* (2 Corinthians 2:11)

At some point, apparently led by Satan, a group of angels rebelled against God.

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. (Jude 1:6 NAS)

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into prison¹⁴² and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; (2 Peter 2:4)

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; (Matthew 25:41)

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Revelation 12:9)

The fact that these are called *the devil's angels*, implies that he is their ruler/commander.

The Pharisees, accusing Jesus of being in league with Satan, described Satan (Beelzeboul) as the *prince of demons* (Matthew 12:24). Jesus acknowledged the reality of this Satan-led kingdom in His response (Matthew 12:25-26).

And knowing their thoughts He said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand."²⁶ "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" (Matthew 12:25-26)

As the captain of these evil angels, Satan is described as

- the evil one" (Matt. 13:19)
- the ruler of this world (John 12:31)
- the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4)
- the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2)
- the ruler of the dominion of darkness (Acts 26:18)
- the one who binds people with a spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:13-16)
- the one with the power to oppress people (Acts 10:38)

¹⁴² The term, usually rendered as, *hell*, is an unfortunate rendering. The Greek term in this passage is *ταρταρόω* (*tartaroo*). The Greeks called the abode of the dead, *Hades*. In the lower regions of Hades there was a prison called, *Tartarus*, which was a place of torment. It is interesting that Peter chose this term to refer to the imprisonment of the rebellious angels, a concept his Greek readers would quickly grasp.

Those who are loyal to God will be engaged in spiritual warfare with the Satanic kingdom.

Paul's writing to the Ephesians (6:10-18) is one of the most complete statements on this subject. We will note only verse 12, which describes the Satanic hierarchy.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,

- *but against the rulers – ἀρχή (arche).* This term refers to primary authority – those who answer to no one.
- *against the powers – ἐξουσία (ekzousia).* This term refers to one to whom authority has been delegated by an authority over them.
- *against the world forces of this darkness – κροσμοκράτωρ (kosmokrator).* This term refers to those who have authority over a particular world region or government.
- *against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places – τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (ta pneumatika tays ponerias en tois epouraniois).* Literally, *the spirits the evils in the heavenlies.* This generally is understood to refer to the demonic influence that permeates all of life and harasses the saints.

The picture presented here is of demonic forces (angelic companies?) that have authority over certain cultures, regions, and governmental powers. Frequently, these are referred to as, *territorial spirits.*¹⁴³

There is a spiritual hierarchy in the angelic world.

Angels of one hierarchical rank have the ability to deal with demons of that same rank, but demons of a higher rank must be faced by angels of an equal rank. This is illustrated in Daniel.

After three weeks of fasting, Daniel was visited by an angel who told him that he had been dispatched on the first day of Daniel's fasting and prayer, but that a spiritual foe (the demonic power over Persia) had prevented his getting through to Daniel. Then, Michael, the archangel – an angelic rank above the demonic power over Persia, had been dispatched and he had opened the way for the messenger to get through to Daniel.

Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words."¹³ "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days;

then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia."¹⁴ "Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future." (Daniel 10:12-14)

Jude 1:8-9 acknowledges the hierarchy and condemns those who do not respect the angelic hierarchies. He illustrates this by referring to the fact that Michael, the archangel, who was not of the same level as Satan, did not rebuke Satan.

¹⁴³ I (JWG) have experienced this manifestation when ministering in different geographical localities. Those who live in the area, being accustomed to the environment are not aware of what they battle. However, coming from outside the region and entering into the spiritual environment of the area, the nature of the demonic influence often can be identified.

Yet in the same manner these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.⁹ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." (Jude 1:8-9)¹⁴⁴

Satan's power to attack and harass God's people is circumscribed by God.

The Book of Job illustrates this complex truth. There are many questions to be asked about the Book of Job, but for our purposes we only note the truth that Satan had to get permission to attack Job.

Note that there was nothing in Job's life that Satan was able to use as a temptation. Job was a thoroughly righteous man.

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil. (Job 1:1)

Job was a man who was greatly blessed with ten children, great possessions, and a very prosperous life. Since Satan could not find some means of tempting Job, he accused Job, before God, that Job was a prostitute – that he was faithful to God only because of the blessings that God had bestowed upon him. Satan asked permission to attack Job's possessions and his family. Permission was given and Job's servants were killed, his property taken, and his children killed. Even so, Job did not accuse God. Next Satan asked permission to attack Job personally. Permission was given and Job became afflicted, but still he did not waver.

The point of this account, for our purposes, is that Satan had to get permission to attack a righteous man.

Paul addressed this truth,

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

What About Lucifer?

Readers of the KJV encounter the name, *Lucifer*, in Isaiah 14:12. Does the term refer to Satan? First, it must be recognized that the term, *Lucifer*, is not in the Hebrew text. The Hebrew term in this text, הֵלֵל (helel), means, *shining one*.

When Jerome translated the Hebrew into Latin, he used the Latin term, *lucifer*, which means, *shining one*.¹⁴⁵ Instead of translating, the KJV committee used Jerome's Latin term. Many see this section of Isaiah 14, coupled with Ezekiel 28:1-19, a description of Satan. Others see these passages as referring to haughty rulers that will be brought down. For discussions of these options, see,

- <http://www.crivoice.org/lucifer.html> <https://www.hope-of-israel.org/luciferinisaiah14.html>;

¹⁴⁴ Jude is referencing the Jewish book, *The Assumption of Moses*. Although the book is not a part of the canon, Jude, used this as an illustration, as any writer might use a reference in literature to make a point.

¹⁴⁵ The Latins used this term to describe the planet Venus.

- <https://bible.org/article/lucifer-devil-isaiah-1412-kjv-argument-against-modern-translations>
- <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2015/09/the-fall-of-lucifer-in-isaiah-14>

There are many lingering questions about Satan. Many things about him and his role must remain speculative. Yet, even though we don't know all the answers, we know the God who does. One thing we do know, beyond a doubt, is *The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.* (1 John 3:8)

In the meantime, Satan's havoc extends only as far as God's hand allows.

ARTICLE XVIII: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ISSUES THAT CHALLENGE THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

As noted in the first semester of this study, the early creeds were written in response to heretical teachings that were threatening the orthodoxy of the Church. In the 21st Century, there are two major social issues that challenge the New Testament Church.

- Sexual identity and the practices that result from this issue
- Abortion, euthanasia, and the value of human life

We will examine the issue of sexual identity first.

The issue of sexual identity involves a number of issues, including questions related to homosexuality, lesbianism, trans-gender, same-sex marriage, and social stances that relate to these matters.

The first place to begin this section is in the creation account.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; ... And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

The second chapter of the creation account gives details of how the male was created first and then describes the unique creation of the female.

Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth; and there was no man to cultivate the ground.⁶ But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.⁷ Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:5-7)

the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." ...²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place.²² And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.²³ And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2:18, 21-23)

Clearly, God created two sexes, male and female and there was no confusion as to which was which and who was who.

It is God's will for this distinction to continue. For example, the Law of Moses prohibited cross dressing.

"A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 22:5)

Paul emphasized the importance of their being a distinction between men and women in his instructions concerning the attire of men and women in the Sunday meeting.

² *Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.*

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

⁴ *Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head.⁵ But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.*

⁶ *For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.⁷ For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.*

⁸ *For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;⁹ for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.¹⁰ Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.*

¹¹ *However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.¹² For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.*

¹³ *Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?¹⁴ Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, (1 Corinthians 11:2-14)*

The final two verses (13 & 14) are important in our interpretation of this passage, *Judge for yourselves: is it proper....does not even nature itself teach you...*

In that culture and in that century, indeed, one's instinctive response would have been... *yes, nature itself teaches me...* because that is how one's thinking in that culture was programmed. In today's culture, this is not true. For that matter, a covered or uncovered head indicates just the opposite of what Paul sought in the distinction of the sexes. Today, an uncovered head indicates the subordinate position, whereas the covered head indicates the superior position.

For example, in our culture, out of respect, a man removes his hat, when the American flag passes by. The colloquial expression, *He approached his boss, hat in hand...* indicating submission to one's boss, indicates the reversal of the meaning of a covered or uncovered head in our culture, from what that meaning was in Paul's culture.

A couple of decades ago, John Miller, who was the director of Mennonite missions in one part of the globe, told me of a situation that is an illustration of this truth – that culture expresses modesty, etc. In the primitive culture where one of the Mennonite missionaries was working, none of the natives wore anything above the waist. Both men and women were bare-breasted. The missionary's wife, however, always wore a white blouse. Some women in the church

approached the elders and asked if they, like the missionary's wife, could wear a white blouse,. The elders said, "Yes, as long as you don't wear a blouse at the communion table. For you to wear a blouse at the communion table would be immodest, because it would be calling attention to yourselves."

Yet, even though the manner of displaying the relationship changes from culture to culture, the principle does not. A distinction is to be made between male and female and the hierarchy between the sexes is by God's design.

This reflects the principle elucidated in Paul's statement to Timothy, which we noted in the closing paragraph of ARTICLE V.

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. ¹³ *For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.* ¹⁴ *And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression.* (1 Timothy 2:12-14)

Note that in this prohibition, Paul does not appeal to culture, nor to how one might instinctively respond to a woman's exercising this authority. His reasons have to do with the history of the sexes and the God-imposed resulting relationship.

To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." (Genesis 3:16)

Concerning homosexual and lesbian relationships, Paul's description of the downward trend of a culture when God removes His Hand is quite clear.

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷ *and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.* (Romans 1:26-27)

Twice in his letters, Paul addressed the topic of homosexuality.

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor **homosexuals**,* ¹⁴⁶ *nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers ¹⁰ *and immoral men and **homosexuals*** ¹³³ *and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,* (1 Timothy 1:9-10)

This view of homosexuality is consistent with the revelation that God gave in the Mosaic Law.

'You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. (Leviticus 18:22)

¹⁴⁶ The Greek term is ἀρσενοκοΐτης (*arsenokoitays*), which refers to an adult male who practices sexual intercourse with another adult male or a boy

If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them. (Leviticus 20:13)

When quizzed about divorce, Jesus clearly declared God's plan for marriage – one man and one woman – not two men or two women.

³ *And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?"⁴ And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,⁵ and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'?'⁶ "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:3-6)*

Conclusion concerning sexuality and sexual practices

Regardless of what culture advocates, regardless of what the secular law of a country might demand, a New Testament Church will not allow any of these deviant views of sexuality to be taught or tolerated in the Church. There will not be any confusion concerning the sexual identity of members of the Church. One is born male or female and that truth remains throughout a person's life. Regardless of the consequences, a New Testament Church will not allow same-sex marriage in its building nor approve of any member's participation in such an event.

Marriage is to be between one man and woman and the commitment is a lifetime commitment, ending only with the death of one of the partners in the marriage.

Concerning those who practice aberrant sexual behavior, the apostle Paul, after stating that those who practice such things will be damned, wrote an encouraging statement to the Corinthians:

And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

The second cultural challenge to the New Testament Church is the growing acceptance of euthanasia and abortion.

The first verses that one must deal with in considering the issues of euthanasia and abortion are those that relate to the creation of humanity – the same verses that are pertinent to the same-sex issue.

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27)

As the creation account reveals, mankind is not the same as other animal life. Only humans are made in God's image. This the first place that one must begin his assessment of the value of human life. Human life is sacred, because human life reflects the image of God – intellectually, emotionally, moral responsibility, spiritually, as well as destiny.

Thus, to kill a human is a serious sacrilege – it is treating the image of God irreverently – and is to be punished by executing the one who committed the sacrilege.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ There are times when killing is not a sacrilege – such as in a war in which one is fighting true evil – as was true in World War II. In Scripture there are instances in which God commanded

This principle was stated in Yahweh's instructions to Noah.

