



.. God so loved the world...

CHRIST'S CHURCH

Written by **Carmen D. Hilliard** - Copyright 1989

Husbands,
love your
wives, just as Christ
loved the church and
gave himself for her to
make her holy,
cleansing her by the
washing of water
through the word, and
to present her to
himself as a radiant
church, without stain
or wrinkle or any other
blemish, but holy and
blameless.

Ephesians 5:25-27

I**N**TRODUCTION: There are thousands of churches in our world today. Each one is different, yet all claim to know and practice true religion. It is commonly believed by people around the world that God doesn't care which church a person chooses, what one believes or how one worships, so long as he accepts Christ as his Savior. Many people even go so far as to say that it doesn't matter **which God** you believe in. These ideas come from man, not God. From the beginning of man's existence on earth, he has continually tried to change God's plan and has never stopped trying to get his own way. What does God think about man's opinions? Does He give man a variety of religions, all different, and let us take our choice? Will God be understanding and allow everyone into heaven, regardless of what he believes? According to the Bible, the answer is **NO!** Man is hoping to cover up for his disobedience with ignorance of the truth. An honest person will admit that these ideas are not acceptable to God. A diligent student of the Bible will come to the realization that God condemns every form of division in the church. Why? Division in churches show that people have changed God's truth and are refusing to follow His original plans. Otherwise, there would be no differences in the names of churches. The teaching would be the same and all churches would believe alike. There is only one truth. Those who do not follow it will be denied by Christ.

Matthew 7:20-23, "Therefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not everyone who says unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my father who is in heaven. Many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and by your name cast out demons, and by your name do many mighty works? And then I will

profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity."

I. IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING CHURCH HISTORY:

By tracing back through Old Testament history, we learn that God promised to send His Son to earth for the purpose of establishing a kingdom which couldn't be destroyed, Daniel 2:44. The kingdom referred to in this prophesy is the New Testament church of Christ. God kept His promise. Jesus came to earth and died, took away the Old Law and instituted a new one. The New Law gave the world a pattern for His church. (Not many patterns for many churches.) God has always given us correct instruction and never granted us permission to change it for any reason. Through the centuries men have defied God, demanding the right to select the God of their choice and the method of worship. God's Word says, **"Keep my commandments. Don't add or subtract from them."** Church history is important. It teaches us what God's purpose was for the church in the first century. We must know **when** God promised to build it, **how** the church started, what pattern He used and how Christians were instructed to worship in the New Testament. Then, we will understand why Christ gave His life to build the kingdom called the church. His plan and design for the church was perfect-- it still is and doesn't need to be changed or **modernized**. Examples of church history teach us to follow the same instructions today that were commanded in the first century church. If we refuse, our actions are a direct disobedience to God, and we have no hope of being saved.

What does the term "saved by God" mean? When God saves a person, he is added to the kingdom of heaven by God and is called a member of Christ's

church. The word **church** is used to identify all the people that God **saved** from sin and Satan. The church is the saved of God. You must learn which church is following the correct pattern. **It is critical to know how to be saved.** If you are not a member of Christ's kingdom, you are not saved. Instead, you are separated from God and are a member of Satan's kingdom. The true church was established on this principle of salvation.

This lesson was written to help you conduct a personal examination to find out if **your church** is following Christ's design for His **true church**. When you have finished it, you will have Bible evidence to prove the truth. You will know if your church is a correct, New Testament church of Christ. I warn you in advance, this examination is hard to make. It will affect your emotions. Many of my students find it hard to be honest about what their church teaches. No one enjoys finding out their church is doing something that God doesn't like. But you **must want the truth** so much that you will be willing to do anything to get it. If a doctor found that you had a fatal disease, you would do everything in your power to cure it before you died, wouldn't you? It is much more important to cure a spiritual disease. Admit the truth about what your church is practicing. If it is wrong, don't deny it. Face it and deal with it. Make the changes needed in your life to obey God and be saved. Your life and worship to God must be as He commanded or He will not save you. (Work the Introduction and Section I of the answer sheets)

II IS SINCERITY ENOUGH TO SAVE A PERSON?

