

## ECCLESIOLOGY (Doctrine of the Church)

When one examines the biblical record there is absolutely no doubt that there is a special entity which is called the Church. There are specific books of the Bible that feature clear revelation and information pertaining to this special entity. Yet, for the most part this information is neglected and, as a result, the doctrine of the Church, Ecclesiology, is rarely, if ever, taught. If all people, who claim to be right with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, would prayerfully and carefully study this doctrine and then determine to obey what God's Word says concerning this doctrine, denominations would disappear, church problems would be resolved God's way and the Church would become the powerfully blessed life-force that God intended it to become. However, when one studies the doctrine of Ecclesiology, one soon realizes this has not happened in the past and isn't likely to happen in the present. It is, however, our desire to become the Church God wants us to become. We are not interested in becoming the Church the community wants us to become or a congregation wants us to become, we are interested in becoming the Church God wants us to become. Therefore, the study of the doctrine of the Church is absolutely imperative.

**QUESTION #1** – What does the word “Church” mean?

The most common Greek word which is translated in the N.T. by the English word “church” is the word “Ekklesia” (Εκκλησία), from which we get the title of this doctrinal study, Ecclesiology. Ekklesia appears 114 times in the New Testament—only three times in the gospels for a very good and explainable reason (Matt. 16:18; 18:17 - twice), and 111 times in the Epistles. This is an important observation to make because our doctrine of the Church will not be found in the gospels; it will be found in the Epistles.

The Greek word “Ekklesia” is a word derived from two Greek words: “Ek” which means out from; “kaleo” which means to call. When these two words are combined in composition, they obviously mean “to call out.”

Now what may be immediately observed is that there appears to be no resemblance between the English word “church” and the Greek word “ekklesia.” For example, when we study the doctrine of angels, we see that the Greek word “angelos” is in close proximity to our English word “angel.” But such is certainly not the case when we compare our English word “church” with the Greek word “ekklesia.”

Our English word “church” is related to the Scottish word “kirk” and to the German word “kirche.” This particular word is derived from the Greek word “kyriakon” which means “belonging to the Lord.” Although this particular word is **never** used in the New Testament for “church,” this word has become an accepted substitute in some languages. Actually, if one combined the actual meanings of the words “ekklesia” and “kyriakon”—“a called out people belonging to the Lord,” one certainly would be close to a true understanding.

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As with other Greek words which are not precisely transliterated (God in English; Theos in Greek), the transliteration of the original word is not so important, but the meaning of the word is very important. The true meaning of the word “church” is to call out.

**QUESTION #2** – How important is the Church to God?

Any who think lightly or act irreverently concerning the Church or any who think highly or reverently concerning the Church need to realize that the Church is of utmost importance to God.

1. Jesus Christ specifically promised that He would build His Church. Matt. 16:18
2. God purchased the Church with His own blood. Acts 20:28
3. God specifically and Personally gave increase to His Church. Acts 2:47
4. God identifies the Church as God’s Church. I Cor. 1:2
5. God has specifically promised to destroy one who destroys His property, which is written in the context of an address to a church. I Cor. 3:17
6. God has appointed and given special gifts to His Church. I Cor. 12:28
7. God’s threefold classification of humanity includes a special classification called the Church. I Cor. 10:32
8. God specifically manifests His wisdom to and in and through the Church. Eph. 3:10
9. Jesus Christ specifically loves the Church. Eph. 5:25
10. Jesus Christ specifically sacrificed Himself for the Church. Eph. 5:25
11. Jesus Christ specifically nourishes and cherishes the Church. Eph. 5:29
12. God demands and expects specific behavior and conduct in His Church. I Tim. 3:15
13. God demands that His Church be the pillar and support of His truth. I Tim. 3:15
14. God gave specific written revelation to and for His Church.

For example, the Apostle Paul writes specific letters to seven different churches—Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians. Jesus Christ gives specific information to seven different churches—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

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It is very evident from just these passages alone that the Church is extremely important to God. Those who live consistently with God's Word will be intensely interested in, involved with and dedicated to the Church.

**QUESTION #3** – Who is the apostle that is so important to the doctrine of the Church?

The apostle that absolutely must be considered when forming a doctrine of the Church is the Apostle Paul. It is Pauline revelation that is so often neglected concerning this doctrine and yet it is Pauline revelation that becomes the basis for this doctrine.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer observed: “The all but universal disregard on the part of theologians for the Pauline revelation respecting the Church has wrought confusion and damage to an immeasurable degree. ...No theology would be complete...that did not exalt the first Pauline revelation of the gospel” (Vol. 4, pp. 36-37).

**QUESTION #4** – What were two unmistakable revelations that God gave specifically to Paul?

When one carefully studies the Bible in reference to the Church, it becomes very clear that Paul was a very special agent of God who was given special revelation from God. In fact, he called the Gospel “my gospel” (i.e. Romans 2:16). Pertaining to this doctrine, there are two key revelations given to Paul, which become an important foundation:

**Revelation #1** - God revealed to Paul His Gospel –through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, both Jew and Gentile may enter into a perfect and eternal state of salvation based on the sole condition of faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). Paul was so intent on communicating this Gospel that he gave specific warning to anyone who did not present it accurately (Gal. 1:8-9).

**Revelation #2** - God revealed to Paul His purpose –the purpose for this Gentile Age is given by Paul in Eph. 3:1-7. Dr. C. I. Scofield gives us profound insight here when he writes: “That Gentiles were to be saved was no mystery (Rom. 9:24-33; 10:19-21). The mystery ‘hidden in God’ was the divine purpose to make of Jew and Gentile a wholly new thing –‘the church, which is His body,’ formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:12-13) and in which earthly distinction of Jew and Gentile disappears (Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 3:10-11). The revelation of this ‘mystery’ of the Church was foretold but not explained by Christ (Matt. 16:18). The details concerning the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the Church were committed to Paul and his fellow ‘apostles and prophets’ by the Spirit (Eph. 3:5)” (C. I. Scofield, note #7, Eph. 3:6).

Those who do not grasp “sound” doctrine pertaining to the Church are those who do not consider these two important revelations specifically given to the Apostle Paul.

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**QUESTION #5** – What is God’s threefold classification of humanity in this age?

We must remember when we read the Bible that the Bible is God’s **one** and **only** Book! In this one and only book He reveals facts about eternity and time, heaven and hell and earth, facts pertaining to Himself and to all of His creation. When we read the Bible, we soon realize that God gives classification to and information concerning the origin, present status and destiny of three groups of people; 1) Jews ; 2) Gentiles ; 3) Church/Christian (i.e. I Cor. 10:31).

Each group has specific revelation and information that is specifically given by God pertaining to that group. We may define these groups the following way;

- 1) Jew – Those who are physically related to Abraham.
- 2) Gentile – Those who are not physically related to Abraham, but have their racial stock and origin in Adam, who is their federal head.
- 3) Christian – Those who are spiritually related to God by faith in Jesus Christ, either Jew or Gentile.

**QUESTION #6** – When it comes to the Church, what are the two Pauline aspects he reveals?

**Aspect #1** - Paul reveals the Church to be a living organism. I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:25-32

When the Church as a living organism of God is referred to, it is sometimes called the Church Universal or the Church Invisible. The Church as a living organism or the Church universal refers to all who have truly trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and are indwelt by the living Spirit of God and have been made alive unto God. Floyd Barackman observes: “The true universal church is that company of people who have been saved and joined by the Holy Spirit’s baptism to Christ and to one another in Him to form a body of which He is the head and life” (Floyd Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology*, p. 373).

Dr. Paul Enns gives us valuable insight into this Pauline aspect of the Church: “...the universal church views ‘all those who, in this age, have been born of the Spirit of God and have by that same Spirit been baptized into the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13; I Pet. 1:3, 22-25).’ It was this corporate group of believers that Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18); it was this Body for whom Christ died (Eph. 5:25), and He is the head over it, giving it direction (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). In Ephesians 1:23 the Church is referred to as ‘His body.’ This cannot refer to a local assembly but must depict instead the universal body of believers (cf. Col. 1:18). **A particular emphasis of the universal church is its unity, whether Jews or Gentiles, all together compose one body, in a unity produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 4:4).** The universal church is sometimes referred to as the invisible church and the local church as the visible church (although some deny this equation). Men like Augustine, Luther and Calvin all taught this distinction, which upheld the invisible church as emphasizing the perfect, true, spiritual nature of the church, whereas the visible church recognized the local assembly of believers with its imperfections and even unbelievers having membership in a local church. The term invisible is also used to indicate that its exact membership cannot be known” (Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 348).

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**Aspect #2** - Paul reveals the Church to be a local organization. Rom. 16:1

This is a very important concept to Paul and this is the church known as the Church local or the Church visible. In fact, the most common use of the word church in the New Testament is in regard to the Church as a local organization.

A local church is one in which people, who profess to be saved, gather together to meet, being in general agreement with doctrine, policy, practice and organization. A local assembly or local congregation is a very important biblical concept as there were local churches in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1; 11:22); in Asia Minor (Acts 16:5); in Rome (Rom. 16:5); in Corinth (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1); in Galatia (Gal. 1:2); in Ephesus; in Philippi; in Thessalonica. The early believers did not initially have special buildings to meet in called church, but met in homes (Rom. 16:5; Philemon 1:2).

**The central difference between the Universal Church and the Local Church is that of membership. In the Universal Church of God, all members are saved. In the Local Church of God, all members profess to be saved, but this may or may not be reality.**

Both of these theological aspects of the Church are extremely important to our understanding of the doctrine of Ecclesiology. Now when it comes to the subject of the local church there are different categories of local churches which exist in an area:

- 1) There are many visible churches which are local and denominational. These are churches linked to a specific denominational dogma which often times contradicts the Bible. Usually this group will choose belief of denomination rather than revelation of God.
- 2) There are many visible churches which are local and heretical. These are churches dedicated to presenting things and propagating ideas that are not biblical, which adds, subtracts or invents its own religious thought.
- 3) There are some visible churches which are local and fundamental. These are churches which adhere to certain fundamental doctrinal truths such as salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ, Jesus is God, and the Bible is the Word of God.
- 4) There are some visible churches which are local and biblical. These are churches intent upon understanding God's Word and making application of it in every possible way pertaining to church life.

Both the Church Universal and the Church Local demand high regard by God's people. Since both are revealed by God and important to God, they should both be revered by God's people.

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**QUESTION #7** – What are the unique features and distinctions of the universal/invisible Church?

Distinction #1 - The universal Church is distinct from Israel. I Cor. 10:32

Distinction #2 - The universal Church is distinct from redeemed Gentiles. Matt. 25:31-34

Distinction #3 - The universal Church is distinct from Christ's Kingdom. Rev. 20:4

Distinction #4 - All who are in the universal Church are saved. I Cor. 12:13

Distinction #5 - All who are in the universal Church form Christ's body. I Cor. 12:13, 27

Distinction #6 - All who are in the universal Church are Christ's bride. Eph. 5:23; II Cor. 11:2

These are important distinctions to keep in mind concerning the universal or invisible Church.

**QUESTION #8** – In systematizing a study of Ecclesiology, what are three areas that must be considered?

Consideration #1 - The Church as an organism.

Consideration #2 - The Church as an organization.

Consideration #3 - The believers rule of life as it relates to the Church.

**QUESTION #9** – When did the Church begin?

This question is extremely important. When we ask this question, we are basically asking when the Church Age began. The beginning of each local church is a matter of specific history in that location and will be unique in its time and location. At some point in time, the whole group of believers would be classified differently by God so they could be a church. This question attempts to answer that question. Another way to understand it would be when did the age of the Church begin, so people who believed on Christ were classified as being part of Christ's body?

1) There are some who believe the Church existed in the Old Testament.

There is absolutely no biblical support for such a position and, in fact, there is specific New Testament revelation that makes it clear that "other generations" knew nothing about the Church Age of Grace (i.e. Eph. 3:5).

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2) There are some who believe the Church existed at the time of Christ.

Those who hold this position typically do so on the basis of Matthew 16:18 in which Jesus declared, "I will build My church." However, what is so often overlooked is that Christ was speaking futuristic. The verb "I will build" is future tense. Dr. Paul Enns appropriately observes:

"'I will build my church' indicates the building of the church was future. This point is important. It emphasizes that the church was not yet in existence when Jesus spoke these words. He was making a prediction concerning His future building of the church" (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, pp. 348-349).

3) There are many who believe that the Church began at Pentecost in Acts 2.

This conclusion is the one we believe to be correct and it is formed on that basis of the following biblical data:

- 1) I Cor. 12:13 - This text identifies the manner in which the Church is being built by the Holy Spirit baptizing believers into one body of Christ.
- 2) Eph. 1:22-23 - This text identifies the Church as being the body of Christ, which is contextually identified as being the Church.
- 3) Acts 1:5 - This text clearly presents the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit as being futuristic. Obviously when Jesus Christ made this statement this event had not yet occurred.
- 4) Acts 2:1-4 - This text introduces us to a new moment in the program of God which features the Holy Spirit.
- 5) Acts 11:15-16 - The Apostle Peter identifies Acts 2:1-4 as being the "beginning" of the event known as Spirit baptism. This is clearly in a context of a program which featured Gentiles (11:18).

Our conclusion is the Church began at Pentecost in Acts 2. This is the biblical beginning of the era we know as the Church Age. Although various local churches would spring up in the aftermath of Acts 2, the potential for them to spring up begins at Acts 2.

**QUESTION #10** – What constitutes a local church?

Here is perhaps one of the most perplexing questions of Ecclesiology. For example, would two or three people meeting in a house, who claimed to be believers, constitute a church by God's classification? The issue is further complicated by the fact that we have so many churches which identify themselves as being a church. The question is are they a church? What is it **in the mind of God** that makes a church a church?

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From a purely secular perspective, a local church is nothing more than a building set aside for services and meetings. Webster defines church: “a building for Christian worship, a service held in it, baptized Christian men and women, a body of Christians, ecclesiastical government” (*The New Lexicon Webster’s Dictionary*, p. 177).

From a purely biblical perspective, however, a local church contains elements of definition which are very different from the viewpoint of the secular world and even from most in religious thinking. There are at least eight biblical matters of consideration necessary when thinking through the local church:

**Local Church Matter #1** - A local church, biblically speaking, **is not** determined by a building.

Although we do not base our local church polity on the book of Acts, we can observe that as the Church began, it sometimes met in the Temple (Acts 2:46-47), in homes (Acts 18:7-11; I Cor. 16:19) and sometimes it met in a field (Acts 16:13). During the infant days of the Church, people met wherever it was possible as there were no church buildings. Even today church planters often begin by meeting in a home or other location (i.e. motel, school, etc.). D. L. Moody first began his work in Chicago by meeting in a bar. When this kind of thing happens, the believers who meet are no more or less a church because they do not have a building.

**Local Church Matter #2** - A local church, biblically speaking, **is not** determined by spirituality.

This may seem surprising but it is also biblically true. There is no doubt that spiritual development and spiritual maturity in holiness are **the** main objectives of the church; however, the Bible reveals that a local church can be very unspiritual (Eph. 2:20-21; 5:25-27). Two churches in Scripture which clearly reveal this are Corinth and Laodicea. Both were classified by God’s Word as being a church and yet both lacked true spirituality (I Cor. 1:2; 3:1-3; Rev. 1:11; 3:14, 16).

Just because a local church has a building and has many people attending the services does not make it a spiritual church. The truth is it may be very unspiritual and very unscriptural.

**Local Church Matter #3** - A local church **is not** determined by the book of Acts.

Although we can glean much concerning the historical roots of the early church and although we may make several practical applications from Acts to church life, the truth we need to see is that N.T. church polity is not determined by the book of Acts.

Acts is a transitional book, which bridges two main dispensations of God—both the Old and the New, both the Jew and the Gentile. In Acts, there are apostolic miracles and revelations such as tongues (1:26-2:3). There are various baptisms (2:38). There is a unified selling of possessions (2:45). There are miraculous prison escapes (5:18-20). There were instant executions (5:1-11).



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There were people who were resurrected (9:36-42). There was miraculous healing from the bite of a deadly serpent (28:1-6). All of these kinds of things show up in Acts, but they do not show up in the local church today. There were miraculous demonstrations of God, designed to notify the world that His sovereign program was moving in a **new** direction. Clearly we do not determine a local church by these things found in the book of Acts.

**Local Church Matter #4** - A local church is determined largely by the writings of Paul.

We must remember that Paul was specifically the apostle who was appointed by God to be a teacher for this Gentile Age (II Tim. 1:11). It stands to reason, then, that we must base our concept of a local church largely upon Pauline writings since he is the one who writes letters to local churches (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae and Thessalonica). Any true biblical grasp of a local church will be based largely, in part, on the teachings of Paul.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer observed: “How much of the present sectarian confusion and sin might have been obviated had there been a clear and primary emphasis upon the Pauline doctrine of the true Church cannot be determined. The New Testament exhorts to unity, to unbroken fellowship, and to brotherly love; but these have been neglected and rejected” (Vol. 4. p. 147).

**Local Church Matter #5** - A local church is determined by people who profess salvation.

A local church has in its infancy a collective group of people in a particular location who claim to be saved, responding to the grace and Gospel of God (Acts 2:47; 14:21, 23; I Cor. 1:2).

In its purest sense, the local church is comprised of those who have been sovereignly called by God to salvation and have been the recipients of His elective grace. But, as in the case of any organization, there will always be those within whose hearts are not truly in accordance with the norms of the group.

We need to point out that if a church is still focused on salvation and repentance from dead works years after its inception, the church will remain stagnant and will not go on to maturity (Heb. 6:1-3). Any local church would do well to biblically realize that although God will continue to save people as each member of the body takes his/her responsibility seriously, the primary objective for the believer is not the salvation of others, but the maturity of self. God expects that His people go on to maturity so that the church will be a stable reflection of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12-14). A church that is still primarily focused on evangelism long after it has been established is an immature church which will never produce strong believers who are skilled and mature in the Word and doctrines of God. It is a terrible mistake to assume the local church is about saving the lost; it is about developing the saved so they, in turn, can be productive for God in their own private world.