"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. (Genesis 9:6)

Euthanasia (which may take place as assisted suicide) is the taking of a human life. Therefore, it is a civilized form of murder. This is not the same as honoring a "do not resuscitate" request, nor refusing to use extreme means to sustain a life that is moving toward death. Euthanasia is taking steps to bring about death. Rather than leaving life's terminal point in the hands of God, euthanasia is putting God's role into the hands of a human.

Abortion falls into the same category. Although there is not a direct prohibition of abortion in Scripture (as there are concerning same-sex issues) there are Scriptures that present principles which are violated by abortion. (For an attempt to present a biblical pro-abortion argument, see ADDENDUM U).

The question has to be asked, "When does this human life begin – at conception, or at some point during the pregnancy, or after the child comes forth from the womb?" In recent decades, the scientific community has given us much more understanding of the beginning of life than was available previously. Today, it is clear that life begins at conception. For a series of quotes validating this truth, see <https://www.princeton.edu/~prolife/articles/embryoquotes2.html>

Since life begins at conception, then abortion is the snuffing out of a human life, not merely disposing of a glob of unwanted tissue. Snuffing out of a human life is of murder.

Concerning God's awareness of the embryonic state of a recently conceived baby, the Psalmist wrote,

For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. (Psalm 139:13-16 NAS)

Similarly, when calling Jeremiah to prophetic ministry, Yahweh said to him,

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5 NAS)

These verses speak of the reality of God's knowledge of, and His involvement in, the initial phase of human life in the womb.

The horror of late-term abortion is highlighted in Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy, and the baby in her womb had developed to the point that he responded to the visit of the mother of Our Lord.

And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" ⁴³ "And how has it

his people to annihilate a particular group (for example. I Samuel 15:2-3)

happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ "For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. (Luke 1:41-44)

Indeed, the baby in Elizabeth's womb was not just a piece of flesh, but it would seem that at six months, there already was some form of spiritual life in the baby.

Again, the Psalmist presents an important general truth

*Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. (Psalm 100:3)*

Conclusion concerning euthanasia and abortion

Because human life is a reflection of God's image, and thus sacred, the taking of a human life in any manner is sin. The New Testament Church opposes euthanasia, since it is the taking of a human life.

The same is true of abortion. The New Testament Church considers life to begin at the moment of conception. In principle, therefore, abortion is an act of murder – the taking of a human life. The New Testament Church will speak out against abortion and not tolerate its practice among its members.

Even though this is true, the New Testament Church will have great concern and compassion for women who have undergone an abortion and are struggling with a sense of guilt. The church must be committed to bringing these women into an experience of God's forgiveness and in every way possible, to bring healing to their wounded souls. There also may be a need to minister in this manner to the men who had fathered an aborted child.

A SUGGESTED CREED

FOR THE 21ST CENTURY NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Preface

This is a *suggested creed*, rather than a binding creed. Thus, this creed cannot be a point of division between those who agree with the statements therein and those who disagree with those statements.

This creed is the product of a sixteen-week Sunday Night Seminar series at Tulsa Christian Fellowship. The first eight weeks were in September/October 2019. The second eight-week session was in January/February 2020. The class notes for these sessions contain the Scriptural basis for the doctrinal statements in the creed. These notes are online under the title, *Suggested Creed, Part I* (class notes from the first session), and *Suggested Creed Part II* (class notes from the second session), available at <http://www.tulsachristianfellowship.com/doulos-press---papers.html>.

Footnotes for each article of the creed will cite the pages in the class notes containing the reasoning behind the doctrinal statement. These references will be cited as *Part I*, followed by the page numbers and *Part II*, followed by the page numbers. The class notes on these pages will reference the relevant addenda documents

ARTICLE I: THE HOLY SCRIPTURES¹⁴⁸

B. Defining Scripture

Although, by observing the creation, mankind has been able to discern the existence of a creator, the identity of that creator, and objective knowledge about Him, is not obtainable by examination of the creation. Thankfully, God has chosen to give mankind accurate information concerning His Person, His activities, and His Will. This revelation is found in documents that human authors have written at the Holy Spirit's direction and inspiration. These documents, labeled, *Holy Scripture*, are not the result of human creativity or of human wisdom. but are the product of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Scripture is divided into two testaments: the Old and New Testaments. The documents that constitute the Old and New Testaments are the following:¹⁴⁹

The Old Testament

Genesis	I. Kings	Ecclesiastes	Amos
Exodus	II. Kings	The Song of	Obadiah
Leviticus	I. Chronicles	Songs	Jonah
Numbers	II. Chronicles	Isaiah	Micah
Deuteronomy	Ezra	Jeremiah	Nahum
Joshua	Nehemiah	Lamentations	Habakkuk
Judges	Esther	Ezekiel	Zephaniah
Ruth	Job	Daniel	Haggai
I. Samuel	Psalms	Hosea	Zechariah
II. Samuel	Proverbs	Joel	Malachi

¹⁴⁸ Part I pages 74-97

¹⁴⁹ The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon.

The New Testament

The Gospel according to:	Paul's Epistles:	The Epistle to the Hebrews
Matthew	Romans	The Epistle of James
Mark	I & II Corinthians.	I & II Peter
Luke	Galatians	I II & III John
John	Ephesians	The Epistle of Jude
The Acts of the Apostles	Philippians	The Revelation of John
	Colossians	
	I & II Thessalonians	
	I & II Timothy.	
	Titus	
	Philemon	

C. The Authority of Scripture

The New Testament Church looks to these Divinely inspired documents as:

- the only source of Divine doctrine,
- the only authority for directing the administration of the Church, and the doctrines that the Church proclaims,
- the only rule of faith and life for the Church and for the individual Christian.

ARTICLE II: WHO IS GOD?¹⁵⁰

An inductive study of the Scriptures reveals that the term, "God," refers to a Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The members of the Trinity are three persons who share the same Divine Essence. The Trinity is sometimes referred to as, "The Godhead." There is perfect unity within the Trinity. The relationships between the members of the Trinity are seen in the roles that Scripture assigns to each of them. For example, the Father sent the Son, the Father gives the Spirit to the Son who then pours it out on the Day of Pentecost, etc.

ARTICLE III: GOD AS THE CREATOR AND SUSTAINER¹⁵¹

Scripture describes each member of the Trinity as being involved in the creation of the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them, including the heavenly hosts. Scripture also reveals that the ongoing existence of the creation is the result of the Trinity's sustaining the creation.

ARTICLE IV: GOD'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE FOR HUMANITY¹⁵²

The entire corpus of Scripture, from the first chapter of the first book, Genesis, to the final chapter of the final book, Revelation, has its central subject, God's involvement with humanity. God's compelling love for mankind is demonstrated and declared time and again in this narrative. The picture presented of God and man in Scripture is that of God's desire to have creatures made in His Image, with whom He will live forever. Scripture is a record of God's repeated and ongoing actions aimed at the achievement of this goal.

¹⁵⁰ Part II, pages 4-12

¹⁵¹ Part II, pages 12-13

¹⁵² Part II, pages 14-18

ARTICLE V: GOD’S ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, “WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”¹⁵³

This is the most important question that a person can ask. The answer to this question is found in the New Testament. Two important messages permeate the New Testament:

- The good news about Jesus and His redemptive work is rightly called *the Gospel message*, i.e., *the Good News*.
- The instructions as to how one is to respond to the Gospel, is *the salvation message*.

An inductive study of the New Testament reveals that the salvation message, the answer to the question, *what must I do to be saved*, is both clearly presented in many passages and assumed in others. In answering the question, *What must I do to be saved*, the 21st Century New Testament Church will be faithful to the command of Christ and the apostolic model:

- Preach the Word
- Call people to repentance/belief
- Joyously hear their confession of faith
- Bury the old man in the waters of immersion and raise the convert to live in the newness of life
- Rejoice as we observe the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling the new believer as evidence of his/her salvation.
- Teach the convert to observe all things, whatsoever Our Lord has commanded us.

ARTICLE VI: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?¹⁵⁴

The church consists of those individuals, who out of the general public, have responded positively to God’s call through the preaching of the Gospel and demonstrated that response by obeying the salvation message. The Church exists as assemblies in various locations, but also is a world-wide and eternal brotherhood. The members of the Church presently on the earth are united, in spirit, with the members of the Church who have died and are with Christ. Together they await the day when Christ will return to the earth, the dead will be raised, and Church will spend eternity with God.

ARTICLE VII: THE FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH¹⁵⁵

Jesus stated that He would build His Church upon the truth that He was/is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The New Testament is the record of what that means and how that truth is the foundation of the Church. Thus, the truths about His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension into heaven where He continually makes intercession for His Church is the foundational doctrine of the Church.

¹⁵³ Part II, pages 18-47

¹⁵⁴ Part II, pages 47-48

¹⁵⁵ Part II, pages 59-63

Jesus was born when the Holy Spirit impregnated the womb of a virgin named Mary. He grew to manhood and experienced all of the things that any human being experiences in this life. When He was thirty-years of age, He began a ministry that extended over a 3 ½ year period, following which He was crucified, was dead, and was buried. On the third day, He arose from the grave and for forty days appeared to selected individuals. After the forty days he ascended into heaven, from which He will return at the Father's appointed time. When He returns, all of His Church will be given glorified bodies and will spend eternity with the Godhead.

ARTICLE VIII: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT IN THE CHURCH¹⁵⁶

Our Lord has blessed the Church with individuals whom He has ordained and equipped to lead and care for the church. These individuals function as Christ's representatives in the various roles that He has assigned to them. Some of these gifts are trans-local in nature – they are not limited to a particular congregation but are for the building up of the Church at large.

Paul stated that when Jesus ascended He imparted four *ascendant gift* ministries to the Church

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Evangelists
- Shepherd/teachers

The first three of these may be either trans/local or tied to a particular locality.

The fourth ascendant gift is local. Post-Pentecostal Scriptures, relating to the identity and responsibilities of this forth gift use three terms to reference those in that role:

- Elders
- Shepherds
- Overseers

In addition to these leadership roles, there also are servant/managers, usually referred to as *deacons*.

Both elders and deacons are to be ordained by the laying on of hands and consecrating them for role/task to which they are called.

Scripture clearly presents the qualifications and duties of those in these roles. Elders and deacons are to be male.

¹⁵⁶ Part II, pages 49-59

ARTICLE IX: GOD IMPARTS GIFTS TO MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHURCH¹⁵⁷

There are two categories of gifts Divinely imparted to members of the Church:

- Functional Gifts (sometimes called, *grace gifts*) are abilities, talents, and temperaments given to individuals, enabling them to be used for the benefit of the Church. These may appear to be natural talents, temperaments, and abilities, but the origin of these gifts is God.
- Charismatic Gifts are Holy Spirit imparted gifts that are beyond the realm of human ability. Paul lists these as prophecy, the ability to speak languages that the speaker does not understand, the ability to interpret languages, words of knowledge, being used of God to perform miracles, etc.

The purpose of all gifts of any category is for the upbuilding of the Church, corporately and individually.

ARTICLE X: THE WEEKLY MEETING OF THE CHURCH¹⁵⁸

The New Testament Church will assemble weekly on the first day of the week, Sunday, which appropriately is known as *the Lord's Day*.

The main reason for gathering will be to partake of the Lord's Supper, also known as *Communion*. The physical elements of the Lord's Supper are unleavened bread and wine (fermented or unfermented) from grapes. In some undefined manner, these become, to the communicate, the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the Lord's Supper, the weekly meeting will include prayer and reading/instruction from the writing of the apostles (i.e., the Bible).

Other elements, such as singing may be included in the meeting, but none of these optional elements should replace the Lord's Supper, prayer, and the apostles' doctrine.