A common misconception in religion today is God saves **everyone who is sincere in what they believe**. It is not true! Some people are sincerely wrong because they have not searched for the truth. Everyone has a responsibility to learn God's truth and obey it. No one has a legitimate excuse for not knowing the truth. Why? The Bible was written to give us knowledge. If we don't seek to know what is correct and obey it, God will not allow us into His heaven. A person who is sincere in his desire to obey God will not want to believe a lie. One who blindly follows the teaching of a church without questioning its accuracy, is not completely sincere. He is masquerading as one who loves God's truth but really doesn't care about it. He prefers to follow a lie. That sounds like a harsh statement, but it is a fact. Many of my students think it is a sin to judge another person's religious acts. But the Lord plainly condemned the Pharisees and called them hypocrites for claiming to be sincere while they were finding excuses for disobeying the truth. Matthew 23:28, **"Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity"** Luke 6:46, **"Why call me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say?"** Jesus said, in John 14:15, **"If you love me, keep my commandments."**

How do we know if a person is truly sincere or is a

hypocrite? By his fruits! A sincere person will demand to know and obey only the truth. They are not afraid to search for it or admit it. Those truly dedicated to God's truth will not endanger their soul for a lie. Millions of people are led into error by blindly accepting the teachings of other people. They believe that God allows man to decide what is correct. Wrong! Take no one's word for it. Search the Scriptures and learn the truth for yourself. If you are not a sincere seeker, **you don't love the truth. Few people are willing to change** their belief and correct what is wrong. Instead, they want God to change **His** commands to agree with their desires. These people will not make an honest examination of their church. God's Word distinguishes between those who are sincere in their religion and those who are not. It tells us to recognize (judge) what they do, by inspecting their fruit (what they practice). For example: If a person is using a Jewish practice from the Old Law in worship, you will know his worship is incorrect. The truth in the Bible makes the judgment, not you. Truth is available to everyone but not everyone wants the truth. On the Day of Judgment, many people will think they are saved because they have been religious. But many will be rejected (not allowed into heaven) for not following the truth. Do you have a sincere desire to know the truth about the church? I hope you will allow the Bible to teach you what the true church is and that you will trust God by obeying what the Bible says. [Work Section II]

III GOD REVEALS HIS PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

The Old Testament prophesied that a King would come to rule over all nations of people and languages. His dominion would be everlasting. It would never be destroyed, Daniel 7:14; Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:27. The Jews awaited the coming of this great and wonderful king. They assumed He would reign from an earthly throne with great wealth, power and majesty. The Jews were wrong. The King, who would be the Deliverer and Savior, was a man without earthly wealth. He would never sit on an earthly throne. The kingdom that God was promising was not physical but a **spiritual kingdom**. It was not for the Jews alone but for all nations of people. The throne that He would rule from was in heaven at the right hand of God, not on earth. In Isaiah 53, God predicted that Christ would die for the sins of the world. He bought His kingdom with His blood. History tells us that most of the Jews rejected God's plan and refused to be saved by Christ. God allowed them to make the choice of rejecting His kingdom. He allows you to decide what to do with Christ's church. You can also reject it, but He will not save you . . . **if you do!**

To us, living in the twentieth century, it's unbelievable that the Jews could be so blind and ungrateful. We see their mistakes clearly, yet fail to see our own. The Jews had been God's chosen people for centuries. They were proud of their heritage, customs and traditions. And, the Jews thought they were better than the Gentiles. The temporary ordinances and regulations in the Old Testament, which God gave to the

Jews, were designed to train them in obedience. The Law of Moses was much like the combat training that soldiers receive before going to war with the enemy.

to carry out His mission. When He died, His New Law went into effect. At that time, Christ established His new kingdom, known as the church.]

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t was created to teach them how to obey.

God was preparing them for the spiritual battle of Christianity. God prophesied through Jeremiah (31:31-33) that He would make a new covenant (law) with them, but the Jews didn't want the Jewish Law to be changed. They loved their Jewish ways. Many of us react to change much like the Jews. We don't want to see the truth or obey God's commands. We want to select the religious practices that we enjoy doing and continue with our traditions. Changing churches is a big adjustment, and most people are not willing to do it. Many will sacrifice the truth to keep what feels best to them. We claim to be sincere in our religion, hoping God will accept our disobedience. Will God let us slip into heaven without noticing that we are not following His commands? **No!** God will never save those who disobey Him. His mercy only covers the sins of those who turn from disobedience. [Work Section III on the Worksheet]

IV PREPARING FOR THE NEW KINGDOM TO COME

In Isaiah 2:3, we are told the word of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem. Isaiah's prophecy was made between **695-745 years before** Christ came. It promised that the new kingdom would begin in Jerusalem and go out into the whole world from that city. God kept His promise. When the time was right, God chose John the Baptist to go before Jesus to tell the Jews of the coming kingdom, Matthew 3:1-2. John reminded the Jews of what the prophets had said about the Messiah. He pointed to Christ as being the One. Accepting Christ as the Messiah and Son of God meant the Jews had to make changes in what they believed. Mark 1:14-15, **"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.'**" John's part in preparing the people for Christ was important, but he died before the kingdom (church) was established. Christ's ministry lasted **three years**. He told the Jews, **"My kingdom is not of this world."** John 18:36. They were looking for an earthly king. His kingdom was never meant to be physical. The Jews refused to see the truth. Christ's kingdom is spiritual. They later learned that His reign would be from a throne in heaven.