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**Local Church Matter #6** - A local church is determined by leadership.

When one studies the Bible regarding a New Testament local church, it becomes very clear that from God's perspective, leadership was a very critical element. A quick glance at a few passages makes this point very clear – Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5.

According to Scripture, there were two specified offices of leadership which God ordained for His local churches: 1) The office of bishop/elder; 2) The office of deacon. (See I Tim. 3:1, 10.)

The word “bishop” is episkopos in Greek and it has its emphasis on management and oversight. The word “elder” is presbyteros in Greek and it has its emphasis on maturity. The office of “bishop/elder” may be deemed an office which is one and the same from various N.T. church passages—Acts 20:17, 28; I Tim. 3:1; 5:17; Titus 1:5, 7.

It needs to be biblically understood that pastor/teacher **is not** an office **of** the church; **it is** a gift **to** the church (Eph. 4:11-12). There is a distinct difference between an office and a gift. We may illustrate this point biblically by the life of Philip. Philip was one of the first to hold the office of deacon as the Church Age began. He held this office in the church of Jerusalem (Acts 6:5, 7). What we learn later about him is that his spiritual gift was that of evangelism (Acts 21:8). We may assume that he first faithfully served in his office of deacon before he discovered his gift of evangelism. We may also illustrate this point biblically by the life of Peter. Peter was one who had the gift of being an apostle (Eph. 4:11; I Pet. 1:1). Yet we learn that Peter held the office of elder (I Pet. 5:1). One who is developing a true perspective of the local church will recognize these distinctions.

The primary responsibility for complete oversight of a local church, from God's perspective, falls to the bishop/elders. Whenever one reads Scripture there **is always** an emphasis on a plurality of elders. There is **never** a hint that only one elder is to be a leader in God's church. Dr. C. I. Scofield, in his Bible Correspondence Course, wrote: “What seems clear from a consideration of all passages (is) that gradually the normal local church organization included elders and deacons. ...There is no instance of one elder in a local church” (Cited from Chafer, Vol. 4, p. 151). A careful reading of God's Word substantiates the accuracy of Dr. Scofield's observation for there is a plurality of leadership in every church (Acts 14:23; 15:4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; I Thess. 5:12-13; Titus 1:5; James 5:14).

We will acknowledge that the gift of “pastor/teacher” is a very important gift God gives to a church. This gift has supernatural ability to understand and unravel God's Word that is far beyond the norm, however, a one-man-pastor-ruled-church is nowhere to be found in the Bible. The elders (plural) are to rule (I Tim. 5:17) and to guard the truth (Titus 1:9). The elders (plural) are to oversee the flock specifically seeing that the flock is well-fed (Acts 20:28).

The office of deacon is another critical office of the church. It is also an office of plurality. It seems to particularly be an office which focuses its emphasis on the benevolent and physical needs connected to the church (Acts 6:1-6; I Tim. 3:8-13).

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Deacons are also, as elders, to be spiritually-minded men who develop the character and quality of faithfulness to God. Both the elders and deacons are responsible for what is taking place in the local church (I Tim. 3:15).

As one studies the Bible, one cannot help but be impressed with the leadership concept. God's Word demands a plurality of organized leadership called elders and deacons to govern His church. We conclude, then, that this is a critical issue of the local church. If one is to be classified as a local church, it must have organized leadership that is dedicated to seeing that the church moves in the direction God demands in His Word.

**Local Church Matter #7** - A local church is determined by organization .

This matter is naturally connected to the previous matter. It is only logical that in order for there to be leadership, there must be an organized congregation. In the early days of the Church, congregational organization **was not** determined by a church membership list, for there is absolutely no record of any such list in the New Testament. But congregational organization obviously **was** determined by organized leadership and some form of government.

When it comes to local church organization, there are differences in structure and differences in power. The problem of organization is further complicated by the fact that almost every church will claim some type of biblical justification for its structure. Dr. Chafer, however, made a significant observation when he wrote: "All warrant for church government must be found in the New Testament Epistles and every existing form of church rule will claim that its procedure is justified by the Scriptures" (Vol. 4, p. 150). It is right here where the problem lies. What is truly important in a New Testament church is its emphasis on God's Word, its emphasis on sound doctrine and its promotion of a life devoted to Jesus Christ. In most churches these truths are lost in a shuffle of dedication to a denomination or church which dedication tends to exceed the real vital issues. Organization is necessary for a local church, but organization is not the goal of the local church. This is why in most churches you will find they have their own schools, their own literature, their own missions and their own clergy. Most churches are interested in promoting their organization. What the local church must realize is that the promotion is not ever to be the organization. The promotion is to be God's Word and sound doctrine and spiritual maturity and development. The organization is always secondary to this. That is why an "undenominational" church has such potential for promoting what God would truly have promoted.

Generally speaking, there are three main forms of government which exist in a local church. Although there will be variances to a greater or lesser degree in local church polity, these three seem to be those that do exist:

**(Governmental Form #1)** - The Episcopal form of government.

The word "episcopal" comes from the Greek word "episkopos," which is translated in English by the word "bishop" or "overseer." As we previously learned, the word actually refers to one who oversees or manages.

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In the episcopal form of local church government, the authority lies with the bishops. These are not typically “bishops” in a biblical sense, elders of a local church, but in an ecclesiastical sense. In this type of government, the bishops rule many churches. These bishops have power to appoint and ordain ministers or priests and send them to any church they desire. They also govern the local church as a hierarchical ruling power.

Several churches fall under this type of governmental structure. The most complex and obviously the most powerful form of this type of government is seen in the Roman Catholic Church, which features the most complex form of episcopal government in existence. In this religious system of government, the ultimate authority rests upon “the” bishop who lives in Rome, who is called the pope. There are many other churches that actually use this pattern of church government. Among them are Episcopal churches, Lutheran churches, Methodist churches and Orthodox churches.

This form of government is based upon a misinterpretation of the Bible. The justification for this is derived from equating apostolic power with bishop power. For example, Eph. 2:20 and Acts 11:29-30 are often cited as proof texts for this form of government. There is no doubt that the apostles were prominent in the development of the N.T. church (i.e. Rev. 21:14). However, it **is not** true that today’s bishops are a distinct group designed for the purpose of succeeding the apostles in controlling all the local churches. Even the apostles did not control the local churches but turned the responsibility of that to the elders (i.e. Titus 1:5). One major error of interpretation is that those who hold to this position of government make “bishop” or “overseer” a separate office from “elder.” As we have already carefully observed, the two terms refer to the **same** office, but emphasize different aspects of the office (Acts 20:17, 28; I Tim. 3:1, 5:17; Titus 1:5, 7). “Overseer” or “bishop” emphasizes management responsibility, whereas “elder” emphasizes maturity. Bishop is not a separate office of power and those who maintain an episcopal form of government fail to discern this.

**(Governmental Form #2)** - The Presbyterian form of government.

The word “presbyterian” comes from the Greek word “presbuteros,” which is translated into English as the word “elder.” Under this form of government, the local church is governed by elders who are elected by the people. Above the elders is a group known as the presbytery, which includes all ordained ministers of that particular denomination. Above the presbytery is the “Synod” and above the synod is the “General Assembly.” Presbyterian churches and Reformed churches are notorious for this type of governmental structure.

This particular form of government is based upon passages that refer to elders. Under this system elected elders govern the church as ruling elders and a teaching elder presides over the other elders. The only downside to this system of government is that power which is above the elders—the presbytery, the synod and the general assembly. In this type of ecclesiastical system, the local church surrenders some of its “individual sovereignty” to a central power, although it does maintain some individuality. This system does have a proper view of elders; however, it typically takes the power above the elders to another level.

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**(Governmental Form #3)** - The Congregational form of government.

The peculiar feature of Congregational churches is that of individuality. In a congregationally ruled church there is autonomy and a democracy. In a congregationally governed church there is autonomy in the sense that no outside governing agency controls any part of the church. It is democratic in that all members participate in making decisions that pertain to the government of the church.

A true biblical, congregational form of government selects elders and deacons to handle leadership responsibilities. The congregation also participates in many decisions pertaining to the church (Acts 6:3-5; 14:27; 15:4, 25). Many theologians cite the fact that a congregational form of government is clearly implied in the fact that church discipline, although enforced by the elders, is to be applied by the entire congregation (I Cor. 5:4; II Cor. 2:6-7; II Thess. 3:14-15).

There are several churches that more or less use a form of this type of government—Bible churches, Congregational churches, Baptist churches, Mennonite churches and Evangelical Free churches.

In assessing the three main forms of church government, we draw the following conclusions:

1. The Episcopal form is the least biblical. In fact, Dr. Paul Enns observed that one can find this form of government in the second century, but there is no hint of it in the first century (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 358).
2. The Presbyterian form has a good grasp of the concept of “elders,” however, there is no scriptural evidence that a local church submitted to a governing board located elsewhere. There were moments in church history when various doctrinal councils were held, however, there is no evidence that churches yielded their autonomy.
3. The Congregational form would appear to be potentially the most biblical if there is a solid understanding and good working relationship of elders, deacons and the congregation. If this is in place, it would seem easiest to defend a congregational form of government.

There can be no doubt that a local church has some form of organization. Careful observation can determine which form a particular local church has. Actually, if proper elements are taken from the Presbyterian form of government and the Congregational form of government, the church can have the most biblical form of government.

**Local Church Matter #8** - A local church is determined by ordinances.

We may define an ordinance as something the church does which is external, which symbolizes something that is spiritual. An ordinance is something ritual that pictures something real. It is an outward rite that is sanctioned by God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, to be administered in His church which has a symbolic and sacred meaning.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (14)

Due to the fact that an ordinance has sacred meaning, there has arisen a difference of terminology. Some refer to the ordinances of the church by the word "ordinance." Others refer to the ordinances of the church by the word "sacrament." Catholics and some Protestants prefer the term "sacrament" which comes from a Latin word which means something set apart as sacred. Later the word came to mean an "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." It is right here where many reject the term sacrament and prefer the word ordinance. The term ordinance does not in any way have any connotation of imparting grace, whereas the term "sacrament" can and does often convey the concept of imparting grace.

It has been generally observed that in order for something to be classified as an ordinance, it must meet four key prerequisites:

- 1) It must be commanded to be practiced by Jesus Christ.
- 2) It must be obediently practiced by the early New Testament churches.
- 3) It must be referred to or alluded to and instruction given by the apostles.
- 4) It must be practiced throughout Church history by the churches.

Historically speaking, there have been two ordinances which Protestants have observed which meet these criteria: 1) The Lord's Supper; and 2) Water baptism.

The Roman Catholics have added a series of things to this which they classify as sacraments:

1) Baptism; 2) Lord's Supper (they call the Eucharist); 3) confirmation; 4) penance; 5) extreme unction; 6) holy orders; 7) marriage. We will discuss "baptism" and the "Lord's Supper," but for the sake of understanding the other terms:

- A. Confirmation was classified as a sacrament by Peter Lombard in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and by the Council of Trent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This religious ceremony is done for children prior to their first communion. It is believed that when the words are stated, "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation" a special sanctifying grace is increased in the soul of that child which consists of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is absolutely no biblical basis for this whatsoever.
- B. Penance was originally a term that referred to one chance an offender had to get right with the church after he had been disciplined by the church. Such things as fasting, public profession of sin, agreeing to certain lasting prohibitions were some of the things the offender had to do. The Council of Trent made penance mandatory once a year and they invented things the person must do to take care of certain kinds of sins. In other words, it was necessary for the church member to agree to do things demanded by the church in order to rid himself or herself of temporal guilt. Such things as attending masses, giving money or doing certain things became the means of absolving one of guilt. It is not too difficult to see that this is very unscriptural and is invented by men. Guilt is removed by faith in Jesus Christ and one is saved, guilt and sin are removed by confession to God.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (15)

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### MAJOR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN A BIBLE CHURCH AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:

**DISTINCTION #1 – Bible churches base what they believe and do on the teachings of the Bible, whereas Catholic churches base what they believe and do on the teachings and things invented by men.**

To prove this, we list 22 practices which are found in the Catholic Church, which are not found in the Bible or in a Bible Church:

1. Baptism as a saving ordinance was instituted approximately A.D. 150.
2. Infant baptism was instituted approximately A.D. 225.
3. Prayers for the dead were instituted approximately A.D. 300.
4. Making the sign of the cross was instituted approximately A.D. 300.
5. Worship service in Latin was instituted approximately A.D. 600.
6. Worship of Mary and various saints was instituted approximately A.D. 788.
7. Worship of the cross, images and relics was instituted approximately A.D. 788.
8. Fasting on Fridays and on Lent was instituted approximately A.D. 998.
9. Fabrication of holy water was instituted approximately A.D. 1000.
10. Rosary beads were instituted approximately A.D. 1090.
11. Money for Masses was instituted approximately A.D. 1100.
12. Enforced celibacy of priests was instituted approximately A.D. 1123.
13. Sale of indulgences was instituted approximately A.D. 1190.
14. Transubstantiation of the wafer was instituted approximately A.D. 1215.
15. Confession of sins to a priest was instituted approximately A.D. 1215.
16. The Roman Catholic Church as the only Catholic Church was instituted approximately A.D. 1303.
17. Purgatory was instituted approximately A.D. 1438.
18. Justification by works and not faith alone instituted approximately A.D. 1545.
19. Invention of scapulars, medals, edible religious stamps instituted approximately A.D. 1545.
20. Immaculate conception of Mary was instituted approximately A.D. 1854.
21. Infallibility of the Pope was instituted approximately A.D. 1870.
22. Assumption of Mary was instituted November 1, 1950.

Most of these practices are still very important to the Catholic Church and **none** of these are found in the Bible or in Bible churches; we conclude this is one major difference. Furthermore, many of these things oppose the teachings of the Bible:

1. No religious rite such as baptism can save, only faith in Jesus Christ. Rom. 3:26-30
2. Any worship in a language no one understands (i.e. Latin) is useless worship. I Cor. 14:19
3. Worshipping any person by God is idolatry against God. Ex. 20:2; Matt. 4:10; Rev. 22:9
4. Worshipping anything made with hands (relics, images, etc.) is idolatry. Ex. 20:4; Rom. 1:21-25
5. Making people pay money for religious services is contrary to the Word of God (Luke 9:3; 10:4; 19:45-48).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (16)

6. The Apostle Peter was a married man; obviously forced celibacy is not biblical. Luke 4:38; I Cor. 9:5; John 1:42
7. Mary, after becoming pregnant with Jesus, admitted she was in need of a Savior, which means she is admitting she is a sinner, not one who is sinless (Luke 1:47).
8. No person is infallible or sinless. Rom. 3:10-12; I Cor. 8:2

**DISTINCTION #2 – Bible Churches believe and defend the truth that justification is by faith alone and is not possible through any human works, whereas the Catholic Church believes that justification is not by faith alone, but is brought about by many religious works.**

The position of Bible Churches is based on what the Bible says. Rom. 3:21-28; 4:4-5; 5:1-2; Gal. 2:16; 3:11, 24

The position of the Catholic Church is that faith in Christ alone **is not** enough to make one right with God, but it must be accompanied by many religious works. This teaching comes from the Council of Trent, which was held in three stages during the years A.D. 1545-1563. These three stages of the Council of Trent are often referred to as the “Tridentine Decrees.” We cite several of their conclusions taken from their council:

“If anyone says that by faith alone the sinner is justified so that no cooperation is required on his part in order to obtain the grace of justification...let him be accursed” (Can. 9).

If anyone says that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins...or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is solely the favor of God; let him be accursed” (Can. 11).

“If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else by confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake; or that confidence alone is the whereby we are justified; let him be accursed” (Can. 12).

“If anyone says that it is necessary for everyone, in order to obtain the remission of sins, that he believe for certain, and without any wavering arising from his own infirmity and indisposition, that his sins are forgiven him; let him be accursed” (Can. 13).

“If anyone says that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified because he assuredly believes himself absolved and justified; or that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified; let him be accursed” (Can. 14).

These statements may be found today in any Catholic Manual for Priests and Seminarians. These have been cited from “*Secrets of Romanism*” by Joseph Zacchello, p. 100.



## ECCLESIOLOGY (17)

**DISTINCTION #3 – A Bible Church believes that every believer is a priest and has a right to go directly to God, whereas the Catholic Church believes that there is a special priesthood that must mediate between God and man.**

Bible Churches hold their position based on the Bible (I Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 5:8-10). Every believer can personally approach God in confession and with requests (Heb. 4:16; I John 1:9; Rom. 10:9-13). The Catholic Church teaches only a special religious priest can be a mediator between God and man. Many teachings such as penance and confession promote this view.

**Bible churches stick to the Bible; Catholic churches stick to things invented by men.**

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C. Extreme Unction is the act of anointing the sick person with oil with the belief that as the priest does this and prays and gives the sign of the cross, that grace is given to the sick person's soul and the soul is strengthened regardless of what happens to the body. As with the other matters, there is no biblical basis for this whatsoever.

D. Holy Orders is a term that refers to the clerical hierarchy of the Catholic Church which decrees a distinction between a priest that is conferred by baptism and a priest that is conferred by ordination. In other words, one who is ordained is one who participates in the sacrament of Holy orders. Again, there is no scriptural basis for any of this.

E. Marriage is a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church that was understood to mean that a marriage was indissoluble. However, there has been somewhat of a disregard for this recently and annulment (a term used by the Catholic Church which declares that a valid marriage never existed) is now permitted for even deficiencies of character.