ARTICLE XI THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS A PRAYING CHURCH¹⁵⁹

It would not be far afield to say that a New Testament Church considers prayer to be like breathing – life cannot be experienced without it. Through prayer, things are changed, and the Church hears from God. As noted in ARTICLE X, prayer is an essential element in the weekly meeting.

The New Testament describes a Church that lives by prayer. On every occasion of triumph, every occasion of concern, every occasion of launching a ministry, etc., the church prayed.

If prayer is not a “way of life” in a local church, then that church is not a New Testament church.

¹⁵⁷ Part II, pages 63-64

¹⁵⁸ Part II, pages 65-90

¹⁵⁹ Part II, page 91

ARTICLE XII: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH PRAYS IN CONFORMITY WITH THE PATTERN OF PRAYER DEMONSTRATED IN THE PRAYERS RECORDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT¹⁶⁰

New Testament Churches not only are characterized by consistent prayer, but those prayers will be prayed according to the New Testament instructions and pattern of prayer. The Apostolic Church modeled a consistent pattern of prayer; the epistles shed light on that model through elaboration and instruction. This model is the standard for church-life in all succeeding generations.

- New Testament prayer is addressed to the Father
- The New Testament pattern of prayer is praying To God the Father in Jesus' name, thus, prayer is prayed through Jesus.
- The Father is addressed in Jesus' name as we "pray in the spirit"
- Prayer to the Father, in Jesus' Name, in the Spirit, must be prayed in faith
- Prayer to the Father, in Jesus' Name, in the Spirit, in faith, requires a knowledge of God's will
- New Testament prayer is honest prayer
- New Testament prayer reflects a life lived intimately with God
- Effective New Testament prayer comes from a righteous heart

ARTICLE XIII: THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH¹⁶¹

During the forty-day period between his resurrection and ascension, the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples, which by extension, is a commission to the Church. This is referred to as *The Great Commission*.

The New Testament Scriptures contain five accounts of the giving of that commission. The most complete record of the commission is in Matthew 18:18-20. Thus, the other, somewhat abbreviated, accounts must be understood in the light of Matthew 18:18-20.

The pattern displayed in these accounts is:

- the Church's reception and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, which enables the Church to preach the Gospel;
- Those who respond to the Gospel message are to be immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;
- Those who respond to the Gospel and are immersed are forgiven of their sins;
- After being immersed, the converts are to be taught the commands of Christ;
- Christ, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, will be with the Church throughout this present age.

¹⁶⁰ Part II, pages 92-102

¹⁶¹ Part II, pages 102-103

ARTICLE XIV: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGES THAT EVERY HUMAN BEING WILL SPEND ETERNITY IN HELL OR IN THE GLORIOUS PRESENCE OF GOD¹⁶²

The New Testament clearly states that a judgement day is coming. As stated in earlier articles of this creed, the Son of God came to earth in the form of a human being, lived a sinless life, and then was crucified for the sins of the world. However, not everyone will accept the truths concerning Christ and thus, they reject the message of His atonement.

All who do respond to the Gospel message, as outlined in previous articles, have their names transcribed in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Book of Life, mentioned eight times in Scripture, is the roll of the righteous redeemed.

Those whose names are written in the Book of Life will be judged on a different basis than those whose names are not in the Book of Life.

Those whose names are not recorded in the Book of Life will be judged on the basis of what is recorded in their individual journal – the implication is that a biography of each person is recorded in a book, which will be the basis of their judgment. Since *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*, those who have not accepted the redeeming/atoning work of Christ will be found guilty of sin – rebellion against God. These, not having their names inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life, will be *thrown into the lake of fire*, from which there will be no escape.

Those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will not be judged, as to whether or not they should be cast into the lake of fire, but they will be judged in order to determine the degree of their heavenly reward. Those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life will spend eternity in the Presence of God.

ARTICLE XV: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AFFIRMS THE REALITY OF ANGELS¹⁶³

The English term, *angel*, is an Anglicization of the Greek term, ἄγγελος (*angelos*). This Greek term is a translation of the Hebrew מַלְאָכִים (*malak*). Both the Hebrew and Greek terms mean, *messenger*.

Even though many things about angels are in the realm of fantasy and speculation, the Bible does give much information concerning them.

- Angels are created beings
- Angels are invisible spirits
- There are occasions in which angels temporarily take on visible form
- Three types of God's angels are mentioned in Scripture:
 - Cherubim
 - Seraphim
 - Living Creatures around God's throne

¹⁶² Part II, pages 105-107

¹⁶³ Part II, pages 108-111

- In addition to these plural designations, there appears to be a special angel, *The Angel of Jehovah*, who has a special role.
- The Bible gives the names of only two angels: Gabriel and Michael
- There is a spiritual hierarchy among the angels – Gabriel is the only angel labelled an *archangel*
- Angels are not omnipresent
- The Bible does not declare how many angels exist, but clearly, there are many of them
- Angels do not marry
- Angels minister to those who have been saved
- In spiritual battles, they oppose Satan and his angels
- Angels are not to be worshipped

ARTICLE XVI: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGES THE REALITY OF AN EVIL SPIRITUAL EMPIRE, LED BY SATAN¹⁶⁴

Both the Old and New Testaments often refer to an evil spiritual being. In Scripture he is known by a number of descriptive names, but the three most frequently used designations are: *Satan*, *the Devil*, and *The Accuser*.

As is true of angels, the doctrine of Satan is not systematically developed in Scripture. No doubt this is because the writers of Scripture, led by the Holy Spirit, were interested primarily in God. Only when the evil powers became a part of the narrative do they enter into the Sacred Pages.

- The Bible never explicitly states when or where Satan originated, but, as is true of angels, he is a created being
- Since God did not create evil, Satan was not created as an evil being. The origin of evil in him must remain speculative
- At some point a group of angels, led by Satan, rebelled against God.
- As is true of God's angelic host, there is a spiritual hierarchy in Satan's company of rebellious angels
- Satan, as God's adversary, has as his goal the enticing of humanity away from God. By doing this, he is attempting to deprive God of realizing the fulfillment of His desire to spend eternity with those made in His Image.
- As the enemy of God, Satan is the enemy of those made in God's image
- Those who are loyal to God will be engaged in spiritual warfare with the Satanic kingdom
- Satan's power to attack and harass God's people is circumscribed by God.

¹⁶⁴ Part II, pages 111-116

ARTICLE XVII: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CIVIL GOVERNMENT¹⁶⁵

Christians are to be obedient to the laws of the society in which they live, they are to respect and honor those in positions of authority, and they are to pay their taxes.

However, should the civil authorities begin to pass laws that require a Christian to disobey the clear command of God, or which seek to replace God as the arbiter of morals, then the Christian must respectfully disobey civil authority. Such respectful disobedience was modeled by the apostles. When a Christian must respectfully disobey, he/she will gladly accept the consequences, counting it an honor to suffer for the name of Christ.

ARTICLE XVIII: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ISSUES OF SEXUAL IDENTITY AND THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE¹⁶⁶

God created male and He created female. A baby is born with the physical organs that clearly display his/her gender. That gender does not change, throughout a person's lifetime. The Bible plainly speaks against lesbian, homosexual, and transgender behavior. The New Testament Church will maintain these biblical standards, regardless of how powerful the LGBT movement becomes in contemporary culture.

Because human life is a reflection of God's image, and thus sacred, the taking of a human life is a grievous sin.¹⁶⁷ The New Testament Church opposes euthanasia, since it is the taking of a human life.

The same is true of abortion. The New Testament Church considers life to begin at the moment of conception. In principle, therefore, abortion is an act of murder – the taking of a human life. The New Testament Church will speak out against abortion and not tolerate its practice among its members.

Even though this is true, the New Testament Church will have great concern and compassion for women who have undergone an abortion and are struggling with a sense of guilt. The church must be committed to bringing these women into an experience of God's forgiveness and in every way possible, to bring healing to their wounded souls. There also may be a need to minister in this manner to the men who had fathered an aborted child.

¹⁶⁵ Part II, pages 103-105

¹⁶⁶ Part II, pages 116-121

¹⁶⁷ The only exception is the legal execution of someone guilty of murder and the killing of enemy combatants in a just war.

ADDENDUM O

How various denominations answer the question, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*

Contemporary churches respond to this question with a variety of answers. We will illustrate that variety by citing a few examples of how different denominations and denominational streams answer this question.

The two most ancient institutional churches (of equal age), the Roman Catholic and the Eastern (Greek) Orthodox, have contrasting answers to the question. Both of these ancient churches consider baptism to be necessary for salvation:

- Until January 2013, Roman Catholicism would have answered the question by stating that baptism by Roman Catholic clergy provides that salvation. In January 2013, the American Roman Catholic Church and Reformed Churches in America agreed to recognize one another's baptism.¹⁶⁸ These churches all have a common understanding of the role of baptism in salvation. Roman Catholicism does have a unique understanding of salvation, in that the baptized Catholic may (probably will) spend time in purgatory where he will be perfected for eternity, but the fact that he has been baptized as a Catholic guarantees his eventual entrance into heaven.¹⁶⁹
- The Orthodox Church has a rather vague concept of personal salvation. The Orthodox Church (Greek Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, etc.) teaches that salvation begins when one is baptized (immersed). Orthodox theologian, Thomas Hopko, states, "everything in the

¹⁶⁸ After about six years of dialogue, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and the United Church of Christ signed a document recognizing each other's liturgical rites of baptism.

The Common Agreement, ratified by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on Nov. 16, 2010, and publicly signed and celebrated January 29, 2013, was the result of six years of study and consultation by Catholic and Reformed scholars during the seventh round of the Catholic-Reformed Dialogue in the USA. The agreement reads, "Together we affirm that, by the sacrament of Baptism, a person is truly incorporated into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13 and 27; Ephesians 1:22-23), the Church. Baptism establishes the bond of unity existing among all who are part of Christ's body and is therefore the sacramental basis for our efforts to move towards visible unity."

Note that this dialogue and the resulting Common Agreement has been between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the various expressions of the Reformed Church in America. There may be some question as to the acceptance of this agreement outside of the USA.

¹⁶⁹ See Reverent Joseph I. Malloy, C.S.P., *A Catechism for Inquirers* (New York, the Paulist Press) 1927, pages 14-19

church flows out of the waters of baptism: the remission of sins and life eternal.”¹⁷⁰ After baptism, the process of *theosis* begins. *Theosis* is the process whereby one becomes “more deified – in the sense that the Holy Spirit dwells with Christian believers and transforms them into the image of God in Christ, eventually endowing them in the resurrection with immortality and God’s perfect moral character.”¹⁷¹ Another term used by the Orthodox to describe this process is *chrismation*. The Eastern Orthodox Church emphasizes the language of I Corinthians 1:18, *to us who are being saved*, and Philippians 2:12, *work out your salvation with fear and trembling*.¹⁷²

Note how the Orthodox view of this process differs from that of most Protestant denominations. Most Protestant denominations consider progressive sanctification (growth in holiness of character) to follow baptism or confirmation. The Eastern Orthodox Churches describe this as progressive salvation. Both views consider baptism to be necessary for the process to begin.

Among Protestants, there many different answers to the question, *What must I do to be saved?* Here are some examples:

- Churches of the Reformed Tradition,¹⁷³ emphasize the Sovereignty of God. God, in His Sovereignty has chosen certain ones to be saved. Through baptism, these chosen ones will align themselves with the Church and manifest their saved state through the lives that they live. Reformed churches, in many ways, display an Old Testament concept, i.e., Reformed Churches consider infant sprinkling to fulfill the same role in the New Covenant that circumcision fulfilled in the Law of Moses. As circumcision was the sign that made a male Jewish infant a part of the Covenant Nation, in the same manner infant baptism makes an infant (male or female) a part of the Covenant Community¹⁷⁴ (it is the faith of the community, not the faith of the baby that gives validity to the baptism). At a later time in life, the individual must make a conscious decision about his faith.