[Some religions teach that Christ is coming back to rule from an earthly throne in Jerusalem. They teach that Christ was not able to establish His kingdom in the first century because He was rejected and killed. This is false teaching. It implies that Christ failed. It is an insult to Christ!!! If you believe in the power of God, then you know that He always keeps His promises. He promised to establish a kingdom and He did! Christ did not fail

During His ministry, Christ was getting ready for the coming kingdom. He chose (12) men called *apostles* to start His church. They were with Him on a daily basis. Carefully, He trained them for the special work that would be required of them after His death. It would be their task to take the gospel to all the world. In Matthew, Peter confessed his belief in Jesus as the Son of God. Christ made a promise based on Peter's confession, calling that confession a rock (meaning **that the foundation of the church is the Son of God**). Christ promised to build His church on that principle of truth. Satan's power would not be strong enough to destroy it. Matthew 16:18, **"And I say unto you, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."** Even though the apostles were with Christ all during His ministry, they didn't fully realize that the kingdom or church He spoke of wouldn't be established until **after** He died. The prophecies about Him were not completely fulfilled until after His death, burial and resurrection from the grave. After His resurrection from the grave, Christ appeared to the apostles to give them final instructions before ascending to His throne in heaven. While talking to them, He miraculously opened their minds so they could understand the church from its beginning. The role these men would play in history was most important.

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He placed the future of His kingdom, the church, in their hands. And charged them with the responsibility to teach what they had seen and heard from Him.

This qualified them to be apostles. No man can correctly claim to be an apostle today because no one can meet these qualifications. *[Note: Paul was the only apostle to be commissioned directly from the Lord after He had gone back to heaven.]*

Luke 24:44-49, "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you have been clothed with power from on high."

For a moment, put yourself in the apostles' place as they watched the Lord rise into heaven. He had told them to wait in the city to receive power from God. Many questions must have filled their minds. They were in a unique position that none of us can identify with today. Knowing they would suffer and die for the gospel, the task which lay ahead must have been frightening. They could have invented reasons to keep from obeying. Many of us do, when it's hard to obey. What if they had said, "One religion is just as good as another. Let's preach our own interpretation of the gospel. Christ won't mind what we preach, if we have a sincere heart." They didn't find phony reasons to change the truth. Christ had died so the world could know the truth. The apostles knew that no one can be saved by a lie. The truth is just as important to the church today as it was then. (Work Section IV)

V THE CHURCH WAS BORN

Christ's death canceled the Old Law of the Jews. The apostles had the responsibility of establishing a kingdom of believers, known as the church, and teaching them Christ's New Law. The gospel would go forth from Jerusalem into all the world. Christ sent the Holy Spirit as He had promised, to give the apostles the power and knowledge to teach the truth. Read how the church began in Acts 2. Several thousand Jews were gathered in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost for a special feast day. The apostles were given the ability to speak in 15 different languages, which they had not previously learned. This enabled them to teach in all the native tongues of the Jews, from every section of the country round about. They heard the first gospel sermon on that day, about the Son of God who came to earth, died, was buried and came forth out of the grave. In this sermon, they learned that Christ was the One of whom the prophets spoke. He was the long awaited Messiah, and they had killed Him. Out of the large number present that day, the hearts of three thousand souls were pierced by the message, and they committed their lives to Christ. The Lord saved them, and they were placed in His kingdom.



n that day, in the year 33 A.D., the church of Christ was born.

[Work Section V]

VI THE CHURCH WENT FROM JERUSALEM

The New Testament records the rapid growth of the church of Christ in Acts. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles as they taught the early Christians how to worship and what to practice in religion. Worship in the church of Christ was nothing like Jewish worship or the pagan religions of that day. It was done in spirit and truth. The first Christians,

taught by the apostles, converted others. Soon many churches of Christ were planted throughout the country. All of them used the same pattern of worship. The truth of Christ was delivered to the churches through miracles by the Holy Spirit, until the New Testament was finished, to take their place. The church is not a physical building. The word church means "called out." It refers to those who are separated from the world and given a new relationship with God. When we obey the gospel, we become members of Christ's true church, God's family. (**How to obey the gospel** will be covered in the next lesson.) Christians met together in homes, on the first day of the week, to worship and eat the Lord's Supper in memory of Christ. As the truth of Christianity spread in the first century, it became a threat to the governing powers of that day. Christians were tortured and killed in an attempt to turn their allegiance from Christ and stop Christianity. They faced cruel persecution. It caused many of them to deny Christ, but that didn't stop it. Before Christ died, He had told His disciples, "**Do not fear those who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,**" **Matthew 10:28.** (Work Section VI).