Because of the unbiblical nature of these things, this teacher believes it is best to stay clear of the term "sacrament" and adhere to the term "ordinance." We now turn our attention to the two biblical, legitimate ordinances:

**(Ordinance #1) - The Biblical Ordinance of the Lord's Supper.**

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted the Lord's Supper on the eve of His crucifixion (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23). It obviously was given in the context of a focus on His sacrificial work which He was about to take place. It was, however, the Apostle Paul who received direct revelation from Jesus Christ, who delivered this ordinance to the Church (I Cor. 11:23-32). There were obviously two tangible elements involved in the carrying out of this ordinance:

**Element #1 - The element of the bread. I Cor. 11:23c-24**

From these verses we may make the following observations:

## ECCLESIOLOGY (18)

- 1) It is to be partaken of by thanksgiving. 11:24a
- 2) It is to be partaken of by breaking. 11:24b
- 3) It is to be partaken of by remembering. 11:24c
- 4) It is to be partaken of by eating. 11:26a, 27a

**Element #2** - The element of the cup. I Cor. 11:25

Actually there was only one cup (singular), not cups or cuplets (plural) used and it did contain wine.

We may observe the following concerning the cup:

- 1) It is to be partaken with thanksgiving. 11:25a
- 2) It is to be partaken after eating. 11:25b
- 3) It is to be partaken of by remembering. 11:25c
- 4) It is to be partaken of by drinking. 11:26b, 27b

Now the obvious purpose of this ordinance is clearly stated in I Cor. 11:26—it is to publicly declare, by way of tangible, visible symbolism what Jesus Christ did for sinful man and to illustrate God’s only means of being right with Him. This ordinance is to be practiced until Christ returns.

When it comes to this ordinance, there have been four distinct views concerning the meaning of it:

**(View #1)** - The transubstantiation view.

This is the view of the Roman Catholic Church. The word “transubstantiation” actually means change of substance. This is the belief that the bread and the cup actually change during the communion service and actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church teaches that a miracle takes place at the communion service and the elements of the bread and wine actually are changed into the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ, even though the sensory characteristics (called by Catholics “accidents”) remain the same. In other words, it still looks smells and tastes like bread and wine, but it has actually become something else.

This view is totally heretical and frankly may be quite easily proved false:

- 1) Metaphors, when used as illustrations of a person are never to be taken literally in themselves, but are designed to symbolically illustrate a critical point. Jesus Christ used many metaphors in reference to Himself which are designed to give us insight and understanding into His Person and work.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (19)

For example, Jesus Christ said, “I am the door” (John 10:9); He said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11); Jesus Christ said, “I am the true vine” (John 15:1) and in the same context said, “I am the vine, you are the branches: (John 15:5). Jesus Christ said, “I am the bread” (John 6:35). Jesus Christ said, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood” (John 6:54). Obviously every one of these metaphors is not to be viewed literally but to be studied for the literal truth it conveys.

- 2) When Jesus Christ personally said concerning the bread and the cup, “this is My body” and “this is My blood,” He was still in His body and had not shed His blood (Matt. 26:26-28).
- 3) Paul said this was a “memorial” to Christ, not an actual taking in of Christ (I Cor. 11:24-25).
- 4) Those who hold to transubstantiation equate taking communion with salvation. This contradicts the entire N.T. which says salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, not by taking communion.

This perspective of communion will be rejected by any of sound mind and doctrine. It cannot be proved by Scripture, by language or by logic. It is totally absurd.

**(View #2)** - The consubstantiation view.

This is the view of many of the Lutherans. This is the belief that the elements of communion do not change and become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ, but that the real presence of Christ is in the bread and the wine. Lutherans emphasize this belief by saying things in communion such as “Christ is **in** the element,” “Christ is **with** the element” and “Christ is **under** the element.”

Sometimes those who hold the consubstantiation view actually believe that by partaking of the Lord’s Supper, one experiences very real benefits such as forgiveness of sins and confirmation of faith.

The problem with this view is that there is no biblical support and a failure to recognize the figure of speech Christ uses when He says, “this is My body.”

**(View #3)** - The reformed view.

This is a little different slant to the meaning of communion, which basically says that when one partakes of communion, Jesus Christ is very present and His entire person, including His body and blood, are experienced and enjoyed. Those who hold this view believe that an extra dimension of grace is given to one who partakes in the communion service. This is very dangerous because it theologically presents God’s grace as being experienced by a human work, namely, partaking of communion. There is no biblical support for this position.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (20)

**(View #4) - The memorial view.**

The memorial view is sometimes referred to as the Zwinglian view because it was Ulrich Zwingli, the famed Swiss reformer (1484-1531), who first clearly expounded this view in light of the various views which were being propagated. This view believes that the bread and cup are figurative reminders of Christ's death, specifically His broken body and His shed blood. This view suggests there is no change in any substance of the elements. The bread is bread and the wine is wine. But these two elements are reminders of what Jesus Christ sacrificially did.

The memorial view is the easiest view to defend biblically:

- 1) It makes sense of the repeated words "do this in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:24, 25).
- 2) It causes one to focus on specific things concerning the work of Christ:
  - A. Bread causes us to focus on Christ's broken body which bore our sins (I Pet. 2:24).
  - B. Cup causes us to focus on Christ's blood which takes away our sins (Eph. 1:7).
- 3) It causes one to reflect on the fact that Christ, who physically died, will physically return (I Cor. 11:26).
- 4) It causes one to remember that it is by receiving Christ that one has sins forgiven—one must "eat" the bread and one must "drink" from the cup (I Cor. 11:26).

In this church we hold to the memorial view of communion. It is logical and biblical.

**(Ordinance #2) - The Biblical Ordinance of water baptism.**

The second ordinance of the New Testament Church is the ordinance of water baptism. Of all the areas of the church, perhaps none are more divergent or divisive as the subject of water baptism. The subject of water baptism is not as simplistic as one might think.

There are many different kinds of baptisms found in the New Testament:

- 1) Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit. Matt. 3:11 - a future reference to Pentecost.
- 2) Christ baptizing with fire. Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16 - a reference to Pentecost, persecution and second coming (II Thess. 1:7-9).
- 3) Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13).
- 4) Christ's baptism into death on the cross (Luke 12:50).
- 5) A typical baptism of Noah's ark, which depicts a baptism which now saves us (I Pet. 3:20-21).
- 6) The baptism of the children of Israel into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (I Cor. 10:2).
- 7) The cultish baptism in Corinth called the baptism for the dead (I Cor. 15:29).
- 8) The Jewish law baptisms, which were ritualistic (Heb. 9:9-10 - word "washings" is "baptisms").
- 9) The Jewish baptisms or washings invented by men (Mark 7:7 - word "wash" is "baptism").

## ECCLESIOLOGY (21)

- 10) John's water baptism, which was to introduce Jesus Christ to Israel (John 1:31), which specifically focused on the theme of repentance and forgiveness (Luke 3:3).
- 11) Christ's water baptism, which was designed to fulfill all righteousness of the Law and to introduce Him as Messiah to Israel (Matt. 3:13-15; John 1:31).
- 12) Pentecostal water baptism, which meant a miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
- 13) The Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the work of Christ (Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:11-13).
- 14) Water baptism that was being practiced in a New Testament Church (I Cor. 1:14-17).

It is not too difficult to see why there is so much confusion concerning the subject of baptism, when very few even take the time to examine the various baptisms found in Scripture. The common denominator among all baptisms is the idea of identification. In any biblical baptism, something is being identified with something else. The key to a proper understanding of the particular baptism is to carefully determine what is being identified with what. For example, in the baptism of the children of Israel into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (I Cor. 10:2), it is clear that the children of Israel are being identified with Moses and the cloud that protected him and the Red Sea which he crossed. They were identified with Moses and all that he did.

In Greek, there is actually five different words translated baptism (G. Abbott-Smith, pp.74-75):

- 1) Baptizo - this verb means to dip, to immerse, and to sink. It is usually translated baptize except in Luke 11:38 and Mark 7:4 where it is translated "wash."
- 2) Baptisma - This noun is always translated "baptism" and is used metaphorically of suffering (Mark 10:38-39), of John's baptism (Mark 11:30), and is the word used in Rom. 6:4; Eph. 4:5; and Col. 2:13, where it refers to Spirit baptism.
- 3) Baptismos - This noun is used in reference to Jewish washings (Heb. 6:2; 9:10). Charles Baker observes that this noun is used four times—three times "washing" and one time "baptism."
- 4) Baptistas - This noun is used to refer to the one who is doing the baptizing. It is used 14 times in the N.T. and all references are to John, who was baptizing others.
- 5) Bapto - This verb occurs three times and means to dip as in dip something in something else such as dip in dye (Luke 16:24; John 13:26; Rev. 19:13).

When one tackles the theological subject of water baptism with a desire to actually study the matter, one soon realizes there are three main areas of great disagreement: 1) The disagreement of the words; 2) The disagreement of the mode; 3) The disagreement of the meaning.

**Disagreement #1** - The disagreement concerning the words.

These Greek words have become a battleground when it comes to the subject of water baptism. For example, those who call themselves "Baptists" emphatically and dogmatically claim the two verbs Baptizo and Bapto have only one meaning: immersion. However, here is the problem. Baptizo is a Greek word that means to immerse or sink with no thought of bringing the object up again or of removing it.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (22)

Bapto means to dip something into something else such as dye and is never used in the N.T. of water baptism. Immersion is not dipping and dipping is not immersion. To immerse something means it is submerged with no thought whatsoever of bringing that object to surface again. To dip something means to dip it in liquid and immediately remove it. Again the problem lies in the fact that the word dip (Bapto) is never used for water baptism. Thus the battle lines are formed on this issue.

**Disagreement #2** - The disagreement concerning the mode.

This disagreement naturally stems from the first disagreement. Generally speaking, there are two modes presented by which ritual baptism should be administered: 1) Immersion; 2) Affusion. The immersionist is one who believes that the entire body must be submerged into the water. The affusionist is one who believes that water may be sprinkled or poured on the body. Of the Protestant churches, approximately 1/3 practice immersion and 2/3 practice affusion.

In the case of the immersionist, the mode of baptism enacts the believer's codeath, coburial and coresurrection with Christ. In the case of the affusionist, the mode of baptism enacts the Holy Spirit coming into the believer's life and permanently remaining. These two schools usually battle each other with the immersionist rejection affusion because it does not express what he understands the ordinance to mean and the affusionist rejects the immersionist for the same reason.

To further complicate the problem, some theologians draw a distinction between affusion and sprinkling, which is called aspersion. In affusion, water was poured on the head of a person, whereas in aspersion, water was sprinkled on a person who was sick or too weak to participate in affusion or immersion.

**Disagreement #3** - The disagreement concerning the meaning.

Here is another battleground when it comes to the subject of ritual water baptism: meaning.

- 1) Some claim water baptism actually saves a person—this is called baptismal regeneration. For example, the Roman Catholics believe that water baptism is enough to save a person without faith. The Lutherans, on the other hand, believe water baptism, along with faith, is enough to save a person. Infants are baptized to give an unconscious faith of the parent to the child.
- 2) Some claim water baptism is a sign or seal of the O.T. covenant. This view tries to equate the ordinances with the O.T. rite of circumcision. Therefore, water baptism is both the means of initiation into a covenantal relationship with God, and the sign of salvation. Several Reformed and Presbyterian churches hold to this view. Infants are often baptized in this group.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (23)

- 3) Some claim water baptism is a symbol of our N.T. salvation. This is the view that water baptism is an outward sign of what has happened inwardly. In this view, infants are not baptized because no inward transformation has been wrought, therefore, there is no point for the baptism which symbolizes that.
- 4) Some claim water baptism is not for this age at all. Those who hold this position believe that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, downplayed water baptism and stressed Spirit baptism. Those who hold this view suggest that water baptism was a Jewish kingdom connected baptism and that Paul specifically said God did not send him to baptize in water (I Cor. 1:17). Furthermore, it is argued that Paul did not give any instruction concerning the ordinance of water baptism as he did with the ordinance of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:23ff). Based on this, there are believers who hold to the firm conviction that water baptism has no purpose or place in this present dispensation.

As one can see, when it comes to the subject of water baptism there are tremendous disagreements, some legitimate and some not legitimate. Perhaps no subject has divided the body of Jesus Christ more than water baptism.

In forming our own conclusions concerning this issue, we would suggest that the more biblical data we can decipher, the better and more stable will be our position. This would mean not only passages that pertain to the subject proper, but sound doctrine and theology which enables one to form meaty conclusions. It seems to me an unfortunate thing that most individuals who run around dogmatically proclaiming a position so often give very little prayerful thought and consideration to that position. We must acknowledge that some of the greatest students and teachers of the Bible in past generations, who were used by God more than most will ever be, struggled to gain a true understanding of this issue. If it is true for them, how much more for us.

Those who hold to the rite or ordinance of water baptism for this dispensation typically do so based on argumentation which goes something like this: Prior to Christ ascending into heaven, He gave His disciples a new command, which looked forward to this dispensation, which was to make disciples and baptize them (Matt. 28:19). In the origination of this command there is a particular chronology expressed—first, one is made a disciple and second, one is baptized. This particular pattern may be traced through the book of Acts as the Church Age began. For example, Peter commanded that his hearers should first repent and then be baptized (Acts 2:38). Only those who heard the Gospel understood and responded to it through faith and repentance could be baptized. The result was that those who received the Word and believed it were baptized (Acts 2:41). The same was true with Philip's message—they first believed and then were baptized (Acts 8:12). It is true with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:38), with Paul (Acts 9:18), with the Caesarean Gentiles (Acts 10:48), with Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), with the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:32-33) and with Crispus (Acts 18:8). The pattern was belief first and baptism second. In other words, faith precedes the ordinance of water baptism.

Concerning the subject of water baptism, we believe the following:

## ECCLESIOLOGY (24)

- 1) Water baptism is an ordinance which is something we do that is external, which symbolizes something that is spiritual. It is a ritual which symbolizes something real.
- 2) We do agree that the Lord's Supper was commanded by Jesus Christ and handed to the Church by the Apostle Paul (Matt. 26:20; I Cor. 11:23ff) and that water baptism was commanded by Jesus Christ and was not handed to the Church by Paul (Matt. 28:19).
- 3) We observe that water baptism was clearly practiced by the early Church in the book of Acts (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5) and that it was practiced in at least one N.T. church (I Cor. 1:13-17).
- 4) We also observe that the key baptism for this age is Spirit baptism, which means water baptism will need to expressly symbolize Spirit baptism in this dispensation (John 1:33; I Cor. 12:13).
- 5) We may also observe that Jesus Christ Himself was baptized in water and even though we cannot follow the unique meaning of His baptism, we are taught in many N.T. texts that we are to follow the example of Jesus Christ (i.e. I Peter 2:21).
- 6) We may observe that Jesus Christ did not personally baptize anyone but He apparently did approve of His disciples baptizing people in water (John 4:1-2). This argument may be used to suggest that since we are to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, we should not be baptizing others in water.
- 7) We acknowledge that the great Epistle baptism passages—Rom. 6:1-11; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12—are references to Spirit baptism, not water baptism.
- 8) We acknowledge that water baptism is not necessary to go to heaven and water baptism does not save anyone; one is saved by Spirit baptism when he believes on Christ and is immediately identified by God with the finished work of Jesus Christ on Calvary (Luke 23:39-43).
- 9) Our conclusion is that water baptism in this age must symbolize Spirit baptism. If a N.T. church is to emphasize in a water baptism service precisely what it symbolizes in this dispensation, the emphasis must be on the meaning, not the mode (i.e. Spirit baptism).

**QUESTION #11** – What are the contrasting differences between Israel and the Church?

This is an extremely important question to ask and answer because terrible confusion has arisen from those who fail to recognize the major distinctions between Israel and the Church. This very issue has been a constant source of doctrinal error. Many confusing doctrines enter into the Church because of a failure to realize that Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel. E. W. Bullinger promoted many inaccurate conclusions which he recanted before his death. His conclusions were based on the fact that he equated Israel with the Church and the Church with Israel. There are several contrasts we need to realize:

**Contrast #1** - There is a contrast in biblical revelation.

Israel occupies nearly four-fifths of the Bible and the Church occupies nearly one-fifth of the text of Scripture.



## ECCLESIOLOGY (25)

**Contrast #2** - There is a contrast in biblical purpose.

Every promise pertaining to Israel is earthly; every promise pertaining to the Church is heavenly.

**Contrast #3** - There is a contrast in seed related to Abraham.

One seed is classified as the “dust of the earth” (Gen. 13:16) and another seed is classified as the “stars of heaven” (Gen. 15:5).

**Contrast #4** - There is a contrast in birth.

One becomes an Israelite by physical birth, whereas one becomes a Christian by spiritual birth.

**Contrast #5** - There is a contrast in headship.

Abraham is the head of the Jewish race (John 8:37-40), and Jesus Christ is the head of the Church (Col. 1:18).

**Contrast #6** - There is a contrast in covenants.

God has promised to unconditionally fulfill His covenants with Israel and enter into a new covenantal relationship with Israel (Jer. 31:31-33), whereas God has already entered into a new covenantal relationship with Christians (Heb. 8:7-12, 9:15).

**Contrast #7** - There is a contrast in nationality.

Israel belongs on the earth, whereas Christians are strangers and pilgrims just passing through the earth.

**Contrast #8** - There is a contrast in Divine dealing.

God’s Word covers the whole spectrum of time and a wide range of human history. In almost every other period of time, with the exception of the Church Age, God dealt with nations. He dealt with nations as a whole and, of course, the specific nation that He focused on was Israel. The dealings of God in the Church Age are individual. Responsibility in this age is altogether personal, not national. This is a very unique matter of this age.