¹⁷⁰ Infants are immersed three times and then the priest anoints the infant with a special oil, making the sign of the cross on various parts of the body (see Daniel B. Clendenin, *Why I’m Not Orthodox* www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=1063)

¹⁷¹ Deacon Victor E. Klimenko, PhD. *The Orthodox Teaching on Personal Salvation*, Chap. 1, pgph. 1.4 <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/46463.htm>

¹⁷² “Viewing the Church as the new and eternal life of the Kingdom of God given to man by God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, we understand first of all that for life to exist there must be birth. The birth into the eternal life of God is the mystery of **baptism**. But birth is not enough for living; there must be the ongoing possibility of life: its power, energy and force. Thus, the mystery of **chrismation** is the gift of the power to live the life of Christ which is born in man by baptism. It is the gift of the ‘all-holy and good and life-creating Spirit’ to man.

(<http://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-sacraments/the-sacraments>)

¹⁷³ Churches of the Reformed Tradition include, among others, the Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Churches, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and the United Church of Christ

¹⁷⁴ Colossians 2:10-12

For example, if an adult desires to become a part of a Presbyterian Church, he must be baptized (spiritually circumcised) in order to become a part of the Covenant Community. Thus, whether infant or adult, baptism is the act that makes one a member of the Covenant Community.¹⁷⁵ Those in the Covenant Community are saved.¹⁷⁶ The Westminster Confession, to which Presbyterians adhere, says that "the grace promised" in baptism (which includes regeneration) "is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongs unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time."¹⁷⁷ Baptism is the external vehicle that God uses to communicate the grace of regeneration—though it is properly received only by faith. That being true, the grace of baptism truly comes only to the elect (those chosen by God). Non-elect who are baptized receive only the "common operations of the Spirit",¹⁷⁸ thereby receiving only temporary and partial benefits.

- The Lutheran doctrine concerning salvation is similar to that of the Reformed position, although there are subtle differences. Lutheran theology states that regeneration (the new birth) comes through baptism, and that baptism is necessary.

“Lutherans teach that Baptism is ‘the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit’ (Titus 3:5) and that it is necessary because ‘it now saves you’ (I Peter 3:21). Through this divine, miraculous washing of water and His word, God works the forgiveness of sins and gives His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Because Baptism is God’s work, and not a human work of committing oneself to the Lord, children also should be baptized because the promise of forgiveness ‘is for you and for your children’ (Acts 2:39)”¹⁷⁹

Lutherans believe that baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersing.¹⁸⁰

In the Lutheran view, the key to salvation is faith. Baptism supernaturally imparts faith into the heart of a baptized infant. Even though the infant cannot verbally express his faith, his faith is real and present, having been imparted by God in the act of baptism. At a later time, when old enough to express one’s faith (usually at around twelve years of age) in a ceremony of confirmation, the child does verbalize his faith. Adults who come to faith through the power of the Holy Spirit’s using the vehicle of the Word of God (hearing or reading) should quickly be baptized and thus receive the dimension of divinely imparted faith. Lutherans believe that the grace of baptism and its imparted faith can be resisted, resulting in the condemnation/damnation of the one baptized; unless the

¹⁷⁵ Baptism in Reformed Churches is by sprinkling or pouring.

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/2000/09/Presbyterian-Views-On-Salvation-And-Non-Christians.aspx>

¹⁷⁷ Westminster Confession of Faith 28.6

¹⁷⁸ Westminster Confession of Faith 10.4, referencing Heb. 6:4-6

¹⁷⁹ *What Lutherans Teach* Concordia Tracts (St. Louis, MO, Concordia Publishing House) 2005, page 6

¹⁸⁰ Karl Kretzchmar, *What Lutherans Teach*, Concordia Tracts (St. Louis, MO, Concordia Publishing House) [uncopyrighted] page 10

grace is overtly resisted, the baptized are considered saved. Baptismal regeneration is not seen as a contradiction to salvation by faith alone.¹⁸¹

- Methodists believe that salvation is by grace alone and by faith alone. The process of salvation is quite similar to the views of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Concerning the role of baptism and the process of salvation, the UMC website states,

“Salvation is a lifelong process during which we must continue to respond to God’s grace. Baptism offers the promise that the Holy Spirit will always be working in our lives, but salvation requires our acceptance of that grace, trust in Christ, and ongoing growth in holiness as long as we live....In all forms of Christian baptism (infant or adult) God claims those being baptized, whatever their age or ability to profess their faith, with divine grace”¹⁸²

Concerning the conversion of adults who have not been baptized as infants, God sovereignly imparts “prevenient grace” to such individuals which enables them to make a free-will decision concerning whether or not to accept God’s “saving grace.”¹⁸³ When such an individual comes under the conviction that he is a sinner (*prevenient grace*) and chooses to accept God’s grace, he begins to experience the wholeness that God has promised. Next, comes a time of conversion, in which the individual chooses to leave one life-orientation for another – being born anew. Baptism is the covenant moment in which one becomes a member of God’s Church – the Covenant Community. Children who are baptized must, at a later time (when they are old enough to make a profession of faith), confirm their faith in an official ceremony. Baptism does not guarantee salvation and baptism is not necessary for salvation. Salvation depends on a lifetime of surrender to God’s grace and an ongoing life expressing faith. Baptism usually is administered by sprinkling, but both pouring and immersion¹⁸⁴ are offered in some Methodist Churches.¹⁸⁵

- Southern Baptists, like, Methodists, believe that salvation is by grace alone and by faith alone. One is saved when he makes a profession of faith – present day Southern Baptists often have the convert pray the “sinner’s prayer,” inviting Jesus into the convert’s life. Baptism (by immersion) is the act whereby one joins the local church, but is not required for salvation. Baptists believe that only a church can baptize – independent evangelists

¹⁸¹ LCMS Doctrinal Issues – Baptism PDF document

www.lcms.org/document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=537 pages 2-3

¹⁸² *Does baptism mean that I am saved?* and *What’s the difference between infant baptism and believer’s baptism?* WWW.umc.org/site/apps/ninet/content.aspx?

See also http://www.allaboutbaptists.com/distinctives_Church_Membership.html

¹⁸³ Wesley taught that unregenerate man, bearing the impediment of original sin, did not have the free will to make an unhindered positive or negative response to the Gospel. God, therefore, extends prevenient grace, which enables an individual to have the free will to say, “yes,” or “no,” to the Gospel.

¹⁸⁴ In one Tulsa Methodist Church, when the convert opts for immersion, a portable baptismal tank is wheeled out and used for baptism.

¹⁸⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of Methodist views on salvation, baptism, etc. see www.umc.org

do not have the right to do so.¹⁸⁶ Once saved, always saved, is a cherished doctrine of most Southern Baptist Churches.¹⁸⁷

We could cite more examples of how contemporary churches answer the question, *what must I do to be saved*, but these are sufficient to illustrate the variety.

The answers cited above are based on:

- Tradition (Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox)
- Application of Scripture (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist)
- Deductive Logic (Reformed)
- Practices that were inherited from Roman Catholicism (most Protestant Churches)¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ http://www.pbministries.org/Theology/Oscar%20Gibson/baptists_and_beliefs02.htm

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.sbc.net/knowjesus/baptism.asp>

¹⁸⁸ Although immersion always was allowed in Roman Catholicism (the major expression of Christianity in Western Europe until the Reformation of Luther [1483-1546] and Calvin [1509-1564]), sprinkling and pedobaptism had become prevailing practices by the time the Reformation was born. Thus, the Protestant Churches that emerged from Roman Catholicism practiced sprinkling of infants and continue to do so.

ADDENDUM P

Seventeen narratives of salvation events that are not included in the study

When conducting an inductive study, integrity and honesty demand that the researcher avoid, on the one hand, presenting only those cases that are friendly to a certain conclusion and on the other hand, excluding those that might lead to a different conclusion. Every effort must be made to avoid biased selectivity. Because in the forgoing paper nine cases are cited and seventeen are excluded, it is appropriate to give an explanation as to why the seventeen are excluded. The reason for the exclusion of the seventeen is that these contain such general and ambiguous statements that they do not provide sufficient data to contribute information relevant to the subject of the paper.

In this addendum, we will examine each of the seventeen excluded cases and note why they were deemed insufficient to provide data relevant to the paper's quest.

The Day by Day Additions to the Jerusalem Church

Acts 2:41-47

V 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls... V 47 And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Verse 47 informs us that the embryonic Jerusalem Church increased in numbers, daily. No information is given as to how they were added to the Church. However, the beginning of the paragraph, Verse 41, informs us that those who believed were immersed and added to the church. Since verse 47 is the conclusion of the paragraph, it is logical to conclude that the day by day converts of verse 47 were added in the same manner as those in verse 41 were added – by being immersed. Even though such an assumption is a reasonable conclusion, no information is given in verse 47 relating to how they were saved or added. Thus, this statement is excluded from the cases cited in the paper.

The Audience at the Gate Beautiful

Acts 3:1-4:4

As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them,² being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.³ And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. (Acts 4:1-4)

A number of days after Pentecost, Peter and John went to the Temple to pray at the 3 PM hour of prayer. They encountered a lame beggar at the Temple Gate Beautiful. By the authority of Christ, they healed the lame man. This miracle caused a large crowd to assemble around the apostles, thus providing an opportunity for Peter to preach the Gospel. His sermon was similar to the Pentecost message, with special emphasis on repentance (verse 19). Before Peter completed his sermon, Jewish authorities arrived and arrested the apostles. Thus, no opportunity

was given for the crowd to respond as had been done on Pentecost, nor did Peter have an opportunity to tell the crowd what to do be saved.

Acts 4:4 informs us that many of those in the audience believed. This verse also tells us that the membership of the Jerusalem Church grew to include about 5000 men (a growth of 2000 since Pentecost). The number of women is not stated.¹⁸⁹

Both valid and invalid assumptions can be made concerning this episode:

- We must not assume that all of the 2000 additions mentioned in Acts 4:4 came from the incident under consideration, since Acts 2:47 informs us that converts were being added to the Jerusalem Church daily.
- The arrival of the Temple authorities, including a coterie of the Temple guard and its captain, who abruptly arrested the apostles, would have been an intimidating experience for the audience. Thus, we cannot assume that all in this audience who believed were added to the Church, since even some who believed Jesus prior to His crucifixion did not follow him because of the fear of man.¹⁹⁰
- It would be absurd not to assume that some of those who are described in Acts 4:4 as having believed, did constitute a portion of the approximately 2000 additions, since that is the immediate context of the statement.
- We also could assume that those believers in 4:4 who were added to the Church were added the same way as those in Chapter 2 (since that is its immediate antecedent), but we must not read into the text something that isn't there.

Recognizing these ambiguities and under these constraints we have not included this episode in the foregoing charts.

Continued Additions to the Jerusalem Church Acts 5:14

And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, (Acts 5:14)

Acts Chapter 5 reports the nature of the ongoing life of the Church, including the death of Ananias and Sapphira (resulting from their lying concerning the price of a piece of land) and the ongoing miracle activity of the apostles. The report concludes with verse 14, stating that the Church experienced a season of dramatic growth. However, no details are given concerning the conversion experience of these additions, nor how these conversions were achieved.

Once again, assumptions could be made, but since no information is given, this case is not included in our study.