VII NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN OF THE CHURCH

As we examine the pattern of the New Testament church in the first century, compare your own church with it today. To be biblical, your church must teach the same things and worship in the same way. If your church is different, then it is not following the New Testament's blueprint, and you must make arrangements to correct the wrong in your life. Each church of Christ in the first century used the same blueprint. For a church to be Christ's true church today, it must fit that identical design or pattern. We learn what the pattern of the church was by studying what the apostles directed the early Christians to do. The New Testament tells us what Christians did in the first churches of Christ under the guidance of the apostles. **These examples act as commands from God and are the authority telling us what the church of Christ must do today.** In the New Testament, some Christians tried to make substitutes and change God's rules. Their actions were strongly rebuked. The apostles instructed the church to withdraw from them. This action kept the sin from contaminating the rest of the congregation. The church was commanded to hold tightly to the doctrine given to them by the apostles. To learn if your church matches the identity of the true church of Christ in the New Testament, we will examine the seven questions on the next page. By doing this, you can determine yourself if the church where you are a member fits the New Testament pattern:

1. Who is the founder and head of the church of Christ?

2. What name does the church of Christ wear?

3. What are the acts of worship in the church of Christ?

4. Who is authorized to govern church affairs?

5. What are the doctrinal teachings of the church of Christ?

6. How does one become a member of the church of Christ ?

7. What is the mission of the church of Christ?

(Work Section VII)

VIII THE FOUNDER AND HEAD OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The founder of a church is the person at the root of its beginning. He is the originator of laws practiced within the body of believers. He has the most powerful influence on the rest of the followers. The founder pays the purchase price of the church. He is honored by the members for his sacrifice and work. No one changes the founder's laws or receives his honor and glory. His word is the final authority for all that is done. The ideas and principles of the founder and head determine what is accepted and upheld by the rest of the church. When the founder dies, the identifying marks of his leadership stay with his followers as long as the group continues together. The group's reputation in the community is built on the doctrine practiced by its members. These identifying marks are true in every church existing today. The roots of your church can be traced back to the one who founded it and the date it began to teach its doctrine in the community. Who is the founder of your church? Who receives credit for its teaching? Is it a person, other than Christ? Is it a group of people, known for their brand of teaching? Such as: Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Catholic, etc. To be scriptural, the founder must not be someone **other than Christ**. The teaching must be what He taught through the apostles.

Most denominations have a central headquarters. It acts as a control center for all the other churches of its kind and functions as the head of that church. The headquarters determine the laws the church will follow. There is usually a president who has the final authority to make all decisions. Preachers are

hired, fired and transferred through the headquarters. The spiritual oversight of each church is controlled by people in the headquarters who do not know them personally. Contributions from the individual members are used to pay their salary. The headquarters has a manual or creed book. It is used to instill unity among the believers. But few of the individual members of these churches ever see the manual or have a copy of it.

The church of Christ was not governed by a headquarters. If you are a member of a denomination, look at what the Bible teaches on this matter. Jesus is the only founder and head of the true church, Colossians 1:18. He purchased only one church with His blood. It belongs to Him, Ephesians 5:23-27. His church is not a denomination of the truth. *The word "denomination" means to be divided into parts.* Christ's church must teach the whole truth, not part of it. It cannot be divided into many parts or teach different doctrines and still remain the one true church. The church of Christ in the first century was located in many different cities, but the teaching was always the same in each church. Denominational churches teach doctrines that are not alike. Christ's church can have many locations but **not many different teachings**. All the honor of establishing the church belongs to Christ. His church began in the first century, 33 A.D., shortly after His death. The teaching must be the same today as it was then. Christ's church is the kingdom that He delivered (saved) from Satan's power, Colossians 1:13. He rules over His kingdom from a throne in heaven at the right hand of God, not from a central headquarters located on earth, Hebrews 1:3-8; Heb. 8:1-2. God's Word is the only source of truth in the church of Christ; the only creed; the final authority in matters of doctrine. Humans can be wrong, but the Bible never is. (Work Section VIII).

IX WHAT NAME SHOULD THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST WEAR?

The name of a church identifies the **brand** of doctrine taught by the people and gives honor to the founder. A name can tell what the group stands for. Examples: **Pentecostals** are known for their belief in the spiritual gifts which were given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. They promote "tongue-speaking" and healings. One cannot be a true believer in their doctrine until he accepts the idea that miracles are continuing to happen today. **Jehovah's Witnesses** are known for going from door to door giving testimonies of their belief. They prefer to use the name Jehovah instead of God. **Baptists** are known for following John the Baptist's example of baptizing in water, and yet their doctrine states that baptism is not a part of

salvation. **Muslims** believe that Allah is God. Their religion is also called Mohammedanism because of its founder **Mohammed**. Names have always been a major source of identification in all legal transactions. Your last name identifies you as a member of your family. It brings honor to the lineage of your family. It can be a costly mistake to confuse a name on legal contracts in business, on birth certificates, in the reading of a will, with the sentencing or an acquittal in a court of law.