**Contrast #9** - There is a contrast in dispensations.

The Church is restricted to this particular dispensation of time. It will end when the Rapture occurs. However, Israel, who has their beginning with Abraham, continues to exist throughout all of time. Israel is in the O.T., in the N.T., in the Tribulation and in the Kingdom. It is quite evident that there is a major distinction in dispensations pertaining to Israel and the Church.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (26)

**Contrast #10** - There is a contrast in outreach.

Nowhere is Israel challenged to reach other people in order to get them to become Israelites. In fact, the ministry pertaining to Israel was isolated to Israel (i.e. Matt. 10:5-6). In this age, every believer is accountable and responsible to be a witness for Christ everywhere he goes. He is to be ready to give an answer to any who asks him. A man is to be a good employee; a woman is to be a good homemaker; and one of the reasons this is to take place is to be a good witness for Jesus Christ. We are to be witnesses for the Lord in our work, in our home, in our play, in our neighborhood and wherever we go. This is a major contrast from Israeli outreach.

**Contrast #11** - There is a contrast in the death of Christ.

Israel demanded the death of Christ and was accountable for it, yet they are saved as a nation on the ground of that sacrifice. The Church, on the other hand, has a present and perfect salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and thinks of this as a praise to God. This is a major distinction between Israel and the Church.

**Contrast #12** - There is a contrast in fatherhood.

For the most part, Israel knows God by primary titles such as Jehovah, Elohim and Adonai. However, individual Israelites did not know God as their Father. Dr. Walvoord observed: "The Old Testament does reveal that God was Father to Israel in the sense of intimate relationship. Moses was instructed to perform miraculous wonders in his appearances before Pharaoh, 'Then say to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD says: Israel is My firstborn son, and I told you, let My son go, so he may worship Me." But you refused to let him go, so I will kill your firstborn son (Ex. 4:22-23).'" In the Davidic Covenant God said concerning David, 'I will be his Father, and he will be My son II Sam. 7:14).' God is compared to a father having compassion on his children (Psalm 103:13). In the case of Christians, however, God is especially their Father in the sense of having communicated His life to them in the new birth" (pp. 243-244).

**Contrast #13** - There is a contrast in Christ.

To Israel, Christ is Messiah, Immanuel and King. To the Church, Christ is the Savior, Lord, Bridegroom, and Head.

**Contrast #14** - There is a contrast in the Holy Spirit.

Only in very rare instances in the O.T. did the Holy Spirit come upon an Israelite and when He did do this, as soon as His purpose was accomplished He withdrew as freely as He came. In this Church Age the Spirit of God indwells every believer and never withdraws. This is a major distinction between Israel and the Church.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (27)

**Contrast #15** - There is a contrast in the governing principle.

For nearly 15 centuries the Law of Moses was Israel's rule of daily life. To experience God's love, Israel needed to obey God (Psalm 103:17-18). Israel's blessings under the Mosaic covenant were conditional. Members of Christ's body are complete in Christ. They have already entered into the love of God by faith in Him. The Law is nailed to the cross and the governing principle is that which falls under grace (Col. 2:14; Gal. 2:16).

**Contrast #16** - There is a contrast in Divine enablement.

The Law system provided no enabling power for its achievement which is exactly why no one could keep the Law. The system demonstrated that no flesh could keep the Law. Israel, under the Law, had no Divine enablement and, therefore, failed time and time again. In the Church Age we have supernatural power given to us by the Holy Spirit. It is possible for us not to fulfill the desires of the sin nature because of this special enabling power (Rom. 6:14).

**Contrast #17** - There is a contrast in Christ's farewell discourses.

Jesus Christ gave two farewell addresses prior to His crucifixion—one for Israel and one for the Church. The Olivet Discourse, which is recorded in Matt. 23:37-25:46 is Christ's farewell message to the nation Israel. In major contrast to this, the night prior to being put to death, Christ gave His parting message for the Church Age (John 13-17). This message was fully represented by the apostles after Acts 2. Dr. Chafer observed: "When these two addresses are contemplated side by side, it is seen that the widest distinctions are indicated between Israel and the Church" (Vol. 4, p. 51).

**Contrast #18** - There is a contrast in Christ's promised and future return.

Christ's promise for Israel is to deliver her at His second coming. At that time, Israel will be regathered to her own land (Deut. 30:1-8; Jer. 23:7-8; Matt. 24:31). However, Christ's promise to the Church is the Rapture when He will appear to take the Church from the earth to heaven (John 14:1-3; I Cor. 15:51-58; I Thess. 4:13-18). This is a sharp contrast between the future for the Church and the future for Israel.

**Contrast #19** - There is a contrast in position.

Israel is in the position of being called a servant (Is. 41:8). Believers in the Church are in the position of being called "friends" (John 15:15).

**Contrast #20** - There is a contrast in Christ's earthly reign.

During the earthly reign of Jesus Christ, known as the Millennium, Israel will be the prominent head of all nations. The Church, however, will reign "with" Christ in the Millennium.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (28)

The Church will have an exalted position of reigning with Jesus Christ and carrying out His millennial mandates (Rev. 20:4).

**Contrast #21** - There is a contrast in priesthood.

The nation Israel had a priesthood of Aaron and his descendants, whereas the Church “is” a priesthood over which Jesus Christ is the High Priest (Heb. 5:4-6; I Peter 2:9).

**Contrast #22** - There is a contrast in marriage.

The nation Israel is called the untrue and unfaithful wife of Jehovah, whom He has divorced and whom He will remarry and restore (Is. 54:1-17; Jer. 3:1, 8, 14, 20; Ezek. 16:1-59; Hosea 2:1-23; cf. Gal. 4:27). In major contrast to this, the Church is identified as being a virgin waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom and will be joined to Christ at the time of the Rapture (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-9).

**Contrast #23** - There is a contrast in judgments.

Israel will be judged as a nation and as individuals (Ezek. 20:33-44; Matt. 25:1-13). On the other hand, Christians will not come into judgment except at the Judgment Seat of Christ for their works (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1; II Cor. 5:10).

**Contrast #24** - There is a contrast in eternal position.

In Hebrews 12:22-23, Old Testament saints, including Israelites, are identified as being “spirits of righteous men made perfect.” Dr. Chafer observed that “This designation occurs upwards of thirty times in the Old Testament and always with reference to those who were in right relationship with God” (Vol. 4, p. 53). The other group is “church of the firstborn.” Both groups will be in the New Jerusalem and both will have an individual and corporate identity.

Unless one is willing to acknowledge and understand these differences, many biblical misunderstandings will occur. We conclude this particular section of Ecclesiology with the words of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer: “In concluding this extended series of contrasts between Israel and the Church, it should be observed that, in certain respects, there are similarities between these two groups of elect people. Each, in turn, has its own peculiar relation to God, to righteousness, to sin, to redemption, to salvation, to human responsibility and to destiny. They are each witnesses to the Word of God; each may claim the same Shepherd; they have doctrines in common; the death of Christ avails in its own way for each; they are alike loved with an everlasting love; and each, as determined by God, will be glorified” (Vol. 4, p. 53).

**QUESTION #12** – What are the seven figures used for the Church?

Here is one subject that is almost completely neglected in most theological studies and books.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (29)

There are seven figurative portraits of Christ's relationship to His Church which are central to God revealing His purpose and plan for the Church.

The seven figures God reveals to us that gives us a Church perspective are:

Figure #1 - The Shepherd and the Sheep.

Figure #2 - The Vine and the Branches.

Figure #3 - The Cornerstone and the Stones of the Building.

Figure #4 - The High Priest and the Kingdom of Priests.

Figure #5 - The Head and the Body with its many members

Figure #6 - The Last Adam and the New Creation.

Figure #7 - The Bridegroom and the Bride.

These seven figures give us good insight into truth pertaining to the Church. Although entire Church doctrine cannot be based or built on these figures, they do deserve attention for they do help us understand God's doctrine:

**(Figure #1)** - The Shepherd and the Sheep.

The term "sheep" is many times applied in Scripture to people. It depicts the utter helplessness of individuals to find their own way. The term is applied to different groups of people such as Israel and the Church. It usually is used in reference to people who are favored by God.

One key N.T. passage of Scripture that uses this figure is John 10. We have a legitimate right to make a Church interpretation because of what Jesus Christ says in John 10:16. The "other sheep" to whom Christ is referring are not other Israelites, but Gentile believers in Christ who would be brought into a relationship with God in the Gentile Age or Church Age.

This passage is rich in revealing N.T. Grace Age, Church Age truth. The figure of Christ as Shepherd and the Church as His flock is critical revelation concerning the nature of the entire Church Age. We make the following observations from John 10:

- 1) Jesus Christ came to call His sheep, Israel, out of a pharisaical Judaism and His true sheep did know His voice and followed Him (John 10:1-5). The context is a discussion aimed at Pharisees who were trying to get Israel to follow them (9:40 ff).
- 2) Jesus Christ is the only entrance into a true relationship with God and if anyone enters through Christ, He becomes that person's shepherd and gives His shepherding provisions and care to that one, including abundant life (John 10:7-10).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (30)

The words of Dr. Gaebelin are worth reading on these verses: “A most blessed promise, He is the door. Any man, it does not matter who it is, any man may enter in by Him and then having entered in by Him, that is believed on Him, He promises salvation, liberty and food. These three things are bestowed upon all who believe on Him” (Chafer, Vol. 4, p. 58).

- 3) Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and does not abandon them in times of difficulty (John 10:11-13).
- 4) Jesus Christ knows every one of His sheep and every one of His sheep know Him (John 10:14-15).
- 5) Jesus Christ has sheep other than Israel, whom He will call to become one flock (John 10:16). This has clear reference to the fact that in this age, there is neither Jew nor Gentile for the believer, but the one body of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Chafer said of this verse: “That there is but one flock, for saving grace has brought every individual sheep, regardless of his former situation, into one and the same perfected position in Christ Jesus” (Vol. 4, p. 59).

- 6) Those who are not Christ’s sheep do not believe on Him (10:26).
- 7) Those who are Christ’s sheep do believe on Him and follow Him (10:27).
- 8) Jesus Christ gives eternal life to His sheep and that eternal life cannot ever be lost (10:28-29).

Much beginning Church doctrine may be seen right here in this figure.

**(Figure #2)** - The Vine and the Branches.

The key N.T. passage where this figure is found is John 15. This is an important figure pertaining to N.T. believers, because this figure is specifically addressed to N.T. believers and not the Israelites. This particular figure is part of the “Upper Room Discourse,” an important teaching of Christ that looks beyond His death, resurrection and ascension and beyond Pentecost. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said concerning this discourse, “This discourse is, more than any other portion of the Scriptures, the clearest and dearest message to believers in this dispensation” (Vol. 4, pp. 59-60).

This figure of the Vine and the Branches is a revelation of the relationship Jesus Christ has to His Church in the present age. In the O.T., Israel was the vineyard of God (Isaiah 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Hosea 10:1; Luke 20:9-16). When Christ introduced Himself as being the “true vine” (John 15:1), He was presenting Himself in contrast to the vine of Israel, which did not produce fruit.

This image teaches that as the true Vine, He will be fruitful through the branches that draw their life from Him.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (31)

This figure of the Vine and the Branches is designed to illustrate to N.T. believers the importance of communion with Jesus Christ. This discussion automatically assumes “union” with Christ, as stated by verse 2, “every branch **in** me.” The issue being discussed in this text is not one of union, but communion with Christ. The question of being fruitful because of an intimate communion with Jesus Christ is what is being discussed in this text.

The illustration in John 15 presents Jesus Christ as one who prunes the vine and eliminates branches that bear no fruit in order to enhance the fruitfulness of the other branches. In other words, Jesus Christ Personally subtracts unfruitful people in order to surface more fruitful people. He eliminates those fruit-barren to enhance those fruit-bearing.

Now we may notice from verse 3 that the text is addressed to those already clean. In other words, this is a passage addressed to those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb. The challenge is to “abide in Christ.” Dr. C. I. Scofield writes: “To remain in Christ is, on the one hand, to have no known sin unjudged and unconfessed, no interest into which He is not brought, no life which He cannot share” (pp. 1507-1508). The meaning is that in order for a believer to be fruitful, he must have this kind of close, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Remaining close in one’s relationship with Christ enables that believer to “glorify” God (15:8) and to “bear much fruit” (15:5).

The promises given to one who maintains close communion with Jesus Christ are:

1) Pruning (15:2); 2) Effective prayer (15:7); 3) Full joy (15:11); 4) Eternal fruit (15:16).

When we read verse 16, in view of this Church Age context, we realize that the main emphasis **is not** the salvation of the lost, but **is** the fruitfulness of ourself.

God wants us to be fruitful. God wants us to have unbroken fellowship with Jesus Christ so we may be fruitful. As Chafer says, “The fruitfulness of believers is a most important factor in the divine plan and purpose for this age” (Vol. 4, p. 61).

One obvious question arises and that is what if a N.T. believer does not bear fruit? What if a N.T. believer does not maintain communion with Jesus Christ? The answer to these questions is found in John 15:2 and 6.

We must carefully observe that the emphasis of these verses is on the believer not abiding in Christ, not Christ abiding in the believer. In fact, verse 2 clearly teaches that it is possible for a branch who is “in” Christ not to bear fruit. The promise to the believer who does not bear fruit is that Jesus Christ will 1) Take it away (15:2); 2) Throw it away (15:6a); 3) Dry it up (15:6b); 4) Cast them into fire to be burned (15:6c).

Arminian writers generally look at John 15:6 as a most formidable argument to support their claim that one may lose his salvation.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (32)

However, one who does this totally neglects the context, which clearly is that of bearing fruit by abiding in Christ, that is, by maintaining close communion with Him. Union with Christ is totally dependent on God, whereas communion with Christ is dependent on faithfulness. What must always be kept in mind is that **assurance of heaven does not depend on communion with Jesus Christ, but does depend on union with Jesus Christ**. Bearing fruit depends on communion with Jesus Christ after union with Jesus Christ. Union with Jesus Christ is not dependent on human faithfulness, but on sovereign election. Communion with Jesus Christ is dependent on human faithfulness after election.

Now the question arises what will happen to one who does not bear fruit?

### 1) Jesus Christ will Personally take that branch away. 15:2

The Greek word “takes away” means to take, to raise-up or to remove (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 13). The warning is that a believer who does not bear fruit will be one who is taken, raised-up or removed. What Christ is saying here is that one who does not bear fruit will either be raised-up to bear fruit or he will be removed and taken home to heaven. Jesus Christ will not sit idly by and permit one “in” Him to go his own way but may take him home (I Cor. 11:30; I John 5:16). Also we point out that the participle and verb “bear” are both present tense, indicating this is the habitual, continual, normative pattern in life—not bearing fruit.

### 2) Jesus Christ will Personally throw that branch away. 15:6a

The verb “throw away” is generally used of a weapon or object that was thrown or cast at an individual. When the passive form of the verb is used, it is often used in reference to one becoming ill, such as being cast or thrown into a sickness (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 74). The warning is if the believer persists in a continual lifestyle of non-fruit bearing, Jesus Christ will use a weapon to throw that believer into sickness as a warning to develop close communion with Him. He will discard that branch from healthy growth. I am convinced many believers are plagued with some infirmity because they do not develop communion with Jesus Christ.

### 3) Jesus Christ will Personally cause that branch to dry up. 15:6b

The believer who does not bear fruit will begin to dry and wither. This speaks of spiritual growth and life and also of physical life. The life vibrancy will begin to disappear as a result of a direct judgment of Jesus Christ. When this happens, there is no deep understanding of God’s Word and no mature development that takes place.

### 4) Jesus Christ will Personally burn them. 15:6c

Here is where many people toss away sound doctrine. The question that must be answered here is what may be burned in the life of a non-fruit bearing believer who is in Christ. We know that hell is not the issue because the matter of heaven or hell is determined by union with Christ, not communion with Christ. One who believes on Jesus Christ has everlasting life.



## ECCLESIOLOGY (33)

So the question is what may be burned in a believer's life?

There are two answers to this question:

1) One answer is that the testimony of the individual is withered to the extent that other men abhor them and their testimony is burned. Notice carefully the pronoun "they" gather them, not "I."

2) Another answer is works (I Cor. 3:14-15). The warning is that if a believer persists in a non-fruit bearing mode, Jesus Christ will take that believer home and will burn up his works, which means all rewards are lost, plus men here will mock and ridicule them and burn their name.

The challenge to the unbeliever is to believe on Christ. The challenge to the believer is to bear fruit for Christ. Believers have been saved so that they may develop in their relationship with Jesus Christ so they may bear fruit. Those who persistently pursue a path of non-fruit bearing will have spiritual lives that are dead, they will have a testimony that is a stench and they will have all works burned and all rewards lost.

Dr. John Walvoord writes: "Few aspects of the Christian life are more vital than growth, improvement through discipline, measureless efficacy in prayer, and joy which comes from unbroken fellowship with Christ (I John 1:3-4). Such fruit brings glory to God (John 15:8). God has given gifted members to the church so that they may bear much fruit. This purpose is stated in Ephesians 4:12-16, 'To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work'" (p. 253).

The Vine and the Branches is a critical figure for understanding this age and the goals of it. That is why Jesus Christ dealt so extensively with this theme. Those of us who know Christ have been saved by God to be fruit-bearing believers.

**(Figure #3) - The Cornerstone and the Stones of the Building.**

There is a major distinction between Israel and the Church regarding the temple. Israel "had" a temple (Ex. 25:8). The Church "is" a temple (Eph. 2:21). Just as God was present in the O.T. Temple, so now He is present in His Church, indwelling those who are truly saved. The passage that clearly sets forth this figure and relates it to the Church is Eph. 2:19-22.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (34)

We may notice that this in this figure Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. This is precisely the prophecy that Christ uttered predicting the Church Age being built upon the rock Peter had identified (Matt. 16:18). When the Apostle Peter later referred to this image, he clearly applied it to N.T. Grace Age believers (I Pet. 2:5). The writer of Hebrews identified N.T. believers as being Christ's House (Heb. 3:6), and Paul identified believers as being God's building (I Cor. 3:9).