¹⁸⁹ The Greek term is ἀνήρ (*aner*) indicating *men*. If Luke had intended to use a term that could be understood as mankind, he would have used the term, ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*)

¹⁹⁰ John 7:13; 9:22; 12:42; 19:38;

Continued Multiplication of the Jerusalem Church

Acts 6:1

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. (Acts 6:1)

Once again, Luke reports the growth of the Church, with no information given concerning how these numbers were added to the Church.

Thus, there is no information in this verse that is relevant to the topic of the paper.

The Gospel Reaches Antioch

Acts 11:19-21

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-21)

These verses report the exciting advance of the Gospel into Antioch, which soon became the springboard for apostolic missions. However, once again, no details are given other than the statement that a large number believed the preachers and turned to the Lord. No details are given other than a report of evangelistic success. Once again, we could make assumptions, but since no details are given, this incident is excluded from our study.

Barnabas' Evangelistic Success in Antioch

Acts 11:22-24

The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.²³ Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;²⁴ for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:22-24)

As with the previous report, all that we have in this paragraph is a summary, indicating that Barnabas' ministry was attended by many souls being brought to the Lord. No details are given that would assist us in our study.

The Ongoing Advance of the Gospel

Acts 12:21-24

On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them.²² The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"²³ And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.²⁴ But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. (Acts 12:21-24)

Luke seems to contrast the hubris of Herod and his tragedy with the success of the Gospel. Even so, the only statement made here is a general one, that the Word of God continued to grow and to multiply. No information or details are given that would assist us in the foregoing paper.

Sergius Paulus Believes Acts 13:9-12

But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,¹⁰ and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"¹¹ "Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.¹² Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. (Acts 13:9-12)

When the apostolic team (Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark) arrived at Paphos, they encountered a false Jewish prophet, who was attached to the consul, Sergius Paulus. Fearing the loss of his position, the false prophet sought to dissuade Sergius Paulus from believing the apostles' preaching. Paul confronted the false prophet and declared that he would be blinded for a season, which occurred immediately. This so impressed Sergius Paulus that he believed the preachers.

No statement is made about his salvation or his being added to the Church. Of course, as always, assumptions could be made. Once again, a very general statement is given, without any details. Thus, we do not include this episode in our study.

The Gospel Message Spreads at Pisidian Antioch Acts 13:48-49

When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. (Acts 13:48-49)

When Paul preached to the congregation gathered in the Pisidian Antioch synagogue, his message was received with great interest. Many of the congregation began to follow about Paul and Barnabas, eager to hear more. This aroused jealousy among the Jewish leaders, who began contradicting the preachers. In response, Paul and Barnabas declared that they were turning to the Gentiles. When the Gentiles heard this pronouncement, they rejoiced and *those appointed to eternal life believed*. Again, nothing is stated about how they expressed that belief, nor what they were told to do in response to that belief nor any comment concerning their salvation. Of course, we can make many assumptions but once again, we have but a summary statement that some of the Gentiles, because of God's sovereign choice, believed the message.

Because of this paucity of detail, we have not included this episode in our study.

A Multitude of the Jews and Gentiles at Iconium Believed

Acts 14:1

In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. (Acts 14:1)

Again, here is another instance of a summary statement with no indication of what was done to assure the believers of salvation, nor any detail as to how that belief was demonstrated. For this reason, this episode is not included in our study.

Many Disciples Result From Preaching in Derbe

Acts 14:21

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, (Acts 14:21 NAU)

Once again, we encounter a summary statement that contains no detail to assist us in the study that is the topic of the paper. Thus, this episode is not included.

The Churches of Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium Increased in Number

Acts 16:5

So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily. (Acts 16:5)

As in the previous episode, no information is given other than the growth of the churches. Thus, this episode is not included in our study.

Success in Thessalonica

Acts 17:4

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,³ explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. (Acts 17:2-4 NAU)

Here we have another quite ambiguous statement, *persuaded and joined Paul and Silas*.

Exactly what this statement means, other than that they sided with them, rather than those who opposed them, is not clear. Since details related to our study are not present in this account, we do not include it.

Many Bereans are Persuaded by the Gospel

Acts 17:12

Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. (Acts 17:12)

After being forced to leave Thessalonica, Paul and his companions, Silas and Timothy, traveled to Berea. Upon their arrival, as was their custom, the apostles showed up at the local Jewish synagogue where they presented the Gospel. The Bereans took seriously the apostolic

proclamation. They did not respond with the bias that was displayed in the synagogue at Thessalonica, neither did they accept at face value what the apostles proclaimed. The Bereans examined the Scriptures to see if the apostolic message were true. As a result, many of them believed the apostolic proclamation.

Here, again, is a summary statement that the message was believed, but no detail is given concerning what they were told to do to be saved, *i.e.*, how to respond to the message. Thus, since important details are missing from this summary statement, we have not included it in our study.

Measured Success in the Athens Areopagus Acts 17:34

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this." ³³ So Paul went out of their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. (Acts 17-32-34)

When Paul's enemies arrived in Berea and stirred up crowds against him, the brothers escorted him out of the region and sent him to Athens. Silas and Timothy stayed behind Berea, but as Paul was leaving the region for Athens, he sent word back to Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible. While he waited for his two companions to arrive in Athens, Paul, as was his custom, visited the synagogue and disputed with the synagogue leaders concerning the Christ. Not only did he conduct his disputations in the synagogue, but he continued this discourse in the market place – the market place was an arena where orators and philosophers regularly made speeches and argued about concepts and religious matters.

Some of the Athenian intellectuals were intrigued by what Paul was proclaiming because they had not heard anything like it before. One trait of these intellectuals was their obsession with hearing new ideas and most of them had heard just about everything that there was to hear. So, when Paul proclaimed something that was totally new to them, they asked him to speak in the Areopagus (a forum that in pre-Roman times was the site of the supreme court of the region).

Paul presented a masterful oration, and it seems that the audience was following along with him until he mentioned Jesus' being resurrected from the dead. This produced three responses: some sneered, some said that they would like to hear more at a future time, and some followed Paul out of the meeting, believing what he had said.

Once again we encounter a summary statement, *i.e.*, that some believed what Paul had preached, but no information is given as what happened next. Neither is any statement given as to the salvation of those who followed Paul out of the Aeropagus.

Thus, because of the absence of details relevant to our study, this episode is not included.

Success Among the Practitioners of Magic Arts in Ephesus

Acts 19:18

Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. (Acts 19:18)

Prior to Paul's lengthy ministry in Ephesus (recorded in Acts 19), he had passed through Ephesus the year before, while en route to Jerusalem. On his first brief visit, he had spoken in the synagogue and there was great interest in his message, but no evidence that anyone was converted (Acts 18:19-21). As Paul continued his journey to Jerusalem, he left in Ephesus two of his closest companions, Priscilla and Aquila. Later, a gifted Jewish orator, Apollos, who had become a believer, arrived in Ephesus. Apollos fervently proclaimed to the synagogue the message of Christ. However, he was deficient in his message, preaching only the immersion preached and practiced by John, rather than Christian immersion. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and fully informed him of the details that were lacking in his presentation.

When Paul returned to Ephesus, he encountered twelve disciples of John the Baptist and the episode recorded in Acts 19:1-6 took place (covered in detail in the paper). After three months of disputing in the synagogue, Paul moved his operation to the school of Tyrannus where he proclaimed Christ for about two years. He remained in Ephesus for about three years.

The Lord used Paul in an unusual way, during this period. Acts 19:11 states that God was performing extraordinary miracles¹⁹¹ through the hands of Paul:

so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. (Acts 19:12)

There were many magicians and sorcerers in Ephesus. Among these were seven Jews, sons of a Jewish chief priest, Sceva. These men claimed to be able to cast out demons. Seeing the power that was exercised through Paul's use of the name of Jesus, these exorcists attempted to cast out a demon by proclaiming the name of Christ over the demon-possessed man. The evil spirit in the man said to these would-be exorcists, *I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?* The man with the evil spirit then leaped upon them and subdued them. They fled the scene, naked and wounded.

All of this got the attention of the Ephesians and fear came upon many who practiced the magic arts. The result was that a large number of these practitioners believed what Paul was declaring. They came and confessed their sin of sorcery, expressing their repentance of that sin by burning their valuable books of sorcery.

What does this episode tell us about the answer to the question, "what must I do to be saved?" It tells us nothing. No record is contained in this episode of an apostolic instruction concerning salvation, nor any action directed toward that, other than confessing the sin of sorcery and destroying the instruments used in that practice. Thus, this episode is not included in our study.

¹⁹¹ δυνάμεις τε οὐ τὰς τυχούσας (*dunameis te out as tuxousas*) and powerful deeds not the ordinary

Mixed Results in Rome

Acts 28:23ff

When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. ²⁴ Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.

²⁵ And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, ...

"Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen." ²⁹ When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves. (Acts 28:23-25, 28-29)

When Paul arrived in Rome to be tried before Caesar, the court docket was so full that he had to wait two years for his trial to take place. During those two years, he stayed in a private home, under house-arrest. He sent for the leaders of the Jews and, as was his custom, he preached Christ. There was no clear response to the message – no conversions are recorded during this period, even though Paul continued to preach.

Thus, since there is no data in this episode to assist us in resolving the question, “what must I do to be saved,” this episode is not included in our study.

ADDENDUM Q

The Importance of Following God’s Divinely Given Answer to the Question, “What must I do to be saved?”

How important is it for the Church to follow the apostolic model? For example, even though both Jesus and the apostles commanded and practiced immersion, do we have the right to offer a substitute – sprinkling or pouring? The statement frequently is made today that the only thing important is the application of water and the mode is not relevant – is this statement correct?

Do we have the authority to ask people to pray the sinner’s prayer, inviting Jesus into their hearts, and declare them to be “saved,” even though there is no evidence of any such practice in the New Testament? Do we have the right to omit immersion, or relegate it to some vague role – something to be done sometime in the future?

How important is it for us to adhere to the command given by the resurrected Christ and the apostolic understanding of that command? Where can we find an answer to these questions? As always, we turn to the Scriptures for an answer.

The Old Testament sheds significant light on this issue. Even though the ceremonies in the Law and the Old Testament sacerdotal commands no longer are relevant, truths and principles concerning God and His purposes are both relevant and abiding.

It is clear that Jesus and the apostles considered the revelation of the Old Testament to be of ongoing relevance.

- The New Testament cites the Old Testament sixty times (sixty-three, in the Greek text on which the KJV is based), with the phrase, “it is written....”¹⁹²
- Frequently in His debates with the religious leaders who opposed Him, Our Lord Jesus declared God’s perspective with the statement, “It is written....”
- Paul wrote to his younger associate, Timothy,
You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:14-17)

The Scriptures to which Paul referred in this letter to Timothy were the Genesis through Malachi record of God, His relationship with His creation, His sovereignty over the nations, His dealing with His people, and His sacerdotal institutions.

¹⁹²Matt. 2:5; 4:4, 6f, 10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24, 31; Mk. 1:2; 7:6; 9:12f; 14:21, 27; Lk. 2:23; 3:4; 4:4, 8, 10; 7:27; 19:46; 24:46; Jn. 6:31, 45; 12:14; Acts 1:20; 7:42; 15:15; 23:5; Rom. 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 12:19; 14:11; 15:3, 9, 21; I Co. 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19; 9:9; 10:7; 14:21; 15:45; II Co. 4:13; 8:15; 9:9; Gal. 3:10, 13; 4:22, 27; Heb. 10:7; 1 Pet. 1:16

From these, and a host of other examples that could be cited, it is apparent that the New Testament preachers and teachers did not hesitate to look to the Old Testament for abiding truths concerning God and His Will. We are wise when we follow in their train.