Everyone recognizes the importance of proper names of identification. Yet, most people think it is non-essential when identifying the true church of Christ. It is difficult for me to understand why people say their church is Christ's, yet call it something else or give it someone else's name. Christ's church cannot wear another's name and teach a different doctrine and still be His church. Romans 16:16 gives us the name used by the churches in the first century to identify themselves in the community. The name told who they followed and whose doctrine they taught. The whole history of the church was wrapped up in the name they wore. The same is true with churches today. It is also true with each individual person's name. No one wants to be called a name that is not his.

Churches have different names to point out the differences between them. The church of Christ wore Christ's name to point to Him as the source of ownership and honor. Christ purchased the church with His blood. He is the only founder, owner, and head of it. He deserves for His church to wear His name. We know how important names are in identification. If you inherited a large sum of money, would it matter to you if someone else's name was on the check? Why? Because another person would get what is rightfully yours. The same is true with the name of Christ's church. The name **Atheist** denotes a person who rejects God. I do not want to be called an atheist. The name Christian denotes a person who accepts Christ and has obeyed His gospel. Christ's followers are called Christians, Acts 11:26. It is very important for the true church to identify itself with Christ in every way by the name it wears. (Work Section IX)

X THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUE WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

Through the centuries, man has added things to worship that God did not authorize. Man has also subtracted some very important things which the Lord commanded. God has a purpose in mind for everything He tells us to do when we assemble together to worship Him. It should be done according to His directions. Today's modern churches have lost sight of God's authority. Most churches cater to the desires of the people, not God. These

churches worship God in ways they enjoy, instead of giving God the kind of worship He asks for, so they do not truly worship God. God is given the crumbs and expected to be happy with them. Churches began to change things while the apostles were still alive in the first century. Paul warned the churches in all his letters that people would come in among them to deceive and pull them away from the truth. Error gradually came into many churches. The first seeds of false teaching were easier to spot then. Christians fought to preserve true Christianity. Nineteen centuries have passed now, and religion has been divided into hundreds of churches. All are different, and yet all claim to practice the truth. The truth is not important to many people. Most of us want to be comfortable in religion, doing things our own way, not worrying about who needs to be saved. Religious traditions have evolved over the years in many churches and are regarded as holy acts of worship. Very few people check the Scriptures to see if their traditions and doctrines are correct or false. They like the idea of having many religions to choose from. It allows man to change the rules, keep his own opinions, and tailor his religion to his own individual desires.

Man wants to believe that God will approve of all the differences and divisions in the churches. **But God does not!** Do you want to know how God feels about the changes man has made in His original plans? Read the warning He gave to the Jews about adding and subtracting to His Word, Deuteronomy 4:2. After God abolished the Old Testament Law of the Jews, Christ issued a New Law, and God gave the same warning for Christians, Revelation 22:18-19. This warning applies to you and me today. Does God approve of dividing the church? **No!** Does He care what you believe? Yes! Will He be understanding and overlook the Laws of truth that we willfully break? **No!** He sees our disobedience and will not allow us into His heaven if we do not obey His will. Do you want to know if your worship is acceptable to God? If you do, compare your church with the examples of worship in this lesson. What Christians did in the New Testament is what you must do in worship today. When you find something wrong, change it. (Work Section X)

XI CHRISTIANS MET EVERY SUNDAY.

Acts 20:7, **"And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them...."** This scripture tells us the New Testament church met on the first day of every week. Jews observed the sabbath (Saturday), but Christ's death took that Old Law out of the way. New Testament Christians met on Sunday because it was the day that Christ was

resurrected from the grave.

In the Old Law, a priest wore special clothing to set him apart from the rest of the people. Under the New Law of Christ, there is no distinction of clothing made among Christians. Christians are called a royal priesthood, a holy nation of God's own people, 1 Peter 2:9. **All Christians are priests.**

Acts of Worship in the first century church of Christ:

- **Breaking of Bread (Memorial Supper of Christ's death)**
- **Prayer**
- **Singing (vocal only)**
- **Preaching and teaching**
- **Giving**