The symbolism of Jesus Christ being the stone has far reaching application and only a positive application for the Church:

- 1) To the Gentiles, He is the smiting stone in their final judgment. Dan. 2:34
- 2) To the Israelites, He is a stumbling stone to Israel. Is. 8:14-15; I Cor. 1:23; I Pet. 2:8
- 3) To the Church He is the foundation stone (I Cor. 3:11) and He is the Chief Cornerstone. Eph. 2:20-22; I Pet. 2:4-5

Now a very important dispensational point is that Jesus Christ became the Chief Cornerstone **by** and **after** His resurrection, not before. Both the O.T. and the N.T. verify this fact—Psalm 118:22-24; Acts 4:11. In other words, after having been rejected by Israel, He became a chief cornerstone for the Church Age. This is another clear evidence that the Church begins at Pentecost.

Now the building which Christ is constructing as the Chief Cornerstone has three features:

- 1) Each stone in His building is a living stone, and has partaken of a divine nature (I Pet. 2:5).
- 2) Each stone has Jesus Christ as its Chief Cornerstone and Foundation Stone (Eph. 2:20-22; I Cor. 3:11; I Pet. 2:6).
- 3) The entire building is the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22).

Now the obvious point of the figure is to demonstrate that the Church is composed of individuals who are related to each other as stones are related to each other in a building. The obvious contribution that this figure makes to the Church is that each saved person is dependent on other saved people for full development. If one stone were taken from a building the entire structure is weakened.

A true concept of Church doctrine will realize the importance of interdependence of each saved person in the Church upon every other saved person in the Church. The entire structure is being put together by Jesus Christ, but we are the stones of the building and we are connected to each other and we are related to each other. No man, in the context of N.T. Church doctrine, is an island and every believer needs every other believer so that the building may move up and out.

**(Figure #4) - The High Priest and the Kingdom of Priests.**

Here is a very important theological figure that gives us tremendous insight into truth of this Church Age. In the Old Testament, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is typified by the Old Testament high priest—by Aaron and by Melchizedek. The extended discussion in Scripture which sets forth the meaning of all of this is found in Hebrews chapters five through eight.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (35)

Jesus Christ fulfilled the typology of both Aaron and Melchizedek.

In Christ's Aaronic priestly ministry, He offered a sacrifice to God in behalf of sinful people. That sacrifice was Himself and it was a pure sacrifice without any blemish. In this phase of His priestly ministry He was both the Sacrificer and the Sacrifice. However, the Aaronic pattern of priestly ministry could go no further than the Sacrifice.

In Christ's Melchizedek priestly ministry, He is the King-Priest. Melchizedek was a priest who had no beginning or ending of days, no human parents (Heb. 7:3) and he was a high priest solely by Divine authority (Psalm 110:4). These two figures are critical to understanding our Church Age relationship to God.

The N.T. believer-Christian is a king-priest unto God. The fact that the Church is a "royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9) is one of the most significant features of the Church Age. The Christian's service as king is deferred until Christ comes to reign, at which time the believer will reign with Christ (Rev. 20:6).

Present Church Age believers are to be committed to priestly service because of their relationship to Christ, who is our High Priest. This service to which we are to have as a priest during this age includes three elements:

### 1) The service of sacrifice.

In the O.T., the priest was sanctified and set apart for priestly service by sacrifice and then having been inducted into the priest's office, offered a sacrifice for himself so that he could minister to others. So a believer in this present age is sanctified and set apart as a priest by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but he is also to sacrifice himself as clearly stated in Romans 12:1. We are responsible and accountable to present ourselves as a sacrifice to God. Having been yielded to God and no longer conformed to this world, the believer/priest experiences a transforming life of power through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

When an O.T. priest was consecrated for his sacred work, he was given a whole bath (Ex. 29:4). After this, even though he was fully bathed, he was required to be cleansed by partial bathing by washing at the brazen laver to be prepared for his daily priestly service. It is the same for N.T. believers. We are cleansed and forgiven at salvation, yet we still need to experience the constant cleansing that comes through confessing sin, through studying the Word of God and through yielding to the Holy Spirit (I John 1:9). The appointment of the O.T. priests was for life, so also are the appointments of N.T. priests. Once one has been saved, one becomes a priest of God forever. This is important doctrine in understanding Church truth.

### 2) The service of worship.

The O.T. priests were called to worship God and so are the N.T. priests.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (36)

The furnishings of the O.T. tabernacle and temple spoke of Jesus Christ and the believer's worship in this present age is by and through Christ alone.

In the N.T. age, we worship God by offering ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1). As stated in Heb. 13:15, a believer's worship service involves offering continual praise to God, specifically concerning Jesus Christ. It also involves giving and sharing of our substance (Heb. 13:16). Our worship involves praising, singing, sacrificing, giving and studying the Word of God.

In the O.T., there were two prohibitions given in connection with the worship of O.T. priest, which have profound meaning for us: 1) There was to be no "strange" incense offered by a priest (Ex. 30:9); 2) There was to be no "strange" fire offered by a priest (Lev. 10:1). The strange incense speaks typically of mere formality in service toward God. The strange fire speaks typically of a substitution of fleshly emotions for true devotion to Christ.

Our worship, in the N.T. economy, is never to become pure ritual and it is never to become purely emotional. It is to be worshipful and rational.

### 3) The service of intercession.

In the O.T., a prophet was God's representative to the people and a priest was the people's representative to God. In the O.T., priests were not allowed into the most holy place of the tabernacle or temple except once a year when they were accompanied by the high priest who had previously offered sacrificial blood (Heb. 9:7). In the present N.T. priesthood of believers, our access into God's presence is immediate through Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who is now in heaven interceding for us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; 9:24; 10:19-22). Through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the veil was torn and we now have access to God (10:19-22). One of our priestly responsibilities and one of our main responsibilities is an intercessory prayer ministry. Intercessory prayer meetings are priestly prayer meetings that clearly are the will of God (Col. 4:12; I Tim. 2:1).

N.T. believers who do not intercede and pray for others of their local church are not fulfilling their priestly responsibilities and they are living in disobedience to the Word and will of God. There is tremendous power when God's people come to a prayer meeting to intercede for one another. Unfortunately, the majority do not take their priestly responsibilities seriously.

**(Figure #5) - The Head and the Body with its many members.**

One key place where this figure is found is I Cor. 12:12-15. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer observed, "The figure of the head and body with its many members is employed in the Sacred Text more than any other and serves to indicate certain essential facts respecting the Church..." (Vol. 4, p. 68). There are three main features of this figure which we want to understand:

## ECCLESIOLOGY (37)

**Feature #1** - The Church is a self-developing body.

The central passage on the Church as the body of Christ is Eph. 4:11-16. In this text it is very evident that God has appointed some with special gifts which are listed in verse 11. The purpose of these gifts is to enable the laborers to prepare themselves and others for the work of serving the Lord. The objective of this service is to achieve a unity in the faith in the context of the Church, to have a full knowledge of Christ, to attain to spiritual maturity and to realize the measure of the fullness of Christ.

As believers develop this spiritual maturity, they are no longer children who waver and who are tossed this way or that way by various teachings. They speak spiritual truth in love. Dr. John Walvoord, who years ago did an editorial work of Chafer's Theology, said this: "Too much recognition cannot be given to uncounted multitudes of faithful witnesses who discharge their commission as Sunday school teachers, missionaries, personal soul-winners and exponents of divine grace. Ministers in the church are not limited to those who are appointed as pastors. All members of the church are ministers, and their service is to minister on behalf of God according to their gifts. Though each individual believer is endowed with gifts with which to serve the Lord, obviously some are called to places of larger leadership. As such, pastors of churches need to be trained for this task" (Walvoord, edited, Vol. 2, p. 259).

Every part of the human body is held together by supporting ligaments. Each part has a job to do in connection with the whole. So it is in the Church. Every member has a job to do and is connected to and by the other members. When each member takes his job seriously, you have a healthy body which truly will and does bring glory to God.

**Feature #2** - The members of the body of Christ are appointed to specific service.

Make no mistake about this, because the Bible is very clear; members of Christ's body are members by the sovereignty of God. God is the One who determines what gift a person receives and He is the One who puts that gift in the Church.

Through human weakness and sin, there may be jealousy and strife between members of the body, and one key reason for this is a failure to point out that one is placed where he is placed by sovereign decree of God. Many passages point this out including Rom. 12:3; I Cor. 12:11, 18. All members of the body are needed members, but all are not equal in gifts.

Members of the body are part of the whole. Each gift is given by God to the member He sovereignly decrees and He expects that each member will do his or her part in serving the Lord. One passage that stresses this point is I Pet. 4:7-11. In this context, one key motive for faithfully serving the Lord is the fact that the coming of the Lord is very near (v. 7). When each individual member takes his body responsibilities seriously, God is glorified in all things (v. 11).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (38)

**Feature #3** - The body of Jesus Christ is one body.

When one considers this important feature of this figure, one should keep in mind a couple of true points: 1) Everyone who truly has God's Spirit in him is part of the Corporate or Universal body of Jesus Christ; 2) Every passage which discusses these truths is written in the context of a local church.

The body figure is to be applied and lived out in the context of the local church. We will certainly agree that Christ's body extends far and wide; however, the emphasis on the unity of the body must always begin in the local church. The unity of the body is a central theme of this figure—Eph. 1:22-23; 2:15-16; 3:6; 4:12-16; 5:30.

It is a shame that many in a local church do not grasp this very important theme. Some seem to gravitate into a greater unity and harmony with those who are not part of their local church. The truth is this is not what God intended. He intended a local church to be a unified body with people caring for each other in a very real family way, just as a body member does his part in helping to unify the entire body. This is the central figure used most often in the N.T. which is designed by God to give insight as to how His church is to think and function.

**(Figure #6)** - The last Adam and the New Creation.

This figure is of supreme importance in understanding what God is undertaking in this present age. Unfortunately, this figure is typically ignored in studies of Ecclesiology. The new creation as a figure of the true Church includes more than is revealed in the figure of Christ's body. In this figure of the new creation, Jesus Christ is the all-important part of the Church, whereas in the body figure the Church is joined to Christ its Head; but the Church is a whole comprised of separate members.

In the last Adam and New Creation figure, there are four key themes of doctrine:

- 1) The Resurrected Christ.
- 2) The New Creation.
- 3) The two creations requiring two commemorative days.
- 4) The final transformation.

**Theme #1** - The resurrected Christ.

Most theologies that discuss the resurrection of Jesus Christ do so in the context of apologetics as proof of the deity of Jesus Christ, which it is. The connection between Christ's resurrection and the new creation is not mentioned. However, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is far more than just a reversal of His death for as Dr. Walvoord said, "In His resurrection Christ became the pattern of glorified saints in heaven, and Christ's relationship to His church is different from anything that existed previously" (Vol. 2, p. 264). It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that makes it possible for a new creation, known as the Church.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (39)

Dr. Chafer wrote: “That Christ arose into a new sphere of reality which incorporates His glorified human body, that He became a type of Being that had not existed before, and that He became the pattern of that which glorified saints will be in heaven, are apparently themes which are little recognized by theologians of the past” (Vol. 4, p. 79).

In the N. T., prophecy concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ is uttered by Christ alone. None of His disciples could begin to believe He would die or rise from the dead if He did die. There are at least seven reasons for Christ’s resurrection:

1) Jesus Christ resurrected because of who He is.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves He is a Divine member of the Godhead (Micah 5:2; Is. 9:6); it proves He was God (Rom. 1:4).

2) Jesus Christ resurrected to fulfill biblical prophecy.

Much in the program of God hinged upon Christ’s predicted death, but much in the program of God also hinged upon Christ’s predicted resurrection (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:25-31).

3) Jesus Christ resurrected to bestow life. I Cor. 15:45; John 5:25-26; 10:18

Christ’s resurrection authorizes Him to give resurrection life. In a very real sense, the believer is now the recipient of resurrection life both in spiritual position (Col. 3:1-4) and actual possession (I Thess. 4:13-18).

4) Jesus Christ resurrected to impart power.

When Jesus Christ left this world, He made a reference to this very fact (Matt. 28:18). This resurrection power has profound implications for the N.T. Church Age believer—Rom. 6:3-4; Phil. 4:13; John 15:5. Anything we accomplish can only be accomplished through the power of God.

5) Jesus Christ resurrected to be the Head to His body, the Church.

This fact is specifically stated in Ephesians 1:20-23. Clearly the resurrection is connected to the Church for it declares Him to be the head of the Church, which is His body.

6) Jesus Christ resurrected because of our justification.

Romans 4:25 says, “He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” The expressions “because of our justification” or “for our justification” can be translated and understood as “on account of our justification.” The death of Jesus Christ was sufficient to justify the believer.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (40)

When Jesus Christ said “it is finished” (John 19:30), while hanging on the cross, He meant that everything He needed to accomplish in order to justify sinners was completed. His resurrection is the proof of and the testimony of the fact that God fully accepts Christ’s work on Calvary as a means of our justification. If Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead, believers would have no proof or evidence that they could be completely justified by faith in Jesus Christ. But since Christ has risen from the dead, it establishes that once one believes on Him they are judicially declared righteous forever—they are justified.

Let us illustrate this point. When a person goes to prison for a crime, the debt is not fully paid until he is released from prison. Being released from prison establishes the reality that the debt has been fully paid. As long as Jesus Christ was dead, there would be no established reality that the debt for sinners has been fully paid and accepted by God. But the resurrection establishes that the debt has been completely and fully paid and accepted by God. The resurrection is the proof that when one believes on Jesus Christ, he is justified. God accepted Christ’s sacrifice for our sins and when we believe on Him, He judicially declares us righteous as Holy Judge and the evidence that this takes place is the resurrection. Jesus Christ arose on account of our justification.

7) Jesus Christ resurrected as a pattern of first fruits.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ brought an entirely new world reality to this world—the actual possibility of a physical resurrection. The Bible declares in many places that believers are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:20-21; I John 3:2). In I Cor. 15:20 we read, “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.” In I Cor. 15:23 we read, “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming.” Christ’s resurrection is proof that we will have a resurrection. He was the first fruit of N.T. believers to be resurrected and, if we are not raptured, we will also have a resurrection.

Now the critical point we want to see under this figure of the last Adam and the New Creation is summed up by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer: “...Christ became the incomparable Being, the Head of a new race of humanity who not only partake of His resurrection life from the moment they are saved, but are destined to be like Him—even in respect to a glorious body—and to be as He is, adapted to heaven and eternity” (Vol. 4, p. 92).

Every one of these potential realities for us as a new creation are in one way connected to the resurrection.

**Theme #2** - The New Creation.

There are far-reaching ramifications in a verse such as Col. 1:13 which says, “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” The magnitude of this change for a human is not manifest to this world, but is certainly manifest in glory.



## ECCLESIOLOGY (41)

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said, “In truth, the individual who believes undergoes so great a change that, as he will ultimately be situated, he cannot be rated then at all as the being he was at the time he was born of the flesh. He is born of God into the household and family of God and occupies the place of an adult son; he is transferred from the fallen headship of the first Adam into the exalted and infinite Headship of the Last Adam; he is qualified through the imputed merit of Christ to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; being in Christ, he possesses every spiritual blessing and is made complete, even to the satisfaction of God; he is justified forever; his citizenship is changed from earth to heaven; he will yet be delivered from the Adamic nature and he will receive a glorious body like Christ’s resurrection body” (Vol. 4, p. 93).

II Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” This new position that one has in Jesus Christ incorporates two factors:

**(Factor #1) - The Resurrected Christ.**

The resurrected Christ guarantees the believer that he has such a new status that he is joined with that which is heavenly and will eventually be fitted for living and fellowship in the heavenlies. Believers will share in the glory of Christ in heaven (Col. 3:4).

**(Factor #2) - The New Humanity.**

When one comes to faith in Jesus Christ, he is actually united with Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit and is vitally joined to Him in a union that is absolute and eternal. This new status is described by seven great N.T. passages of Scripture.

- 1) II Cor. 5:17-18 - It is clearly stated that if any person be “in Christ” he is a new creation, which statement has to do more with position than experience.
- 2) Gal. 3:27-28 - One who is joined to Jesus Christ by faith is actually clothed with Jesus Christ to the point that there is an eternal, positional unity.
- 3) Gal. 6:15 - It is clearly stated in this verse that no work, no matter how religious, counts for a relationship with God, except being “a new creation.” One who is in Christ has the new, vital union.
- 4) Eph. 2:10 - It is stated that we are created “in Christ” positionally that we might do good works practically. But we become a new creation by faith in Christ not by good works.
- 5) Eph. 2:15 - This text emphasizes the importance of the “new man.” The immediate context is one of Jew and Gentile finding peace with God by virtue of the fact that Jesus Christ nailed the Law and commandments to His cross. One purpose of abolishing in His flesh the Law and the commandments was to make one a new person in Christ.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (42)

- 6) Eph. 4:21-24 - This is an eye-opening text for there are several important points worth noticing. The Ephesians had been taught by the apostles (4:11). This instruction was so inspiring that they could actually view it as being taught by Jesus Christ. The point is that our new position in Christ gives us the power to put off the old life and put on a new life. In other words, every person who is “in Christ” has the power to live a life not dominated by the flesh.
- 7) Col. 3:9-10 - The basis for pursuing a life of righteousness is the new life we have in Jesus Christ. We have a new position that gives us the potential power to live a new life.

From these seven passages the truth is established that there is a new creation which really occurs because of an organic union the believer has with Jesus Christ the moment he believes. Believers are now identified with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and glorification (Rom. 6:2-4). The process of salvation is only partially completed in this life since no believer reaches perfection. It is obvious that when believers stand in heaven, they will stand complete and final as the new creation.