The primary truth communicated in the Old Testament is this: *God is God.*

Because God is God, no creature has a right either to ignore or to alter any of His orders. When Jehovah gave His people a command or an instruction, He expected explicit obedience. No substitute was acceptable in place of that which God had commanded or imparted. To offer something less than, or different from, what God prescribed or commanded, was to show irreverence and to commit blasphemy.

In the following section, we will note a number of examples, then we will draw conclusions from these episodes.

The Tabernacle and The Temple

A clear demonstration of the truth just stated is seen in God's design of the Tabernacle, and later the Temple. Associated with these were God's instructions concerning how worship was to proceed as well as the proper conduct toward the holy items associated with these two worship structures.

When Jehovah gave the plan for the Tabernacle and the elements associated with it, He gave this warning:

According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it... And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain. (Exodus 25:9, 40)

Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown in the mountain. (Exodus 26:30)

...who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." (Hebrews 8:5)

When the Tabernacle and its appointments were made, Jehovah's pattern was followed without deviation.

Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand, hammered work of gold; from its base to its flowers, it was hammered work; according to the pattern which Jehovah had showed Moses, so he made the lampstand. (Numbers 8:4)

Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. (Acts 7:44)

Four hundred eighty years after the Israelites left Egypt, Solomon began the construction of the Temple. He did not employ great architects to design what would be the most important building ever constructed. He followed the plan and design that Jehovah had given to his father, David. I Chronicles 28:11-18 records David's impartation of the plan to Solomon. Following the description of the future Temple, David declared,

"All this," said David, "Jehovah made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, all the details of this pattern." (I Chronicles 28:19)

Like the Tabernacle, the Temple of Jehovah was designed by Jehovah, Himself. When the Temple was dedicated, God demonstrated His approval by filling the Temple with a thick cloud that was permeated with His glory. (II Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:1-3)

All had been done according to God's plan.

Episodes that shed light on the question

A number of episodes recorded in the Old Testament shed light on the question before us. The following are a few examples.

Moses and Gershom

The Old Testament records instances in which Jehovah, in His grace, sometimes tolerated less than perfect obedience for a season, but ultimately demanded conformity. An example is Moses' failure to circumcise Gershom. Circumcision had been established by Jehovah as the abiding seal of the Covenant for all Israelites. Moses' failure to circumcise his son was tolerated until he began the trip to Egypt to fulfill the ministry to which Jehovah had called him. The seriousness of this infraction is seen in that even though Jehovah had called Moses to be the human agent of Israel's deliverance, He sought to kill Moses because of this disobedience.

Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that Jehovah met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." So He let him alone. At that time she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood"-- because of the circumcision. (Exodus 4:24-26)

One can only speculate as to why Moses had failed to circumcise Gershom. Zipporah's statement, indicating resentment at having to circumcise Gershom, would lead us to believe that circumcising their son had been a point of contention between them and that Moses had bowed to her opposition. For whatever the reason, it would seem that obedience to this command outweighed God's call on Moses' life.

Again, the lesson is that God expects explicit obedience. He expects His people to do things His way. By our obedience we honor Him as God.

The Meribah Episode

Moses' most notable failure to obey God explicitly and the consequence therefrom is recorded in the Meribah episode, recorded in Numbers Chapter 20.

Thirty-seven years and six months after Jehovah miraculously delivered the Israelites from Egypt and two and one-half years before they entered the Promised Land, they faced a season of severe drought. Throughout the Exodus experience, even though Jehovah had provided for them in every circumstance, the people continually grumbled, whined, and complained. Facing this shortage of water, they began to complain again. They even accused Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to die. Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle to seek Jehovah.

Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting, and fell on their faces. Then the glory of Jehovah appeared to them; and Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its

water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." (Number 20:6-8)

Moses and Aaron took the rod and gathered the people before a specified rock, just as Jehovah had commanded. However, Moses' patience was at an end. After almost four decades of putting up with their constant complaining, Moses lost his temper. Instead of speaking to the rock, he spoke to the people and struck the rock.

"Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. (Numbers 20:10-11)

Jehovah responded immediately.

But Jehovah said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." (Numbers 20:12)

The sin was two-fold.

- Moses, in his frustration, gave the impression that he and Aaron would bring forth the water.
- Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses vigorously struck the rock twice, as if human energy and effort would make the miracle more certain.

One year and eleven months after the experience in Meribah, just seven months before Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land, God commanded Aaron to leave the assembly and ascend Mount Hor.

- Aaron climbed the mountain and died.
- No one was with him to bury him;
- Jehovah attended to these things.
- Aaron was not allowed to enter the Promised Land with Israel.

Two and one half years after Meribah, Moses ascended to Nebo, the highest peak of Mount Pisgah, and looked over into the Promised Land; then he, like Aaron, died with only Jehovah as witness.

Moses and Aaron paid the penalty for Moses' failure at Meribah. He did not obey Jehovah, explicitly, and thus he failed to honor Him as God.

Nadab and Abihu

One of the most striking examples of God's displeasure with less than precise obedience involved Aaron's two eldest sons. Aaron had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, were selected for a special role before Jehovah. They and their father, Aaron, along with seventy elders of Israel were invited by God to come to the base of the mountain when Moses ascended into the presence of God. They were given the privilege of experiencing a special epiphany (Exodus 24:1-11).

Later, Nadab and Abihu, along with their two brothers, were chosen by God to join their father, Aaron, as priests (Exodus 28:1). Yet, for Nadab and Abihu, this happy prospect was not to be.

On the inaugural day of their priesthood, tragedy aborted the role to which God had assigned them.

Following the consecration of Aaron and his sons, the first offerings of consecration were presented to Jehovah. After Aaron had made the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering, he blessed the people and stepped down from the altar. Aaron and Moses then went into the Tabernacle for a brief time. When they came out, they again blessed the people and God responded – the glory of Jehovah appeared to all the people and fire came out from Jehovah and consumed the offerings that rested on the altar. (Leviticus 9)

The response of the people was ecstatic. The people shouted and fell on their faces. In the enthusiasm of the moment, Nadab and Abihu grabbed their respective firepans, put incense in them as an offering before Jehovah to accompany the praises of the people. Immediately, fire came from God and killed them. The record states that they had *offered strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.* (Leviticus 10:1)

Various explanations have been given concerning the meaning of *strange fire*. What was the offense? It is most reasonable to conclude that they committed two sins:

- Clearly, they were presenting an incense-offering that was not commanded by Jehovah. Jehovah's ordained schedule for the offering of incense was at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice. (Exodus 30:7-8; Numbers 28:3ff)
- A probable additional sin was the offering of an incense other than that which was the prescribed incense (Exodus 30:9, 34-38)

Be that as it may, these two priests offered incense according to their own impulse, not in explicit obedience to Jehovah. Moses explained to Aaron,

*Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what Jehovah spoke, saying,
'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy,
And before all the people I will be honored.'"*

So Aaron, therefore, kept silent. (Leviticus 10:3)

By following their own impulse, rather than carefully complying with God's instructions, they were not treating Jehovah as holy. If this were the only example of God's emphasizing the importance of explicit obedience (it is not), we would be warned sufficiently not to take the attitude,

I know what God commanded, but I have something just as good.

This episode strongly communicates the fact that God expects explicit, careful obedience, without deviation.

The Unnamed Prophet Who Believed a Lie

A strong lesson on explicit obedience is contained in the I Kings 13 record of an unnamed prophet whom Jehovah commissioned to go to Bethel and prophecy against the illegal altar. Jehovah told this prophet that he should neither eat nor drink while in Bethel, and that he was to return home by some road other than the one by which he came to the city. In obedience to this command, after his ministry was complete, the prophet refused the king's invitation to visit the palace and he began his journey back home by a different route (I Kings 13:7-10).

An old prophet who lived in Bethel heard about the exploits of this prophetic visitor. The old prophet pursued the visiting prophet and overtook him on the road. The old prophet invited the younger prophet to return to Bethel and be refreshed with bread and water. When the visiting prophet reported that God forbade him from doing that, the older prophet lied and told him that an angel had appeared to him and had spoken by the word of Jehovah, commanding him to bring the visitor back to Bethel for refreshment. Believing the old prophet's lie, the visiting prophet returned to Bethel, where he ate bread and drank water. (I Kings 13:11-19)

Immediately, the word of Jehovah came upon the older prophet and he cried out that because the visiting prophet had disobeyed Jehovah, he would die away from home. The old prophet, evidently feeling remorse for what he had done, saddled a donkey for his visitor, who began the journey home. On the road, he was slain by a lion. (I Kings 9:23-25)

This is an instance in which God's word was clear. The visiting prophet was deceived into believing that God had changed His mind. Even though he was not disobeying God deliberately, he paid the price for not obeying God's command explicitly.

Of note is the fact that as far as the record goes, the deceitful old prophet was not punished for his deception – the disobedient prophet paid the price.

This episode emphasizes the importance of being wary of anything that claims to be a substitute for or alternative to God's known command.

Many more Old Testament examples of the principle that God's plan, God's command, things imparted by God, were to be received, followed, and obeyed without failure. No deviation was sanctioned by the Ruler of the Universe.

Tolerated Deviations by Sincere Servants of Jehovah

Even though deviations were not sanctioned by Jehovah, fallen man created situations in which less than perfect conformity was tolerated temporarily by Jehovah. In such instances, Jehovah displayed both His grace and His severity. The obvious example of this is the tent that David built for the Ark of the Covenant and the events surrounding the transportation of the Ark.

As already noted, Jehovah had given the design for the tent, which was to be the place where He met with Israel (the tent of meeting), while Israel wandered in the wilderness. It was the place of worship, and the home of the Ark,¹⁹³ During the priesthood of Eli, Israel's spiritual condition had deteriorated to the point that the Ark had become a superstitious symbol. When Israel was losing a fight with the Philistines, the priests audaciously removed the Ark from the tent and marched with it into battle. Their attitude was, "We are losing the battle...Go get God."

Jehovah, via the ark, was regarded as a rabbit's foot – a good luck charm - that Israel could use to guarantee the favorable outcome of its endeavor. Jehovah refused to be used by man; not only was Israel defeated, but the Philistines captured the Ark. (I Samuel 4)

Through the succeeding events associated with the Ark, Jehovah demonstrated that He was not just another god, but that He is God. Each place that the Philistines housed the Ark, there was

¹⁹³Later events demonstrate that the tent was temporary - Jehovah had planned for a Temple when Israel became settled.

evidence of His supernatural presence. The Philistines, suffering because of the presence of the Ark, sought to get rid of it (I Samuel 5; 6:19-21). The Ark finally was deposited in Kiriath-jearim, at the home of Abinadab.

After David was firmly established as king, he made plans to retrieve the Ark, and to bring it back into the heart of the nation. He erected a special tent to be the Ark's resting place. David and a selected retinue went to Kiriath-jearim to conduct the Ark to the resting place that David had prepared.

During this endeavor, Jehovah once again emphasized that He is to be obeyed, explicitly. God had designed the Ark to be carried by two special gold-covered poles. These poles were an essential part of the Ark and it was to be carried in this manner at all times. God had declared that no one was to touch the Ark; the porters were to touch only the poles. In all probability, David's men followed that instruction in lifting the Ark and placing it on the new cart - transporting it on a cart pulled by oxen was easier than carrying it by poles resting on the shoulders of the porters. When the oxen made a move that almost upset the cart, Uzzah, well intentioned, reached out to steady the Ark. Jehovah slew him instantly (II Samuel 6:6-7). After the slaying of Uzzah, David deposited the Ark in the nearby home of Obed-edom, the Gittite (II Samuel 6:9-11).

After three months, David and those with him moved the Ark according to God's original instructions (I Chronicles 15). They brought the Ark to a special tent that David had erected for this purpose (II Samuel 6:17; I Chronicles 16:1). David set worshippers before the tent, instructing them to sing, play instruments, and worship Jehovah night and day (I Chronicles 16:4ff).