Worship in the first churches of Christ was conducted according to the apostles' direction. The apostles received instructions from Christ. Christians were told not to forsake assembling together in worship, Hebrews 10:25. Assembling together kept their faith and hope in Christ alive. It is just as vital for us today to meet together with other Christians and encourage each other as we worship our God. Early Christians were commanded to worship in spirit and truth, John 4:24. (*Meaning that it must be done correctly from the heart.*) Keep in mind, as we look at what they did, that Christ never changed the instructions given to the apostles. We must worship Him today as the first Christians did in the New Testament and stay in the apostles' teaching as they did, Acts 2:42. The only difference in what we do today and what they did then, is the absence of spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts were taken away by God before the close of the first century. Today we acquire knowledge and teach the truth by using the completed knowledge of the Bible, not miracles. (Work XI)

XII THE LORD'S SUPPER

Acts 20:7 also tells us that New Testament Christians took the Lord's Supper. The term "breaking bread" describes how they communed with Christ and other Christians in the memorial service by eating the Lord's Supper. This was the main reason why they met together. Memorials are instituted to help people remember a loved one or event that is very important in their lives. God instituted many memorials in the Old Testament. For example: The Passover was a day when the Jews remembered their deliverance out of bondage. The rainbow is one we still have today. It is a reminder of God's promise that He will never flood the earth again. Christ instituted his own memorial in Matthew 26:28. He knew that He was about to face death on the cross when He told them, "**This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.**" He commanded His disciples to "**Do this in remembrance of me,**" Luke 22:14-21. In Acts 2:42 we read that Christians "**...continued faithfully in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayer**". The first century church of

Christ always remembered the Savior who died to take away their sins, just as He had requested.

They knew the importance of obeying the commands He handed down to them through the apostles.

In the Lord's Supper, Christians used bread (without yeast) to represent Christ's body on the cross. When they broke it and ate, it reminded them of the life He gave for them. To symbolize Christ's blood shed for their sins, they used the unfermented juice from grapes. When they ate of the bread and drank the juice, they communed with Christ's body and blood, remembering His love and sacrifice on the cross for them. Christians today are under the same New Testament commands that first century Christians followed. In the twentieth century, can we neglect to remember our Savior, who died for our sins? **No!** We are commanded to remember Him.

Today, few churches honor Christ as He commanded, by eating the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. In some churches, it is not done at all. Some observe it yearly, while others do quarterly. Why? I have heard it said that having the Lord's Supper every week gets old and loses its meaning if it is done that often. This is only an excuse to disobey. If your church does not honor Christ as He asked to be remembered, by observing the memorial of His death, burial and resurrection, it is disobeying plain biblical teaching given by Christ. The church at Corinth was warned of the consequences of taking the Lord's Supper incorrectly, 1 Corinthians 11:20-29. (Ask your teacher for further study on the Lord's Supper.) **Churches that do not honor Christ by observing His memorial service every first day of the week, are not true churches of Christ.** (Work Section XII)

XIII PRAYER

Under the Law of Moses, a priest offered up prayers for the people and made the animal sacrifices to God on their behalf. Requirements are different in the New Testament Law of Christ. Each Christian is allowed to approach the throne of God in prayer for himself. The priest's function in the Old Law has been abolished, and now each Christian is a priest. Some churches continue to practice the priesthood laws of the Old Testament, but it is not scriptural to do so. Christ's sacrifice on the cross removed that Law, and it must not be used today as a model of worship. Christians in the first century church did not use prayer **beads** to count prayers. **Christ instructed in Matthew 6:7, not to use empty** repetitions in prayer. They did not form **statues** of Christ, Mary or the apostles to bow down before in prayer. There is also no mention of using **holy water** to bless others or wearing **crosses** around the neck to symbolize their Christianity. These are rituals developed by men, to please humans, but are

not acts authorized by Christ. A Christian can go to God, asking to be blessed and forgiven of his sins. No man has the power to take away the sins of another, as some churches teach. Confessionals, where the members confess their sins to the priest, are not found in the New Testament.

We do not need a priest to intercede for us with God. Christ does that for us. A priest who does so, places himself in the role of Christ.

It is a direct insult to biblical teaching. The entire book of Hebrews teaches us that Christ is our only high priest, Heb. 4:14-16; our mediator, Heb. 8:6; He lives to make intercession for us, Heb. 7:25. These things cannot be done by any man under the New Law of Christ.