In the new creation the phrase “in Christ” is most significant. This truth **is not** mentioned in the O.T. but appears in various ways in the N.T. approximately 130 times. Most theologies fail to mention this truth, but this truth is crucial to N.T. doctrine. One who is “in Christ” is one who has believed on Jesus Christ, and it is this one who has believed who is the new creation. It is the “in Christ” that makes one a new creation. The moment one believes that one is united with God as His child forever. From that moment on the believer is in Christ and Christ is in the believer. The believer is a new creation and instantly has position, possessions, safe-keeping and association with Christ. Jesus Christ talked about this new creation when He said, “You in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20).

**Theme #3** - The two creations requiring two commemorative days.

The opening words of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer on this subject are worth considering: “The distinction between the reign of law and the reign of grace is at no point more sharply drawn than in the question of the observance of the seventh day of the week or the first day of the week; for these two days are symbolical of the dispensations to which they are related” (Vol. 4, p. 100).

The N.T. clearly reveals that at one time the Sabbath day was observed by Israel in keeping with the fourth commandment, but that Christians who accept the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ have a commemorative day on the first day of the week instead of the seventh. Dr. Walvoord said, “The deep-seated prejudices regarding the seventh-day Sabbath and the first-day celebration of the resurrection of Christ stem from a lack of comprehension of the tremendous gulf between the Mosaic Law and the present age of grace” (Vol. 2, pg. 274).

The question of the Sabbath Day versus the First Day of the week is a question of supreme importance for at least five reasons:

## ECCLESIOLOGY (43)

- 1) It establishes how precisely one understands the doctrine of Christ's resurrection.
- 2) It establishes an individual's concept of his blessing of grace.
- 3) It helps determine the character of a believer and his comprehension of his scriptural obligation to God.
- 4) It is an important matter in the distinction of Israel and the Church.
- 5) It is an important matter of evangelism, for the enforcement of a day of rest on the first day of the week for a Christ-rejecting world has no scriptural support.

Now in order to have a biblical understanding of this matter, we would like to analyze this under two main headings:

**(Heading #1)** - The Biblical Testimony concerning the Sabbath Day.

Under this heading there are six themes to consider:

**Theme #1** - The period from Adam to Moses.

Because God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, some argue that the Sabbath was given to the entire human race beginning with creation. However, there **is no** biblical support for this view and there **is no** biblical record of any observance of the Sabbath until it was given in the fourth commandment to Moses and Israel in Ex. 20:8-11. It is interesting to observe that of the famous Ten Commandments, nine of them are repeated in the N. T., but one of them is not—the Sabbath day. The fact that there was no observance of the Sabbath day before the Mosaic Law is supported by the fact that the heathen nations, which are condemned for many things, are not condemned for breaking the Sabbath. As Dr. Walvoord said, "It would be incredible for a Sabbath to be observed for the many centuries before the Mosaic Law with no mention of it being recorded either in Scripture or in secular history" (Vol. 2, p. 275).

We get specific revelation concerning this matter in Neh. 9:13-14 and Ezek. 20:10-12. In these verses it is clearly stated that God made known the matter of the Sabbath day when He came down to Mt. Sinai and gave His Law to Moses. Furthermore, we learn from Ex. 31:12-17 that this was a sign between God and Israel and did not even pertain to Gentiles.

For example, when Gentile nations brought things to sell on the Sabbath day, there is no hint that they were wrong or rebuked, but that Israel was wrong (i.e. Neh. 10:31; 13:15-21). We know from the narrative of Israel's journeys in Exodus 16 that they were not keeping the Sabbath because we read that Israel was traveling from Elim to Sinai on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the second month, which is the first day of the week. There is no hint they were stopping for Sabbath day worship. This only occurred after Moses was given the Law.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (44)

Our conclusion, then, is that the Sabbath was not observed from the time between Adam and Moses, but was imposed on Israel as part of the Law God gave to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

**Theme #2** - The period from Moses to Christ.

From Moses to Christ, the Sabbath day was to be a day of physical rest and the whole nation of Israel was bound to observe it at the penalty of death. Any modern day concept of the Sabbath does so in total and complete disregard for the laws which governed the Sabbath. Any attempt at some Christian adaptation of the Sabbath is still a pure violation of the Law. No fire was to be kindled, no food prepared, no journey undertaken, no buying or selling permitted and no burden to be borne. Even the land was to have its Sabbath (Ex. 31:12-17; 35:3; 16:22-26; Neh. 10:31; 13:15-21). Sunday for Christians not only changes the day from Saturday to Sunday, but it is not a day of rest. It is a day of intense activity which includes public meetings, Christian service and active worship. This is totally foreign to the O.T. concept of Sabbath.

In addition to the regular Sabbath day, which occurred on the seventh day of each week, there were at least 15 additional Sabbaths cited in the O.T. on fixed days. For example, in connection with the observance of Pentecost, a Sabbath was arbitrarily set on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month Abib (March-April). Obviously this Sabbath would not always fall on the seventh day of the week. If the crucifixion of Christ was on Friday, it would appear from Mark 15:42 that the fixed Sabbath that week providentially did fall on Saturday since preparations were being made a day before on the 14<sup>th</sup> (Ex. 12:2, 6).

The truth is these Sabbath days were so poorly kept by Israel that she was carried off into 70 years of captivity to make up for her failure to observe them (Dan. 9:2-14, 20-24). Our conclusion is from Christ to Moses, the Sabbath was operative as part of the Mosaic Law, but with all other matters of the Law, Israel failed to completely and fully keep it. It was this period of time which became the prelude to the coming of Jesus Christ to nail the Law to the cross.

**Theme #3** - The period represented by the Gospels.

Much confusion about the Sabbath stems from this time period right here. This was a very peculiar period of time because during the period of the Gospels, Jesus Christ was living in the dispensation of the Law until the moment of His death. He recognized and in fact enforced the legal nature of the Sabbath as an important part of the Mosaic Law. He did, however, stress time and time again that the observance should be to the Law of God, not man-made teachings.

Because Christ refused to accept man-made additions to the Law, His teaching on the Sabbath was a major source of conflict with the Jews. For example, in Mark 2:27, Christ said that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Then He said, "Consequently the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). To the strict Jewish leader, Christ appeared to be a liberal. By making the statement that He was "Lord even of the Sabbath," He is implying that He has the authority to change the Sabbath or to abolish it forever. He abolished it forever and nailed the Law to His cross (i.e. Col. 2:14-16).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (45)

There is never a hint when Christ was here that He tried to get Gentiles to make any application of the Sabbath day. Furthermore, as Chafer said, "...there is no biblical evidence that Christ ever imposed the Jewish Sabbath on either Gentiles or Christians, but, true to the law, He did recognize its important place and obligation in relation to Israel until the reign of the Law should be terminated through His death" (Vol. 4, p. 107).

**Theme #4** - The period represented by Acts and the Epistles.

When the N.T. believer considers the matter of the Sabbath day, great attention should be given to the exact and precise teachings of the New Testament, specifically those which come after the founding of Christianity after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and after the Church Age began in Acts 2 at Pentecost. Unfortunately, when it comes to the Sabbath day question this very important matter is mostly overlooked.

When one carefully examines this biblical data, one will conclude, as Dr. Chafer did, "It should be observed first that the law, as a rule of conduct, is not once applied to the Christian, and that these Scriptures, by overwhelming revelation, assert that the law has passed, through the death of Christ. They assert that the law has ceased both as a means of justification, and as a rule of life for the one who is justified (John 1:16-17; Rom. 6:14; 7:1-6; II Cor. 3:1-18; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Gal. 3:19-25)" (Vol. 4, p. 108).

There are those who try and claim that the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, in which the Sabbath day is embedded (Ex. 20), was not of the Law and therefore did not terminate with the death of Christ. However, when one examines texts such as Rom. 7:7-14 or II Cor. 3:7-14, it becomes biblically clear that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross with all of the other statutes and ordinances of the Law.

Two other points are noteworthy on this issue. If the Sabbath day were applicable to Christians, there is no biblical evidence that the early Christians felt obligated to observe it and second, there is no hint of instruction in the teachings of the Grace Age which incorporate Sabbath day mandates.

When we trace the Sabbath day theme through Acts and the Epistles, here is what we discover:

1) In Acts, the word Sabbath is used nine times and wherever it is used it is used in reference to the unbelieving Jew. Not once in the book of Acts is it stated or even implied that Christians kept the Sabbath day. It is said that the Apostle Paul went to the synagogues on the Sabbath day as he took advantage of their meeting together as a means of speaking to them. But apart from this purpose, to speak to unbelieving Jews, there is no hint that Paul went to a synagogue on the Sabbath day to worship God.

2) In the Epistles, no Christian is ever said to have observed the Sabbath day. If the early believer did observe the Sabbath, there is no such incident mentioned in the bible.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (46)

Not one N.T. believer is ever rebuked for not keeping the Sabbath and we have clear Pauline instruction that the believer should not let anyone judge them on Sabbath day matters (Col. 2:16-17). The obvious implication is that one is able to defend sound theology and doctrine on this matter.

The Law was a shadow of the true rest and reality that is found in Jesus Christ. Many times in the N.T. Epistles, Christians are challenged not to put themselves back under the Law but to enjoy the fullness that is in Christ (i.e. Gal. 4:9-10). N.T. believers are exhorted “not to forsake themselves from assembling together,” but they are not exhorted to observe the Sabbath.

### **Theme #5 - The Sabbath in Prophecy.**

The Scriptures clearly predict that there would come a day when God would cause the Sabbath day to cease in the context of a judgment directly from Him (Hosea 2:10-11). This prophecy is being fulfilled right now during this Church Age and began on the Day of Pentecost. God does not recognize Jewish worship on the Sabbath day during this present age. Again we cite Dr. Chafer: “These Jewish observances which were to cease included all her Sabbaths. They ceased at the beginning of this age of grace, **so far as any recognition from God is concerned**” Vol. 4, p. 111).

The Scriptures also prophetically predict that Israel’s Sabbath will be reinstated in the Great Tribulation and the millennial Kingdom (Matt. 24:20; Is. 66:23). Also it is predicted that during the Millennium, the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem will be shut for six working days and then be opened on the Sabbath and the New Moon (Ezek. 46:1).

### **Theme #6 - The exact day of the Sabbath.**

The belief that a precise and exact observance of the Sabbath day exists in our present day is completely without any foundation. People who believe they truly observe the O.T. Sabbath are living in a fairytale world.

Besides the weekly Sabbath day, which fell on Saturday, there were specific fixed Sabbaths throughout the year that did not have any relationship whatsoever with the seventh day Sabbath. Each one of them began at sunset and ended with the next sunset. This obviously is a very simple thing if it is in reference to Israel in her land. However, when one tries to apply it to a whole day, there is real difficulty because of different time zones. Obviously there cannot be uniform observance when we live in different time zones.

Dr. Chafer makes an important observation on this point: “Who can trace the exact moment, day, or year, through Eden, the flood, the bondage in Egypt, and the dark ages? Yet apart from the assurance that Saturday at a given place on the earth is the exact day in rotation of weeks from creation, there is no basis for the claim to the sacredness of the exact time to be observed.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (47)

Ignorant people are too often encouraged in the belief that they are actually celebrating the rest of God in creation when they observe the hours as they fall on Saturday in the locality where they chance to live. It is therefore the manner of the observance of the day, and not the exact time, which is in question. Shall it be the seventh day, or the first day? It must be one or the other; for there is nothing more unreasonable, illogical, and unbiblical than the observance of the seventh day with confusion of Christian issues of worship and service, which is the practice of every Sabbatarian; or the observance of the first day with confusion of the Sabbath law, which is the present practice of Christendom. **There would be little occasion for discussion of the question if the simple distinctions between law and grace were recognized**" (Vol. 4, p. 113).

**(Heading #2)** - The Biblical Testimony concerning the Lord's Day.

As we begin our journey through this important doctrine, we again open with the words of Dr. Chafer: "Even a cursory reading of those portions of Scripture which condition the daily life of the Christian will reveal the fact that, while every other fundamental principle of righteousness found in the Decalogue is restated in the teachings of grace, the Sabbath is not once imposed upon the believer. On the contrary, as before shown, there is explicit warning against the observance of a Sabbath Day. This is a fact of revelation which should not be overlooked. Throughout the history of the church, a new day has been observed which superseded the Jewish Sabbath, and this change of days has not been contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures, as some insist; it has, rather, been according to the revealed plan and purpose of God" (*Ibid.*, p. 113).

There has been a change of days and there are reasons why there has been a change of days:

**Reason #1** - There has been a change of days from Sabbath to Lord's Day because the Mosaic system has ceased.

The entire Mosaic system which includes its Sabbath day and days has given way to the reign of grace. There is ample biblical revelation concerning this truth and yet there appears to be a group of Christians who do not understand or accept this inspired revelation of God. We are not under law, we are under grace. When it comes to the Lord's Day issue, professing Christians who do not have a handle on this theme can be broken down into two groups: 1) Those who persist in the observance of the seventh day; 2) Those who observe the first day, yet fill it with the character of the Jewish Sabbath and observe it in the context of the O.T. Law.

Both groups actually think they are partially fulfilling the Law of Moses. What is so bizarre is that we have clear testimony that the Law of Moses was never subject to a partial observance. God demands complete and total obedience to every element of the Law as He said, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (48)

**Reason #2** - There has been a change of days from Sabbath to Lord's Day because a new day has been Divinely appointed under grace.

According to Psalm 118:22-24, the new day, which obviously exists after the stone has been rejected, is to be a day of rejoicing and there is no hint of it being a day of resting. This Psalm is a clear prediction of Christ's events (Acts 4:10-12).

The resurrection was appointed to take place on a certain day which the Lord had determined and that day, by Divine intention, was to be celebrated as Scriptures teach. The first Lord's Day, the day Christ arose on the first day of the week, was to become the pattern for the Lord's days which would follow. It began early in the morning, continued with His precious fellowship and closed with His benediction of peace. From that early morning to its close, that day was a day of worship, activity and rejoicing. This is quite a contrast to the Sabbath day which began with the setting of the sun, not the rising of it and demanded complete cessation of activity and perfect rest. The Lord's Day was a day appointed for N.T. Christians to observe a brand new relationship with God that was linked to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Dr. Chafer said, "The Christian has an unchangeable day. He may extend its observance to all days, but he cannot change the one day, which is divinely appointed, any more than Israel, or anyone else, could change the divinely appointed seventh day. A change of the first day to another breaks the symbolic meaning of the day as it represents the true relationship under grace. It results in robbing Christ of that glory which is His alone. This is one of the wrongs committed by all those who persist in an attempted seventh-day observance. The two days do not present an optional choice to the Christian. The choice between these days is one which carries either acceptance or rejection of the most vital relationships between Christ and the believer under grace" (Vol. 4, p. 116).

**Reason #3** - There has been a change of days from Sabbath to Lord's Day because a new day is indicated by important events.

Beginning with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and following, every event recorded in the N.T. which has important spiritual significance fell on the first day of the week, or what is referred to as the Lord's Day. When one carefully explores the teachings of grace, one quickly observes that the Sabbath is set aside and a new day takes its place. Some may say there is no direct commandment for the keeping of the Lord's Day (which certainly coincides with the entire grace system). However, there is a direct and explicit command against the observance of the Sabbath day (Col. 2:14-16). No mention of observance of the seventh day occurs in Acts or the Epistles.

The most important event of all which occurred on the first day of the week was that Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week, as every Gospel writer points out (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). When we travel through the book of Acts, we discover that the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week to hear God's Word and to break bread (Acts 20:7). We also know that when instruction was given to the N.T. Grace Age Church, believers came together for worship, which included giving offerings on the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:2).



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**Reason #4** - There has been a change of days from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day because a new day typifies the new creation.

In Col. 2:11, the Apostle Paul, writing in the context of the fact that we have been made complete in Jesus Christ, speaks of a circumcision we have received which has been accomplished by God "without hands." Physical circumcision as a rite was part of the covenant God made with Abraham and Israel which was to be performed on the eighth day (Gen. 17:9-12). Dr. Chafer observed: "The eighth day was the first day following a completed week. It is thus a picture of that new order which came through the death and resurrection of Christ. ...Not only has the old nature been judged in the crucifixion, death and burial of the Son of God, and the new victory in the resurrection life of Christ has been made possible, but, for the believer, the old creation went into that tomb and a new creation with its heavenly power and glory came out. The old creation was abolished and with it the Sabbath which commemorated it. Only a new standing in the resurrected Christ abides and this both demands and provides a new day. That new day is the eighth day, or the first day following the ending of the old creation" (Vol. 4, p. 119).

The new day which typifies the new creation is not the seventh day, but the eighth day or the first day of the week.

**Reason #5** - There has been a change of days from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day because a new day typifies unmerited grace.

In the O.T., believing Israel rested from her labors on the seventh day. In the N.T., a believer observes the first day of the week in recognition that he has been delivered from the Mosaic Law and from legalism and has been delivered into a new position of God's amazing grace. The first day of the week for the N.T. believer is a day of ceaseless worship and service because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. The Age of Grace is characterized by liberty and freedom which is in total contrast to the legalism of the seventh day Sabbath.

**Reason #6** - There has been a change of days from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day because ever since the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a new day has been observed.

Those who support some Sabbath day concept (called Sabbatarians) usually claim that the Sabbath was kept by the early church until the day was changed by the Emperor Constantine in the year A.D. 321. But as Dr. Chafer said, "There is no ground for this erroneous and misleading teaching. The Sabbath was never changed. It could not be" (Vol. 4, p. 120).