The original Tabernacle and the altar of sacrifice, both of which had been designed by Jehovah Himself, remained at Gibeon. This continued to be the site where the people of Israel fulfilled the ceremonial and sacrificial commands of Jehovah. Both of these Tabernacles existed at the same time, and both were under the protection of the King. (I Chronicles 16:37-41)

The one thing that this arrangement did not allow was the fulfillment of the blood sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. According to Jehovah's instruction, once a year the High Priest was to take the blood of a sacrificial lamb, go through the veil into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkle the sacrificial blood on the Ark. The original Tabernacle contained the Holy of Holies, but since the removal of the Ark in the Philistine episode, the Holy of Holies had been an empty chamber - the Ark wasn't there. On the other hand, there is no mention of such an arrangement in the Tabernacle that David had built. This second Tabernacle had the Ark, but no Holy of Holies and no Day of Atonement ceremonies. As best as can be determined, the ark was absent from the Holy of Holies for about 43 years.¹⁹⁴ After the construction of the Temple (God's ultimate plan), all came together again and functioned in a manner consistent with the original instructions Jehovah had given to Moses.

¹⁹⁴ The Ark spent seven months among the Philistines (I Samuel 6:1), 20 years at Kiriath-jearim (I Samuel 7:1-2), 3 months at the house of Obed-edom (II Samuel 6:11). By following the timeline of David's life and the fact that the Temple was completed in the eleventh year of Solomon's reign (I Kings 6:1, 38) the Ark would have been 22 years in the Tabernacle that David built.

Thus, from the time of Eli's death, when the Ark was captured by the Philistines, until Solomon completed the building the Temple, Jehovah allowed a temporary arrangement, while His ultimate plan – a Temple – was in developmental stages, both cognitively and actively.¹⁹⁵

A number of important spiritual lessons can be seen in all of this, as well as major questions. The biggest question is, “why didn't David return the Ark to its rightful place – the Holy of Holies which Jehovah had designed for it?” For the purposes of this paper, we must not be sidetracked by such questions.

- The important point for our discussion is to note that God tolerated a temporary situation that was not according to the pattern that He had given to Moses, along with the dire warnings not to deviate from anything imparted.
- Linked with this illustration of God's tolerance is the importance of remembering the lesson associated with the death of Uzzah.
- This was a temporary situation that looked to God's ultimate plan of having the Ark in the Holy of Holies of the Temple that Jehovah Himself had designed.

Summary of Points made in these Old Testament Examples

1. When God gives a command, we are to obey that command without deviation. To do otherwise is to deny that God is God.
2. When fallen man brings about a situation in which God's perfect will is not carried out, we should seek to begin a journey that will bring matters back to the place where God's will is displayed.

¹⁹⁵ It seems that the Tabernacle (including all of its vessels and utensils) was kept in the Temple as a sacred relic (I Kings 8:4ff)

ADDENDUM R

The Montanists

Sometime between 155 and 172 AD, Montanus emerged in Phrygia, demanding a higher standard for the Church and separation from the world. He was concerned about the growth of formalism in the Church and the dependence on human leadership, rather than the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He saw the rising prominence of a single bishop in the local church as an expression of this tendency. If he had gone no further than advocating pure living, holiness, and less formalism in the Church, Montanus would have done nothing but good. However, he went much further. He believed that the Church was overly reliant on Scripture. Montanus advocated a Spirit-guided Church. Montanus contended that inspiration was immediate and continuous and that he was the Paraclete through whom the Holy Spirit spoke, even as the Holy Spirit had spoken through Paul and the other apostles. When he did refer to Scripture, it was with a fanatical misinterpretation. He and his two prophetess associates, Prisca and Maximilla, went about prophesying in the name of the Holy Spirit. The Montanists prophesied in a state of ecstasy, as though their personalities were suspended while the Holy Spirit spoke through them. They described themselves as lyres across which the Spirit swept to play a new song, and declared that any opposition to their new prophecy was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Montanus developed an elaborate eschatology, prophesying the speedy Second Coming of Christ. He taught that the Kingdom of Christ soon would be set up at Pepuza in Phrygia and that he would have a prominent place in that kingdom. In order to be prepared and qualified for this coming kingdom, He and his followers practiced strict asceticism (much fasting, eating only dry foods, and no remarriage for widows or widowers, etc.). His doctrine of a new age of the Spirit suggested that the Christian period, centering on Jesus, had ended. He claimed the right to push Christ and the apostolic message into the background. In the name of the Holy Spirit, Montanus denied that God's decisive and normative revelation had occurred in Jesus Christ. The movement was strongest around Carthage and the eastern lands. Montanism was regarded as heresy in most churches. Finally, in 381, the Council at Constantinople officially declared that Montanists were pagans.

The Montanist's puritan approach to life appealed to the Roman lawyer, Tertullian, who had become a Christian while practicing law in Rome. About 202 AD, Tertullian became a Montanist. A prolific writer and apologist, Tertullian wrote a description of Charismatic activity in a Montanist church service (from "A Treatise on the Soul," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1975 American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edition), Volume 3, Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian (Hendrickson) page 336.

“For, seeing that we acknowledge spiritual charismata, or gifts, we too have merited the attainment of the prophetic gift, although coming after John (the Baptist). We have now amongst us a sister whose lot it has been to be favored with sundry gifts of revelation, which she experiences in the Spirit by ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church: she converses with angels, and sometimes even with the Lord; she both sees and hears mysterious communications; some men's hearts she understands, and to them who are in need she distributes remedies. Whether it be in the reading of Scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions. It may possibly have

happened to us, whilst this sister of ours was rapt in the Spirit, that we had discoursed in some ineffable way about the soul. After the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services, she is in the regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen in vision (for all her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care, in order that their truth may be probed). “Amongst other things,” says she, “there has been shown to me a soul in bodily shape, and a spirit has been in the habit of appearing to me; not, however, a void and empty illusion, but such as would offer itself to be even grasped by the hand, soft and transparent and of an ethereal color, and in form resembling that of a human being in every respect.” This was her vision, and for her witness there was God; and the apostle most assuredly foretold that there were to be “spiritual gifts” in the church. “

ADDENDUM S

The *Didache* on how to handle apostles and prophets

Section 11:3 Now concerning the apostles and prophets, deal with them as follows in accordance with the rule of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord. But he is not to stay for more than one day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle leaves, he is to take nothing except bread until he finds his next night's lodging. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. Also, do not test or evaluate a prophet who speaks in the spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven. However, not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he exhibits the Lord's ways. By his conduct, therefore, will the false prophet and the prophet be recognized. Furthermore, any prophet who orders a meal in the spirit shall not partake of it; if he does, he is a false prophet. If any prophet teaches the truth, yet does not practice what he teaches, he is a false prophet... But if anyone should say in the spirit, "Give me money," or anything else, do not listen to him. But if he tells you to give on behalf of others who are in need, let no one judge him.

12:1 Everyone "who comes in the name of the Lord" is to be welcomed. But then examine him, and you will find out - for you will have insight - what is true and what is false. If the one who comes is merely passing through, assist him as much as you can. But he must not stay with you for more than two or, if necessary, three days. However, if he wishes to settle among you and is a craftsman, let him work for his living. If he is not a craftsman, decide according to your own judgment how he shall live among you as a Christian, yet without being idle. But if he does not wish to cooperate in this way, then he is trading on Christ. Beware of such people.

13:1 But every genuine prophet who wishes to settle among you is "worthy of his food." Likewise, every genuine teacher is, like "the worker, worthy of his food." Take, therefore, all the firstfruits of the produce of the winepress and threshing floor, and of the cattle and sheep, and give these firstfruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if you have no prophet, give them to the poor. If you make bread, take the firstfruit and give in accordance with the commandment. Similarly, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the firstfruit and give it to the prophets. As for money and clothes and any other possessions, take the "firstfruit" that seems right to you and give in accordance with the commandment.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Lightfoot & Harmer, pages 263-267

ADDENDUM T

The Expression, "*Abba*, Father"

Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; and Galatians 4:6, contain the expression, "*Abba*, Father." Over the last twenty years, some have taught that, *Abba*, is the term of familiarity, like, *daddy*, as contrasted with the more formal, *father*. This is not true. The terms are synonymous, both being expressed by our English word, *father*.

In the original text, the terms are ἄββα (*abba*) and ὁ πατήρ (*ho pater*).

- *Abba* is the Aramaic word for *father*
- *Ho Pater* is the Greek word for *father*

There is no evidence for the claim that *Abba* is the familiar term and that *ho Pater* is the formal term, what is the explanation?

Jesus is recorded as using this repetitive terminology in Mark 14:36 (“*abba, pater*, all things are possible to Thee”). Paul repeated this terminology twice, identifying with the prayer of Jesus. The fact that both the Aramaic and Greek terms for, *father*, are used in these passages, brings home the fact that Christianity was born in a multilingual setting. Lightfoot (*Horae Hebraicae*¹⁹⁷. On Mark 14:36) argues that Jesus said, *Abba*, in the prayer, and that since Mark wrote for a Greek speaking audience, he interpreted this in his Greek text by adding *ho Pater*. Likewise, Paul did the same thing in Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15 (the only places where this redundancy occurs).¹⁹⁸

Sanday and Headlam present another point of view.¹⁹⁹ "The three passages are however all too emotional for this explanation: interpretation is out of place in a prayer. It seems better to suppose that our Lord Himself, using familiarly both languages, and concentrating into this word of all words such a depth of meaning, found himself impelled spontaneously to repeat the word, and that some among his disciples caught and transmitted the same habit. It is significant however of the limited extent of strictly Jewish Christianity that we find no other original examples of the use then these three."

To this explanation, I (JWG) would add the following. The use of both terms, in the two languages that would have been languages with which Jesus' audience was conversant, emphasize that whatever term in our language that speaks of a paternal relationship is the one that we should use in prayer.

¹⁹⁷ John Lightfoot DD *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudica*, Volume I (Oxford, University Press) 1684 page 457

¹⁹⁸ For an extensive discussion of the term and its use, see <https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hdn/a/abba-2.html>

¹⁹⁹ W. Sanday, D.D, LL.D., A.C. Headlam, B.D., *International Critical Commentary*, On The Epistle to The Romans (New York, Scribner's Sons) 1896, page 203

ADDENDUM U

PRO-ABORTION ARGUMENT FROM SCRIPTURE

Some have attempted to argue for a scripturally based pro-abortion stance. This article is an example of such a presentation, with my (JWG) accompanying critique.

Biblical Abortion: A Christian's View²⁰⁰

REWIRE.NEWS Jun 3, 2012, 7:15pm

Nynia Chance

It's commonly claimed that it's a Christian duty to abolish abortion, in accordance with a Biblical teaching that abortion is a sin. However, one Christian's reading of the Bible poses challenges to that assumption, instead turning up some eye-opening Biblical views on terminating a pregnancy.

The American version of the War on Women has been going on for quite some time, and one of the most long-standing fronts in this war is abortion. It's an unpleasant topic that's fraught with complexities and complications, so it's been a frequent tool in dividing us into Pro- and Anti-camps of social warfare (and in the cases of murders of doctors and bombings of clinics, actual violent warfare).

The War on Women has been especially effective in getting many to feel as though Christians need to march in lockstep against the idea of allowing abortions of any type to ever be legal, to the point of criminalizing miscarriage, itself. Those who try to conscript religious Christians into this war do so under the argument that the Bible itself demands such a prohibition.

Except that it doesn't. The Bible never once specifically forbids abortions; it's actually quite the contrary! Not only were methods of abortion well-known at the time, there's times when the Bible states God commands that one take place. I'm going to walk through a few examples as illustrations.