To justify what they practice, many religions go back into the Old Testament. They select Scriptures which tell of Jewish worship under the Law of Moses to prove that God likes what they do. This is a mistake. The Old Testament Law does not apply to Christians. It was given only to the Jews, and God no longer wants us to use it. When Christ died on the cross, He abolished the Old Law. We cannot use it as a guide for correct worship today. Doing so, contradicts the New Law. Christ's death replaced the Old in the New Testament. **The prayers of Christians** were directed to God through Christ and were always offered in His name. When the church assembled together, dedicated men lifted their voices to God in public prayer on behalf of the entire assembly, as each Christian joined together in worship with their heart, 1 Timothy 2:8. Only one person spoke aloud, never a mass of people praying at the same time. (Work Section XIII)

XIV SINGING

The music of New Testament Christians in worship was drastically different from the music of the Jews in the Old Testament. When Christianity first began, God could have asked for the same kind of music the Jews used, but He did not. Instead, we find examples of Christians encouraging and teaching each other through the singing of hymns. They sang praises to God using only the fruit of their lips and the sincere spirit of their hearts, Colossians 3:16-17. For more than seven centuries, musical instruments were **not used** in the New Testament church of Christ. The apostles did not authorize Christians to use them. Most historians agree that Pope Vitalian I put the organ into church worship about 666-670 A.D. Though it was bitterly fought against for centuries, it was finally accepted by many churches. Today, most churches have added instruments to their worship. Scriptures that are used to support it are taken from the Old Law of Moses and do not apply to Christians. Musical instruments should not be added to the worship. Using them makes a clear statement to Christ that you don't care what He has commanded. Instead, you will use

what sounds best to you. *(Please study the enclosed material on Musical Instruments in Worship. It will give you more facts about this important issue of New Testament Christianity).* (Work Sec XIV)

XV PREACHING AND TEACHING

In the first century church of Christ, preaching was done by standing in the midst of the assembly to proclaim Christ's truth. At that time, Christians did not have the completed New Testament, but they did have ways of testing the accuracy of what was being preached.

Some churches had letters written to them by the apostles. These were studied and read to the whole church. The same letters later became part of the completed Bible.

Some of the Christians were given spiritual gifts so they could teach God's truth to the rest of the church. With the help of spiritual gifts, **knowledge of the truth was permanently recorded in the New Testament.** At that time, spiritual gifts were needed to preach the truth in the congregations until the New Testament could be written. After copies of the Bible were made and circulated among the people, miraculous gifts were no longer needed. **The completed Bible replaced the need for miraculous gifts because it put all knowledge in one place.** Gifts of the Spirit faded away and are not needed today to teach God's truth. Many churches today believe in miracles, but they do so incorrectly because the Bible says gifts were done away with when the perfect (completed Bible) came. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.

Preaching and teaching the truth of God has always been a major part of worship services. Paul told the young preacher, Timothy, to preach the truth constantly, 2 Tim. 4:1-4. Teaching in the assembly was necessary to keep false teachers from coming in and making changes. **A preacher had no authority over the congregation.** He was commissioned to preach the whole truth, leaving nothing out. Christians today should not let the preacher control what the congregation does or believes. They must keep a watchful eye and test what is preached, in case he strays from the truth and teaches error. It is easy to see that this has happened in the past by the existence of many different religions that have sprung into being over the past (19) centuries. (Work Section XV)

XVI GIVING

In the Old Testament Law of Moses, the Jews were commanded to give a tenth of everything they had, even down to the spices in the kitchen cabinet. The New Testament Law of Christ does not state an amount or percent to give to the Lord. In 2 Corinthians 9:7, Christians were **instructed to give cheerfully, not grudgingly.** 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 tells us that Christians were told to contribute as they had been **prospered** and to take a collection of the saints on the

first day of every week. There are indications that first century Christians gave sacrificially to spread the gospel and to meet the needs of the poor. Many sold their houses, land and other belongings to contribute to the advancement of the church, Acts 2:44-45. How we give today, shows the kind of love we have for God. Thinking of what Christ gave for us, our hearts should be moved to give liberally. (Work Section XVI)

XVII WHO IS AUTHORIZED TO GOVERN CHURCH AFFAIRS?

When the church first began, the Holy Spirit taught the apostles, guiding them in all the truth of God's commands. They handled all the affairs of the church at first, teaching and admonishing new Christians, Acts 2:42-43. The church multiplied and spread to other cities. When a church was established, the members appointed from among their number, a group of mature men, strong in the faith, to oversee the congregation's problems and protect the flock of believers.

QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

Acts 14:23. And when they had appointed elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. Churches of Christ in the first century were not under the guidance of a synod or council which ruled over several churches. **Each congregation was independently governed by its own group of elders.** This was a good plan because it kept individual problems or errors from spreading to the other churches and pulling them down. The members of each congregation were told to obey the elders as they watched over the church, Hebrews 13:17. Elders were called overseers, shepherds, pastors and bishops. They guarded the welfare of each member and were held accountable to God for each soul. If a person was overtaken in a sin, the elders went to restore him by lovingly bringing him home to the truth. If he refused to stop the sin, the elders were instructed to withdraw from him to keep the sin from contaminating the rest of the church. (1 Corinthians 5:7, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15) This may appear to be harsh treatment; but God in His wisdom knows the power of sin. If sin is left alone, it will multiply and infect the rest of the body. Therefore, it must be erased to keep it from spreading.