In the N.T., there is no record of a Christian keeping the Sabbath day even because he was theologically confused. On the other hand, there is tremendous evidence that the N.T. believer met on the first day of the week. When we travel back through the historical testimony of the early Church fathers, we see conclusive evidence that the early church was meeting on the first day of the week ever since the book of Acts:

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- 1) Barnabas, one of the apostolic fathers, in A.D. 70 wrote: “Finally He saith, ‘Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me. I shall make a new beginning of the eighth day, that is the beginning of another order of the world,’ wherefore also we keep the Lord’s Day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose from the dead.”
- 2) Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, in A.D. 110 wrote: “Those who walked in the ancient practices attain unto newness of hope no longer observing Sabbaths, but fashioning their lives after the Lord’s Day, on which our life also rose through him that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ, our only teacher.”
- 3) Justin Martyr, in A.D. 135 wrote: “Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God having wrought a change in the darkness and matter made the world and Jesus Christ our Saviour, on the same day, rose from the dead. And on the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. On the Lord’s Day all Christians in the city or country meet together because that is the day of our Lord’s resurrection; and then we read the apostles and prophets. This being done, the president (presiding minister) makes an oration (verbal admonition) to the assembly exhorting them to imitate and to practice the things which they have heard, and then we all join in prayer, and after we celebrate the Lord’s Supper.”
- 4) The Didache of the Apostles, compiled and put into print from A.D. 70 to 140 says, “On the Lord’s own Day do you gather yourselves together to break bread and give thanks.”
- 5) Iranaeus, the Bishop of Lyons, in A.D. 178 wrote: “The mystery of the Lord’s resurrection may not be celebrated on any other day than the Lord’s Day.”
- 6) Bardesanes, who wrote about A.D. 180 wrote: “Wherever we be, all of us are called by the one name of the Messiah, namely Christians, and upon one day, which is the first day of the week, we assembly ourselves together...”
- 7) Clement of Alexandria, in A.D. 194 wrote, “The old Sabbath Day has become nothing more than a working day (to Christians).”
- 8) Tertullian of Carthage, in A.D. 220 wrote concerning sun worshippers: “Though we share with them Sunday, we are not apprehensive lest we seem to be heathen.”
- 9) Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, in A.D. 253 wrote: “The Lord’s Day is both the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> day.”
- 10) Eusebius, the famed Church historian, in A.D. 253 wrote: “The churches throughout the rest of the world observe the practice that has prevailed from apostolic tradition until the present time so that it would not be proper to terminate our fast on any other day but the resurrection day of our Saviour.

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Hence there were synods and convocations of our Bishops on this question and all unanimously drew up an ecclesiastical decree which they communicated to churches in all places—that the mystery of the Lord’s resurrection should be celebrated on no other than the Lord’s day.”

These testimonies and this line of unbroken evidence concerning Sunday as the day of worship traces right back to the N.T. long before the Emperor Constantine or any Pope made any decree about the first day of the week. The Jewish Sabbath was abolished and a new day was clearly observed—the first day of the week.

**Reason #7** - There has been a change of days from the Sabbath to the Lord’s Day because a new day has been truly blessed by God.

New Testament Christians who are serious about God’s Word and will have observed the first day of the week for almost 2000 years and during this period of time these Christians have been the recipients of the manifold blessings of God. Throughout Church history, the most devoted believers, martyrs, missionaries and greatest Bible teachers who have ever graced the world, people who truly know and do the will of God, have faithfully worshipped on the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week.

What arrogance and ignorance it is to try and say they missed the Sabbath day of worship. Dr. Chafer said something profound on this point: “It is a very serious charge to say that all these faithful saints have been disobedient, or as some Sabbatarians now call all Christians who do not keep Sabbath, ‘heretics, deceivers, having the mark of the Beast and blinded by Satan.’”

The truth is Sunday has been a day that people go to church to be fed God’s Word and many lives have been truly blessed by God and transformed by the renewing of the mind because of this day. If one could see into the historical fact book of God for the past 2000 years, I am certain one would conclude that more people have been evangelized, educated and edified on Sunday than on any other day. People have real life-transforming encounters with God on the Lord’s Day when they go to a church that faithfully ministers God’s Word. For the past 2000 years, there have been more book studies of the Bible, more doctrine studies, more hymns sung, more offerings given on Sundays than any other day. To disregard this historical data is to truly disregard blessings which God has given. Many a believer gets up on Sunday, truly having experienced many times before and expecting to experience that very day a personal encounter with God at church. This is not imagined, this is real and countless numbers of believers can say “Amen” to this observation.

When one is honest and accurate with the Word of God, with dispensations, with theology and with historical fact, one will conclude the N.T. believer is not under law but grace and this N.T. Grace Age features a brand new day in which we gather together, the first day of the week. It is not an old Sabbath; it is a brand new day given for this age.

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### **Theme #4** - The final transformation.

Much that happens to the believer who is the new creation is already accomplished for him. However, there are at least three great benefits for the believer which are deferred to the future:

**(Benefit #1)** - The believer will eventually be released from the sin nature.

All of us who know the Lord, also know of a lifelong conflict we have had with our sin nature. We have battled this nature ever since we could make choices and this warfare is further intensified by the world and Satan. There is no question that Gal. 5:17 informs us that our flesh is in total opposition to the Spirit of God. Near the end of his life, Paul alluded to this warfare in II Tim. 4:6-8. His days of warring were finally over. Ultimately, for the believer victory will come. At the end of life's journey, via death or the Rapture, every believer will be released from this old nature and what a day that will be. This is a glorious promise to one who knows the Lord.

**(Benefit #2)** - The believer will actually occupy a citizenship in heaven.

The believer in Jesus Christ is destined for glory. Once we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we become such a new creation that this world is no longer our home. We are strangers and pilgrims just passing through until we are transported to our real "home-center" in glory, which is ours by virtue of our heavenly citizenship. It is an amazing thing to think about, but you who know the Lord, actually by your birth and title have right to a place in heaven. Although this has obviously not happened to us yet, we are truly destined for glory.

**(Benefit #3)** - The believer will ultimately possess a transformed body.

The third deferred benefit of our salvation which will be realized at the end of this life is the benefit of having and occupying a new transformed body. As Dr. Chafer said, "In respect to the physical or material part of the believer, a stupendous metamorphosis awaits him" (Vol. 4, p. 124). Again there are two possibilities of the way this may be processed – 1) He may occupy this new body via death and resurrection; 2) He may occupy this new body via rapture. It is clearly predicted that the N.T. believer will have a body like unto Jesus Christ's glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21).

In I Cor. 15:42-44, we get a glimpse of four contrasts between our old body and our new transformed body: 1) Our old body is perishable, our new body will not be perishable (15:42); 2) Our old body is buried in dishonor and humiliation, our new body will be raised in glory (15:43); 3) Our old body is buried as a weak body, but our new body will be raised a powerful body (15:43); 4) Our old body is buried a natural body, but our new body will be raised a spiritual body which is capable of ministry in heaven and on earth (15:44). All of these benefits will be ours in the future because we are a new creation. We don't have them yet, but we will have simply because we have believed on Jesus Christ.

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### **(Figure #7) - The Bridegroom and the Bride.**

The seventh and final figure which God gives us in order that we may have good insight into truth pertaining to the N.T. Church is the Bridegroom and the Bride. In order to understand this figure, there are seven points that need to be analyzed: 1) This figure in contrast with Israel; 2) The description of Christ's knowledge-surpassing love; 3) The assurance of the Bride's authority in the relationship; 4) The assurance and revelation of the Bride's position above all other created beings; 5) The surety of the Bride's infinite glory; 6) The fulfillment of the Bride in types; 7) The actual meaning of this figure. If these seven points are analyzed and understood, one will have a very good grasp of exactly what this figure was designed to teach.

### **Point #1 - The figure of the Bridegroom and the Bride in contrast to Israel.**

A major source of doctrinal error is the confusion between the Church and Israel. A common theological error which is often made is the concept that the Church is the successor of Israel. This concept is **not ever** and **nowhere** taught in Scripture. One man who thought and taught this was E. W. Bullinger, who totally recanted his position before his death. Bullinger finally came to realize that Israel and the Church were two distinct entities. The problem seems to arise because God uses the figure of marriage and relates it to both Israel and the Church. However, the figure is in no way the same.

Israel is viewed by God as an unfaithful wife (i.e. Hosea 2:2). The Church, on the other hand, is viewed as the Virgin Bride who will be claimed by Christ at the Rapture (II Cor. 11:1-2). There are many passages in both the O.T. and the N.T. which draw this important distinction—Is. 54:5-6; Jer. 3:1, 14, 20; Ezek. 16:1-59; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7-8.

### **Point #2 - The description of Christ's knowledge-surpassing love.**

In Eph. 3:17-21, the Apostle Paul specifically prayed that the Ephesian Christians may know the infinite love of God. The obvious implication of this prayer is that knowledge of Christ's love for the Church and for His bride can only be grasped by Divine illumination. In other words, no scholar will ever on his own grasp the essence of this love. The words of Dr. Chafer on this point are very profound: "The love in which they might be rooted and grounded is not some feeble love these believers might experience toward God, but it is the love of God toward them—the love which has chosen them, which has predestined them, which has adopted them, which has made them accepted in the Beloved, which has redeemed them, which has provided an inheritance for them, which has sealed them by the Spirit, which has quickened them, and which has raised them and seated them in the heavenly in Christ Jesus" (Vol. 4, p. 133).

Twice in Ephesians 5, Paul mentions the infinite sacrifice of Christ as an expression of love for His bride—Eph. 5:2 and Eph. 5:25-27. The total attention and love of God is focused on His Church. It is a shame that believers do not grasp this point. The believer who is naturally in Christ cannot ever be separated from the love of God which is found in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:38-39).

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In connection with the love of Christ for His Church, in Eph. 5:25 husbands are exhorted to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. If we examine several of the contexts that deal with the theme of love, we may conclude that this love is permanent (John 13:1; Rom. 8:38-39), controlled, truthful and enduring (I Cor. 13:4-7). It is a loyal love and it is deep and sacrificial (Eph. 5:25). This is the way husbands are to love their wives, this is the way God loves the Church and this is the way we should love the Church.

People who always threaten to leave a church or those who are not loyal and truthful and controlled and those who are not willing to make sacrifices for the church have no perception of what God wants.

**Point #3** - The assurance of the Bride's authority.

I doubt very seriously that this thought is ever considered for it if were, people's attitudes concerning the Church would certainly be different than they are. The Church is responsible to Jesus Christ; He is the head of the Church, but by virtue of the fact that the Church is His bride, the Church is at the most elevated place of privilege in this world. Just as a bride becomes a co-sharer in everything with her husband, so the Church becomes a co-sharer with Christ in His reign.

When one thinks in these terms, one must realize that there is no higher institution in this age than the Church. The Church is His bride and it does have authority with Him right now. Those who think lightly of the Church or those who try and destroy the Church are tampering with the Bride of Jesus Christ and they will reap what they have sown.

God so highly thinks of the Church that He describes it as a "royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9). If this truth were really known and believed, the Church would be the place of great governmental position, power and authority. It is in the mind of God, but it isn't in the mind of most.

**Point #4** - The assurance and revelation of the Bride's position above all other created beings.

Think of this—the Church is the Bride of the second member of the Trinity. By virtue of Christ's majesty, there can be no higher exalted position. The Lord Jesus announced that He was personally preparing a place for His bride to live (John 14:3). When considering this, it is truly "sublime elevation." Jesus Christ wants His bride to live with Him in glory and He specifically makes this request to God the Father (John 17:24). As the wife of Jesus Christ, the Church will share in the glory of Christ which exalts Him above any creature or power (Eph. 1:20-21).

Again, of all the created things of God, no higher position exists in this age than the Church. When we begin to view the Church as the greatest of all places, the most powerful, the most wonderful and prestigious, we are beginning to think accurately and biblically.

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### **Point #5** - The surety of the Bride's infinite glory.

Very closely connected to the high and holy position, which is given to the Church by God, is the truth that she will be glorified with Him in glory. Dr. Chafer observed: "A glance at an unabridged concordance will reveal the fact that a vast body of Scripture concerns this coming glory. Upward of 180 times this word is used in the New Testament, and the major portion of the references bear on the glory of Christ" (Vol. 4, p. 136).

According to Rom. 8:17, the Church will share in the glory of Christ. In thinking about this, Christ talked extensively about His glory while on earth. He spoke of the glory He had with the Father in eternity past (John 17:5). He spoke of the glory of His transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). He also spoke of the glory that would be revealed to the disciples when they are with Him in glory (John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4). The believer is promised a body that will be made like the body of Christ in glory (I Cor. 15:43; Phil. 3:21). As the bride of Christ, the Church will be glorified by Christ Himself.

In thinking of this analogy, it is well for the student of the Word to remember that when Christ was here the first time, He did not look too impressive. In fact, there was nothing spectacular about His look whatsoever. However, the next time He is seen, He will be seen in all of His glory. So it is with His bride the Church. The Church does accomplish powerful things for God, but most of those things are not visible. The true Church right now does not look too impressive and in many instances is the least esteemed place in the community. However, there will come a day when the true Church will be seen in all of her authority.

### **Point #6** - The fulfillment of the Bride in types.

Whether or not they are specifically designated a type of the exalted position the bride of Christ would have, there are several O.T. women who foreshadowed the special relationship Christ would have with His bride:

- 1) Eve - Eve is related to Adam, as the Church is related to Jesus Christ. Adam was the federal head of the old creation and Jesus Christ is the federal head of the new creation (Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49). Just as Adam had a bride, so does Jesus Christ. Eve was formed from Adam's side (Gen. 2:21-22). The type is obvious; the Church is formed by the physical sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- 2) Rebekah - There is no question that Isaac, Abraham's son, is a type of Christ being the "only begotten" son (Heb. 11:17/Gen. 22:2). This means, then, that Rebekah, Isaac's bride, is a picture of the Church. Isaac was obedient to his father's plan, which included obedience to the point of death. His miraculous birth to Abraham and Sarah in their old age is not just a type of miraculous birth, but miraculous resurrection (Heb. 11:19). As Abraham sent his servant to secure a bride for Isaac, so God the Father sent His Holy Spirit to secure a bride for Christ.

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As the Church is foreknown in election and as the bride is chosen, so the servant of Abraham was directed to the young woman who was selected by God to be the bride of Isaac (Gen. 24:12-61). Rebekah's faith is seen in the fact that she willingly left her home to go with a servant she had not previously known and was willing to marry a man she had never seen. In a similar way, the Church loves Christ even though He has not yet been seen (I Pet. 1:8). The many golden ornaments and jewels given to Rebekah were a foreshadow of the riches she would enjoy as the bride of Isaac. In a similar picture, God gives many blessings to His Church now which are but tokens of the wealth His bride will someday enjoy. Rebekah's journey from her home to the home of Isaac illustrates the Christian's pilgrim walk. As the servant of Abraham revealed to Rebekah things about her future husband Isaac, so the Holy Spirit reveals to the Church things about God and her future husband, Jesus Christ (John 16:13-15; I Cor. 2:9-13). Finally, after the pilgrimage from Rebekah's home, she was joined to Isaac and so there will be a similar union with the Church and Jesus Christ.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer lists seven parallels between Rebekah and the Church (pp. 139-41):

- 1) The Father undertakes in behalf of His Son to find Him a suitable bride.
- 2) The Father sends a trusted servant to find that bride He has already chosen.
- 3) There is a specific election of one who is chosen from the many.
- 4) There is a demonstration of Rebekah's faith in being willing to respond to one she had not previously known.
- 5) There was the foretaste of Isaac's riches given to her.
- 6) There was the pilgrim journey of Rebekah being guided by the servant.
- 7) There was finally the union.

A lengthy and yet profitable doctrinal quote on this very picture from J. Denham Smith, is worth the time to consider: "But what of Isaac? He had been all this while simply passive-waiting the result; like our coming Lord, who all these centuries has been in the presence of the Father waiting the result. When the divine Eliezer, the Spirit who is the great soul-gatherer, has done His present work, Christ will come. This now is where our divine tale deepens in interest; for the 'day breaks, and the shadows flee away.' Isaac has come; he is free, at sweetest leisure simply meditating. It was not in his home that he first met her, nor was it in that which she had left. Their place of meeting was in the quiet field, and in the quiet hour of evening—suited to the scene. Isaac had come from the well Lahai-roi, that is, 'the presence of Him that liveth and seeth.' He came alone, as if he would have undisturbed joy in meeting with her who he knew had left all for him. He came at evening-time, near the world's night; but to her it was as the morning of joy. She had a veil, and had covered herself—self-hidden in the presence of Christ. And now see! she alights from the camel. You understand: there is no more desert-ruggedness now! No more dangerous steps and weary ways now! The time of her rest and joy has come; the longed-for moment has come. What a meeting! what a taking to each other! For Isaac now 'took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.' How suggestive is all this! For it is the world's evening now, but our 'night is far spent, and the day is at hand'—'for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed' (Rom. 13:11).



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And what reality it gives to our hopes when we know that He who was once a Savior for us here will come again to us—as He said, ‘I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:3).’ What a home-taking that will be! He will then be seen not, in His own Home, or down here in the wilderness where we now are, but in these lower heavens as the Morning Star, to herald the departure of this the long night of our separation and death. The Morning Star is that peaceful luminary which always precedes the rising of the sun; its scene is just above the horizon, but below the higher heavens. Thus, in like manner, the Lord when He comes will descend from heaven to the air, and we who are alive and remain, together with those who sleep in Jesus, will be caught up to meet Him in the air. Thence He will take us to the Father’s house, thence again to reign over His kingdom. We shall be forever with the Lord. And then we too shall alight from all our care, from all suffering, and from sin; and from ourselves, as having within us this present evil root of sin, and this evil heart of unbelief. We shall alight from the last grief, the last pain, and the last sorrow” (Op. Cit., pp. 36-38).

3) Ruth – In the book of Ruth, Boaz is the kinsman-redeemer who marries Ruth, even though she is a Moabitess. Boaz was a man of great wealth (2:1) who took Ruth as his wife. Ruth demonstrates a humble obedience to Boaz and she ultimately gives birth to Obed, the grandfather of David. Boaz is a type of Christ and Ruth is a Gentile bride, which makes her a type of the Church. The Church is to humbly submit to the authority of Jesus Christ and she will produce eternal fruit.