Tamar: Killing an Undesirable Pregnancy

In Genesis 38, we have the story of Tamar, from whom king David descended. She was the widow of Judah's oldest son, Er, who had died without fathering any children. In accordance with the law, it fell to his next-oldest brother Onan to give Tamar children who would belong posthumously to Er. Onan pretended to agree to avoid being disinherited and publicly humiliated, but then he "spilled his seed" so he didn't have to father any sons that would belong to his dead brother, not him. This sin of selfishness was so great that Onan then was put to death. (We'll get into this one another time when we talk about birth control, by the way.)

Even though the law then mandated that the third and final son was to fulfill husbandly duties to Tamar, Judah made an excuse that the son was too young, and postponed the marriage indefinitely. Tamar, on the other hand, still felt that it was her responsibility to produce heirs for

²⁰⁰ <https://rewire.news/article/2012/06/03/biblical-abortion-christians-view-1/>

Er, and that it was Judah's responsibility to make that happen. This was one of the families of Israel, and it was at risk of dying out without any heirs to carry it onward; Tamar wasn't going to let that happen on her watch. So during a major feast, she dressed up in a disguise of a Sacred Prostitute, from the local shrines where women invited men to join with them in honoring the Divine Feminine through an enactment of the Male-Female Sacred Union. (More on this when we talk about homosexuality.) Judah took this supposed roadside harlot up on this offer, even giving her the tokens she requested for the union.

When Tamar was found to have been pregnant from harlotry, well, there was only one thing for it! Judah proclaimed that she had to be put to death in accordance with the law, and the unborn child right along with her. Since she was the daughter of a priest (Melchizedek, I believe), rather than being stoned, she'd be granted burning, with molten metal being poured down her throat for a quicker death than being hit with rocks. Now remember that Judah knew that he'd been with a Sacred Prostitute even if he didn't know it was Tamar, so just contemplate the level of hypocrisy at work here. It wasn't until Tamar produced the tokens he'd given her that he realized the baby was his, and stayed the execution.

So in this story, I see the Bible saying that killing an unborn child is necessary when it's not a child conceived in a way the mother's society wants. Also, that the mother should die along with it, because of engaging in an act the sentencer himself had done.

FLAW IN THIS ARGUMENT – The intention of Judah was not to kill the unborn child, but to punish the assumed harlotry of Tamar. Certainly, the unborn child would die, but the focus was not on killing the unborn child – it was on punishing Tamar. There is nothing here about abortion or killing an unborn child. Furthermore, where did the author of this article get the idea that Tamar would die by having molten metal poured down her throat – the Scriptural penalty was to be burned (Genesis 38:24).

Hosea: Progeny of the Rebellious Shall Not be Born

In the book of Hosea, we have the prophet relaying a message from God, saying what will happen to the Israelites who had rebelled as punishment for their transgressions. In Hosea 9:14, we are told God will cause the deaths of the unborn, as he will “give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.” In Hosea 13:16 it is proclaimed:

“Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.”

In Isaiah 7:20 and 10:5, it is stated that the Assyrians will be used by God as the means of implementing these punishments. In 2 Kings it describes how they fulfilled this role:

- 8:12 And Hazael (future king of Syria) said, Why weepeth my lord? And he (Elisha) answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.
- 15:16 Then Menahem smote Tiphseh, and all that were therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not to him, therefore he smote it; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.

So in this series of scripture, I read the Bible saying that violently ripping the unborn from the womb is a just and worthy retribution if their parents were considered to have rebelled against God.

FLAW IN THIS ARGUMENT – Hosea 9 is a chapter that indicts Israel for tolerating idolatry. Dire consequences will befall them, because of their spiritual harlotry. One of the consequences will be miscarriages (verses 11 & 14). This is a far cry from a person's performing an abortion.

Isaiah 7:20 and 10:5 do state that God will use the Assyrians to punish Israel. However, in neither of these passages is there a command to rip open wombs. For that matter, in 10:6-7 concerning the violence that the Assyrians will launch against Ephraim, God expresses His disapproval of how far the Assyrians would go in their violence.

Indeed, Hosea 13:16 prophesies that Samaria will fall by the sword, the little ones dashed to pieces and the wombs ripped open. Such extreme actions were what one nation did to another, when the goal was to destroy the conquered nation in an effort to deprive the conquered nation of a future. However, this is but a prophecy of what the invaders would do, not something that God commanded or even approved of.

For example, God used the Babylonians to bring Judah to repentance. When the Babylonians had conquered Judah, they brought the Judean king, Zedekiah, before the king of Babylon. Then they brought in Zedekiah's sons and forced Zedekiah to watch them kill his sons. Then, they put out Zedekiah's eyes – the last thing that he saw was the slaughter of his sons. There is not the slightest hint in Scripture that God ordered or approved of this cruelty.

If we used the logic expressed in this article, rebellious leaders should be forced to witness the execution of their sons and then be blinded.

Thus, to use the example of what cruel nations did to one another, even perhaps if it is prophesied in advance, does not mean that this sets a principle or pattern that we should follow.

In II Kings 8:12 Elisha expressed his fear that Hazael, the future ruler of Syria, would indeed rip open the wombs of Israelite women. Hazael is taken aback by Elisha's statement – he asks, *who is your servant, a dog, who would do this great thing?* – evidently such a thought was appalling to him.

Indeed, II Kings Chapter 8 through 13 recount the reign of Hazael and how he constantly oppressed Israel, but there is no record of his ever ripping up the wombs of pregnant women. Evidently Elisha's fears were unfounded.

Menahem was king over Israel (the northern kingdom) for ten years. He was noted for his cruelty. One of the cities on the northern border of his kingdom, Tiphshah, refused to submit to his rule and allow him free access to their territory. In retaliation, Menahem struck the city and ripped open the wombs of pregnant women. This is the case of an Israelite doing something to his own people. Nothing in this narrative fits the author of this article's argument, sanctioning abortion.

Thus, in none of these examples is there a sanction for abortion – a mother's deliberate decision to end the life of her child. In none of these examples is there a command from God that such actions take place. These descriptions of violence reflect the habitual actions of conquering nations when seeking to achieve the total destruction of the conquered nation.

Sotah: Abortion-Inducing Potion due to Husband's Jealousy

In Numbers 5, we have instructions given by God to Moses regarding situations where a husband is fiercely jealous of his wife, and there aren't witnesses to prove whether she did or did not have an affair. She is to be taken before the priest who will mix up a potion and have her swear an oath of cursing before drinking it. "And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall

be free, and shall conceive seed.” Otherwise, in poetic terms, it is described that she will lose the baby, by judgment of God.

As an aside, one interesting thing about the ritual of the Sotah is that it’s believed the woman was put before the court with her hair loose and stripped bare to the waist, treated like the “harlot” she was accused to be even before the “bitter waters” proclaimed her guilt or innocence.

So in this ritual, I see the Bible saying that if a husband is seriously jealous, his wife should be made to take a drink that will cause an abortion if she slept with another man (regardless of whose child it is).

FLAW IN THIS ARGUMENT – There is no mention of a miscarriage/abortion in this text. The consequences of a guilty woman’s drinking the potion (dust from the floor of the tabernacle added to a cup of water) was,

‘When he has made her drink the water, then it shall come about, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, that the water which brings a curse shall go into her and cause bitterness, and her abdomen will swell and her thigh will waste away, and the woman will become a curse among her people. (Numbers 5:27)

There is nothing in this text stating that the woman is pregnant, or that she miscarriages.

Causing a Miscarriage: Mere Property Loss

The latest push in the War on Women has been to declare that anyone who causes the loss of a pregnancy shall be guilty of murder. This has resulted in young women who have suffered a miscarriage to endure the further torment of being arrested and jailed for the tragedy. However, the Bible didn’t treat miscarriage as murder, regardless of intent. Rather, it was treated as a property loss by the father, punishable by whatever fine the judges felt was appropriate.

This is spelled out in Exodus 21:22-25: If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Now there are those who try to say that the fruit departing just means a premature birth and mischief is whether the child is lost or not, but the ambiguity is gone when you review more direct translations than the poetic euphemisms of the King James Version. For example, from the Complete Jewish Bible:

²²“If people are fighting with each other and happen to hurt a pregnant woman so badly that her unborn child dies, then, even if no other harm follows, he must be fined. He must pay the amount set by the woman’s husband and confirmed by judges. ²³ But if any harm follows, then you are to give life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound and bruise for bruise.

Note that Exodus 21 also deals with when a man beats his servants, saying he’ll be punished only if the servant dies within a couple days. If they linger on, clinging at death’s door before finally perishing from their wounds, the man is blameless. This whole chapter makes it clear to me that the ancient biblical law is hardly unwavering in a declaration that “all life is sacred and must be preserved”, as many claim. But then many of the same people who would prosecute a woman for a miscarriage are also proponents of War and using Execution as a punishment for those convicted of certain crimes. Just saying.

FLAW IN THIS ARGUMENT - Several comments are in order concerning the author's citing of Exodus 21:22-25.

First, Nynia Chance has falsely stated that the KJV rendering of this passage is a poetic euphemism and that the Complete Jewish Bible is a more direct translation. Quite the contrary is true. It is The Complete Jewish Bible's rendering that is an interpretation, not a translation. The literal rendering of the Hebrew of verse 22 states,

'And when men strive, and have smitten a pregnant woman, and her children have come out, and there is no mischief, he is certainly fined, as the husband of the woman doth lay upon him, and he hath given through the judges;

The Greek of the Septuagint reads the same as the Hebrew, except the Septuagint reads, *child go out*, rather than the Hebrew, *children go out*.²⁰¹

The picture is of a miscarriage or a premature birth. The death or life of the prematurely delivered, perhaps miscarried, child is not stated in the Hebrew or the Greek.

Secondly, should the child die, the crime would be manslaughter, not murder. In every culture, manslaughter, i.e., the accidentally caused death of someone, is treated differently than the act of murder. Therefore, the penalties are different. If we assume that the death of a child is involved in the incident, then the penalty prescribed in verse 22 is the Mosaic penalty for manslaughter prescribed in this sort of an event.

Thirdly, this passage of Scripture is not dealing with the subject of abortion. It deals the miscarriage/premature birth of a child, resulting from accidental violence done to the mother. This is far different from a mother's choosing to end the life of a child, through abortion.

Summary: The Bible is Not Anti-Abortion

My conclusion as a Christian is that the Bible is not anti-abortion. Rather, there is a non-Biblically-based movement that pretends to use the Bible as its justification for attacking women who do not carry a pregnancy to term (even if it was an unintended loss).

Now, even though we just covered some cases where the Bible actively advocates and even commands the loss of the unborn, there will be those who want to overlook them and claim that the Bible still prohibits abortion. Their argument is that we are commanded Thou Shalt Not Kill ('rasach', which is extra-legal killing or murder), and that the Bible teaches us that Life Begins at Conception. We'll deal with that in my next installment, but here's a spoiler: as a devout reader of the Bible, I see it another way.

COMMENT AND CONCLUSION

In none of the cases cited, is there an instance in which a woman is aborting her child. In each of the cited cases, the termination of the pregnancy is violently imposed upon the woman. The author of this article obviously has a pro-abortion agenda, as well as being a combatant in the so called, "war on women." In my opinion (JWG) she has failed to make her case.

²⁰¹ Greek: ἐξέλθῃ the subjunctive, aorist active, 3rd person singular of the verb, ἐξέρχομαι, *to go out* or *to come out*; Hebrew: the qal waw consecutive, perfect 3rd person consecutive plural of the verb, **יֵצְאוּ** *to go out* or *to come out*