An elder had to meet certain qualifications before he was appointed to safeguard the souls of the church. He must have only one wife. (Multiple wives were a sin for any member of the church and still are today.) All elders were men, **never women**. The elder was one who did not drink alcohol or have a bad temper; he could not be quarrelsome or greedy for money. He did not lord his position as elder over the rest of the church. He was able to teach others the gospel. He must have a good character, a good reputation in the community, was easy to talk to and ready to listen to the members. He had control of his family. He must not be a new convert but a mature man in the faith. **There was always more than one elder.** This insured a

check and balance system that kept the truth from being over-ruled by opinion. Study these Scriptures to see if the elders of your church meet the qualifications, 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4. Elders today must meet the same qualifications as were required in the first century.

QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

In each congregation, the church appointed men known as deacons. These men had to meet certain qualifications. A deacon must have one wife and be in control of his family. The deacon's work was to do special tasks delegated to them by the elders, 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They had no rule or authority **over the other members. These men were known as special servants of the congregation.** (Work Section XVII)

XVIII WHAT ARE THE DOCTRINAL TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH?

The word "doctrine" is used to refer to principles of truth; the *unchangeable* facts and rules of faith. Christianity is rooted in doctrine by the evidences that Christ provided when He came here and lived among men. Doctrine was established by Christ. It doesn't change with the times as men have suggested. The truth does not vary from church to church, as men want to believe. Doctrinal truth cannot be individually interpreted. The rules of Christ's New Law are grounded in God's Word. They are *unshakable*. There is only one doctrinal rule book for Christianity. The Bible does not support the idea of multiple religions.

There is only one truth, one faith, one church, one God and Father, Ephesians 4:4-6.

God has only one plan to save man, and He expects us all to follow the same guide (the Bible) to learn the truth of this doctrine. Christians must be united in teaching and practice. If we are not all united, we are not following God's plan, 1 Corinthians 1:10. **Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfected together in the same mind and the same judgment.** The true church of Christ teaches the doctrine found in the Bible, not those created by men. *Much of what is taught and practiced in the religious world is a combination of the Old Law of Moses mixed with the New Law of Christ, and man's desires and traditions. This mixture of teaching is not permitted by God in the New Testament.* Biblical doctrine is not contained in creed books, which were written by men to force the members to conform to man's ideas. True Bible doctrine comes from the mind of God. Most churches have a manual developed by the leaders of their denomination. It tells the members what to believe. This is their creed book. The true church of Christ uses **only the Bible** as the standard of truth. In the church of Christ, there is no Pope, synod, council, society of leaders, or headquarters to control

the people.

The Bible is the final word on all doctrinal matters.

Doctrine (rules of faith) is in the Bible to help us understand sin and conquer it. If the doctrine in our church is not correct, we can die in sin and lose our souls in hell. Nothing would please Satan more! Investigate the background of your church doctrine. Learn who has the power to establish the rules for your church. Do you know all the doctrine taught in your church? Do you agree with what is taught? Are you a member because of family or friends? If you care about the truth, you will not be content until you are a member of the true church of Christ found in the New Testament. (Work Section XVIII)

XIX HOW DO YOU BECOME A MEMBER OF THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

The lesson following this one is entitled "**God's Salvation**". It gives all the information on how to obey the gospel and be saved. A person becomes a member of the true church of Christ when he obeys the gospel. Have you obeyed the gospel? Do you know how? Now is the time to be completely honest with yourself about being saved. No one can take care of your salvation for you. Millions of parents have taken their infant babies to be sprinkled, thinking that it saved them for **all eternity**. **This ritual is not in the New Testament. It is not** the way to become a member of the true church of Christ. People become members of God's family, the church, through baptism into Christ, Galatians 3:27. (Work Sec.XIX)

XX WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

In the first century, the church's mission was to spread the word to as many people as possible, teaching them how to obey the gospel. Most people are not interested in learning about it. They don't want to be bothered. But there have always been a precious few who will listen to the truth and **obey God. Christ said to go into the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you, Matthew 28:19-20.** We cannot accept the gospel of Christ without accepting His church as He established it. We don't want to think anyone is wrong or going to hell. We find it hard because we don't want to judge other people's religion. But hell is so horrible! We must have the courage to warn others to obey the truth, because obeying a lie will send them to hell for all eternity.

The blueprint for Christ's church is clearly seen in the

examples of how the church worshiped, what they taught, and the name they wore.

Do you want to know if your church is the true church of Christ? **Examine these things with an honest heart and open mind.**

(Work Section XX)