These are three examples of bride-types in the Old Testament, which do foreshadow the relationship Jesus Christ would have with His bride.

**Point #7** - The actual meaning of the figure.

The symbolism of Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as the Bride is one of profound implication and application. The love Christ has for His bride is unsurpassing. There is a unity and intimacy between Christ and His bride which is only found in this relationship. The bride of Jesus Christ holds a high position of authority not only in this age, but in the age to come. When we think of this figure we should think very soberly about the Church. We should view the Church as the most sacred of places and the most sacred of relationships. Our relationship with the Church should never be taken lightly. Those who think they can enter into a deep relationship with God apart from the Church are very foolish, for the Church is Christ’s bride and if one wants to enter into the deepest relationship possible with God, one must be part of the Church.

There is much to be learned from these seven figures of the Church (our study began on p. 26). Combined, the figures of the Shepherd and the Sheep, the Vine and the Branches, the Cornerstone and the Stones, the High Priests and the Kingdom of Priests, the Head and the Body, the Last Adam and New Creation and the Bridegroom and the Bride give us good insight into the Church.

## **ECCLESIOLOGY (58)**

**QUESTION #13** – What is the believer’s rule of life in this Church Age?

The second most important matter pertaining to life after the saving of the soul is “the art of living a daily life which is well-pleasing to God.” Unfortunately, it is right at this point where most theologies and ministries fail. Many people are exhorted to keep the Law or the Decalogue. The majority of ministries make the Mosaic economy the sum and substance of human responsibility.

Most people have a concept of worthy conduct equaling lack of punishment. This principle is usually taught in home life, school life and civic life. It is right here where a major problem arises. It is certainly natural for an individual who from childhood has been subject to this principle—if I do what is right, I do not get punished—to conclude that man’s relationship with God must be one of merit. It is right at this point, where the student of Scripture must carefully discern what God has actually said.

In order to understand this very important theme, we need to analyze dispensational time periods. It is evident when one studies the Bible that in different periods of time, God required moral codes that differed in many respects.

### **1. The Pre-Mosaic Economy**

We know that before God gave His Law to Moses and Israel, there were certain requirements God set forth to certain people. For example, in Gen. 2:17, Adam and Eve were informed by God that they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for if they did they would be penalized with death. It is clear from Genesis 4 that apparently God had revealed the importance of a blood sacrifice in order to be right with Him (Gen. 4:3-4). In fact, God classified Abel’s sacrifice as being the right offering (4:7). Furthermore, we learn that Abraham obeyed whatever requirements God had given to him (Gen. 26:5). Even though the Law had not been given, there was obviously a unique direction and instruction from God that pertained to His people. There was in this time frame an obligation to obey God, even though we are not certain as to all that was involved. Apparently godly people received direct revelation from God which is not recorded in Scripture. We know from Rom. 5:13 that this obligation to obey God was based to some extent on the amount of revelation. There were moral requirements, but there was no Mosaic Law in the pre-Mosaic economy.

### **2. The Mosaic Economy**

With the coming of Moses and the development of the nation Israel, the Mosaic Law was given which included God’s instruction for Israel’s civil, religious and moral life. In this Law were more than 600 detailed laws, including a variety of rituals. As Dr. Walvoord said, “The purpose of the Law was to reveal sin (Rom. 5:20; 7:7; Gal. 3:19) and to demonstrate man’s need of Christ (v. 24).

There are two very important truths which must be emphasized concerning the Mosaic Law:

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- 1) The Mosaic Law was never addressed to Gentiles, except Israelites as proselytes.
- 2) The Mosaic Law was never a way of salvation.

Again we cite Dr. Walvoord: “Salvation is not given in response to obeying commands. It is given to those in every age who place their trust in God for forgiveness of sin. The Mosaic sacrificial system was given as a means of restoring fellowship with God for believers who fell into sin. The sacrifices were to be offered by Israelites who had placed their faith in Yahweh. Apart from this faith, the sacrifices were meaningless rituals” (p. 312).

It is very clear in the Old Testament that righteousness could be received only by faith and not works (Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4). In the Mosaic period there was grace along with law, just as in the present there is law along with grace. In the Bible, the word “law” does not always refer to the Mosaic system or any part of it. We observe the following concerning the subject of law:

- 1) The Ten Commandments are God’s Law (Luke 10:25-28; Rom. 7:7-14).
- 2) The entire governing code for Israel, found in Exodus and Leviticus, is the Law.
- 3) The governing rule of life to take place in the Messianic Kingdom may be classified as Law. This is not the Mosaic Law, but the Millennial Law.
- 4) Any rule of conduct prescribed by men may be classified as law (I Tim. 1:8-9; II Tim. 2:5; Luke 20:22).
- 5) Any recognized principle of action is a law and sometimes is equivalent to power (Rom. 7:21; 8:2).
- 6) The entire will of God reaching to every detail of the believer’s life is the Law of God, but should be distinguished from the Mosaic Law (Rom. 7:22; 8:4, 7-8).
- 7) The will of Christ for the believer in this present age is the “law of Christ” (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2).

The dominating factor difference between the present Grace Age system and the past Mosaic Law system is “God is dealing with believers on a **gracious** basis rather than on a **meritorious** basis.”

In the O.T. Mosaic system, the commandments regulated Israel’s moral issues (Ex. 20), the judgments regulated Israel’s civic issues (Ex. 21:1-24:11), and the ordinances regulated Israel’s religious issues (Ex. 24:12-31:18).

The Mosaic Law was a temporal rule of life, **not** an eternal rule of life. Before the Mosaic Law was given, the laws did not apply and after the Mosaic Law was concluded, the Law is no longer the basic moral code for N.T. Christians.

The Law was given to Israel not to create an obedient people, but to prove their utter sinfulness and helplessness (Gal. 3:19; Rom. 7:8). The Law was never given as a means of salvation or justification (Gal. 3:11, 24) and therefore the Law became a curse to Israel, bringing her to condemnation (II Cor. 3:9).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (60)

The biggest problem for this age is when people in the Grace Age try to apply laws from the Mosaic Age. The Mosaic Law was given only to the children of Israel. The Apostle Paul made it very clear that it is to the Israelites who were given the covenants, the Law, the temple worship (Rom. 9:4-5). It is not the intent of Scripture for N.T. believers to impose the Mosaic system of law on themselves, as we shall see the N.T. believer operates under an entire new system of grace.

### 3. The Future Kingdom Economy

Much of the confusion concerning Grace Age living is due to a seeming disregard to rightly divide the Word on texts that pertain to the future Kingdom Age, when Christ reigns as King of Israel for 1000 years. We would naturally expect that when Jesus Christ is reigning in perfect righteousness as King of Israel over the entire world, the system of behavior and life will be drastically different.

This Kingdom Age will come after the Great Tribulation. The Kingdom teachings will be found in the O.T. Psalms and O.T. prophecies which anticipate the reign of the Messiah on the earth. They will also be found in the Kingdom portions of the Gospels. There will be two very unique features of this Kingdom Age: 1) Jesus Christ will reign with a rigid righteousness from Jerusalem that will swiftly execute judgment upon a sinner (Is. 2:1-4; 11:1-5); 2) Jesus Christ will have put His laws into the minds and hearts of all who are living in this Kingdom (Jer. 31:31-40; Heb. 8:7-12).

A helpful perspective of the differences between these ages may be seen in key words of the age:

- 1) The key words of the Mosaic system are law and obedience.
- 2) The key words of the Kingdom system are righteousness and peace.
- 3) The key words of the present system are believe and grace.

One of the key books of the N.T. which present Kingdom instruction for Israel is Matthew. In this book a strong prohibition was given by Jesus Christ not to take the Kingdom message to any Gentile or Samaritan (Matt. 10:5-6; 15:24). The Kingdom message is for Israel. A phrase which is peculiar to Matthew is the phrase "kingdom of heaven." This particular phrase specifically refers to God's rule on earth. The other phrase "kingdom of God" has more to do with God's rule throughout the universe. The term "kingdom of heaven" was used by Christ to announce to Israel that the Kingdom blessings which had been promised by God to Israel were "at hand" when He was on earth. The Gospel of the Kingdom **is not** to be confused with the Gospel of saving grace.

At Christ's birth, He was hailed "King of the Jews." In His public ministry He took up His Kingdom message as the King of the Jews. At His entrance into Jerusalem, He was acknowledged as King. At His trial before Pilate, He was charged with being King of the Jews (Matt. 27:11). In fact, He was given a crown of thorns in view of the fact that He was King of the Jews (Matt. 27:29).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (61)

Make no mistake about this doctrine—the crown of thorns had absolutely no significance in regard to the sacrificial death for sin; it was a sign that the people derided Him and mocked Him for His King and Kingship claim. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer makes an important observation here: “There should be no confusion at this point. The rulers of the nation who demanded His death were not personally rejecting a Savior, as sinners are rejecting Him now; they were rejecting their King. They did not say, ‘We will not believe on the Savior to the salvation of our souls’; they said, ‘We have no king but Caesar’” (Vol. 4, p. 174).

The Kingdom concept will be found in the first ministry of Jesus Christ. In this, He did not appear as personal Savior, but as Israel’s long-anticipated Messiah and King. The famous Sermon on the Mount found in Matt. 5-7 is not a Grace Age Church treatise; it is the manifesto of the King declaring the essence of character which will be required in the Kingdom and the conditions necessary for Israel to enter that Kingdom. These teachings are different from the Law and different from grace. The great kingdom words “righteousness and peace” are dominant in these chapters and there is never a reference to “salvation and grace.” To misunderstand this important doctrine and to attempt to build Grace Age instruction on this text, which is so often done in many churches, is to confuse the matter of Grace Age obedience and life. Those who disregard this end up with a blurred and legalistic concept of life which often contradicts the life of grace.

### **4. The Present Grace Age Economy**

Salvation in this Grace Age is absolutely amazing. At the moment one believes, one is instantly in position as a son of God, a citizen of heaven, and a member of the family of the household of God. Sonship does not have to be earned and it is certainly not deserved. It is right here where a fundamental principle becomes so important—the grace that saves a person and provides a perfect, eternal salvation is the same grace that will enable that person to grow and blossom in the power of God.

The instruction for the kind of lifestyle we are to develop during this age is peculiar instruction. Make no mistake about this point—the classification of this age as “the Age of Grace” does not imply that God’s grace was not and is not operative in the other economies; what it means is that this is now the age in which grace is the predominant feature of a relationship with God.

What is absolutely so mind-boggling is the N.T. specifically warns against legalizers and their instruction and clearly says they are opposed to the doctrines of pure grace and yet churches from one generation to another have continually discredited this grace theme to the point that legalism is more often understood than grace. As Chafer says, “Their messages, though steeped in error, have often exhibited great zeal and sincerity; but zeal and sincerity, greatly to be desired when well directed, fail utterly in God’s sight as substitutes for a consistent presentation of truth. The only hope of deliverance from the false doctrines of legalizing teachers is through unprejudiced consideration of the exact revelations of Scripture” (*Ibid.*, p. 181).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (62)

When we examine things pertaining to the Grace Age, we should do so free from the blind following of the teachings of men and we should approach the Scriptures with a heart that is willing to receive “reproof,” “correction,” and “instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16).

In Titus 2:11-12 we learn some very valuable doctrine. The grace system is now operative but grace system instruction is to “us” that is those who are saved by God’s grace. Grace Age instruction is only for the believer and is not intended for a Christ-rejecting world or individual. God’s Word makes no appeal to the unsaved to better his life. The issue for the unsaved in this age is not character nor conduct; it is an appeal to respond to the grace of God.

The very nature of life under grace naturally precludes life under law. Under grace, obedience is not necessary to be accepted by God. For example, in Rom 8:1 we see “there is therefore now no condemnation” and later we read God will not condemn one He has justified (8:33). Also we learn that nothing the justified person does can separate him from the love of God (8:38-39). Life under grace operates under an entirely new system.

This is not to say that life under grace is a free-for-all existence. The believer who decides to live a life not worthy of his high calling will pay a price for his failure. The price the unfaithful believer will pay includes a loss of communion and fellowship with God; a loss of power in life and in service; a potential loss of health which may lead to death; and a potential loss of eternal rewards.

Timothy was challenged by Paul in the Grace Age to study the Scriptures very intensely so that they may be “rightly divided” or “accurately handled” (II Tim. 2:15). The challenge for the Grace Age believer **is not** one of striking some agreement between law and grace, but **it is** one of separating these systems “to the end that each may retain its intended effectiveness.” Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, in thinking about this very issue said, “What other interpretation could be put on Romans 11:6 than that these diverse systems are as far removed from each other as the east is from the west” (Vol. 4, p. 185).

When it comes to life under grace, we may come to an understanding by asking and answering two questions:

**Question #1** - What are the features of life under grace?

There are three main features to life under grace:

**(Feature #1)** - Life under grace has grace teachings which are independent and uncomplicated.

The principles which govern life under grace are, by their nature, totally different and totally separate from the legal system of the Law. In this present age, every principle emphasizes the foundational truth that Jesus Christ has died, risen and ascended and the Holy Spirit, in this age, now resides in the hearts of those who believe.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (63)

These important theological matters are often glossed over, but the sound student of theology realizes these were “age-transforming” events. Under grace, man can stand in a brand new relationship with God, based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. The principles which govern this age are all in view of this tremendous amazing grace reality.

**(Feature #2)** - Life under grace has grace requirements which are exalted above any other dispensation.

What is expected of the believer in the Age of Grace is, in many ways, more difficult than the prescribed Law of Moses. Since the predominant feature of the Grace Age is the indwelling Holy Spirit, we may naturally conclude that Grace Age life which pleases God will be uniquely in line with a supernatural, divine enablement of infinite power.

The uniquely high standards in this age include such concepts as:

- 1) Bringing every thought into captivity. II Cor. 10:5
- 2) Giving thanks for everything. Eph. 5:20
- 3) Living a life that is worthy of the high grace calling. Eph. 4:1
- 4) Living a life of sacrificial love. Eph. 5:2; Rom. 5:5
- 5) Living a life that is led by the Holy Spirit and produces fruit for the Holy Spirit. Gal. 5:16, 22
- 6) Living a life that witnesses and tries to evangelize the lost. Acts 1:8

A challenge and a heart to evangelize unsaved people is something peculiar to this age. Under the Law of Moses, the emphasis is on Israel’s relationship with God. Israel was not charged with reaching the Gentile world. But in this dispensation, grace which has been demonstrated to us is a theme we are to communicate to others. A passion for lost souls is truly a passion unique to this dispensation and this passion is produced by the Holy Spirit in a passion from God.

Truly life in the Grace Age is an exalted life. The expectations are high but the motivations and the power to meet these expectations are totally distinct and unique to this age.

**(Feature #3)** - Life under grace features Divine enablement for living life in the Grace Age.

If there is one teaching that so dramatically differentiates life under grace as opposed to any other time period, it is this one. A believer in the Grace Age has a supernatural, provisional empowerment and enablement which gives that believer the exact and perfect power to live life in the Age of Grace for the glory of God. As Chafer said, “Under grace, the all-powerful, abiding, indwelling, and sufficient Holy Spirit of God is given to every saved person” (*Ibid.*, p. 188).

## ECCLESIOLOGY (64)

This sufficient power is not given to an elite group, but to every single believer and there is an abundance of Scripture which verifies this: John 7:37-39; Rom. 5:5; 8:9; I Cor. 2:12; 6:19; Gal. 3:2; I Thess. 4:8; I John 3:24; 4:13. These verses are addressed to all believers—men, women and children. Every single believer has enough supernatural power to be able to live life in a supernatural way to the extent that there will be no valid excuse for not doing so.

The fact that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer is a fact peculiar to only the Age of Grace. In the dispensation of the Law, certain individuals were filled with the Spirit at certain times, but there is no place where it is said that every Israelite was filled with the Spirit to the point that he is a temple of the Spirit. Also under the Law when the Spirit did come to a person the relationship was temporal. There was no abiding character of the Holy Spirit in the relationship (i.e. Psalm 51:11). The Spirit of God would come upon one according to the sovereign purpose of God and then depart according to the same sovereign purpose of God. Under grace, the Holy Spirit **never** withdraws Himself or removes Himself, but His abiding presence is always in the N.T. believer (John 14:16). It is this reality that means the believer is forever saved and kept. This is pure grace.

A believer in this age is to grow and to develop into a mature Christian in his knowledge, conduct and service. When it comes to this issue of Grace Age development, a believer must make a choice: 1) The by-works principle of the law; or 2) The by-faith principle of grace. Every believer must ask himself, how am I going to become everything God wants me to become in this dispensation? By works of the Law or by the faith principles of grace?

When it comes to living life in the Grace Age in accordance with Grace Age scriptural teachings, there are two great doctrines and inseparable revelations which complement and supplement each other. Both of these doctrines are intimately connected to each other and great harm is done if either one is made to be separate from the other. The two truths are:

- 1) The goal of Grace Age character is to become Christlike.  
I Cor. 9:21; Phil. 1:21; 2:5; I Pet. 2:21; I John 4:17
- 2) The goal is attained by the enablement of the indwelling Holy Spirit.  
John 7:37-39; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 6:10-11; Phil. 2:13; Col. 2:6

The reason why these two doctrines must be critically connected is because no one will ever reach the goal without a Grace Age faith walk that depends on the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for one to reach Christlikeness by some law-code.

Clearly the features of this Grace Age are: 1) Life under grace is independent and uncomplicated; 2) Life under grace has exalted requirements above any other dispensation; 3) Life under grace features a divine enablement for living life under grace.

**Question #2** - What is the key to daily life under grace?

The key to living life every day under grace may be summed up in one word—relationships.



## ECCLESIOLOGY (65)

The key to a Christian's daily life and the key to becoming Christlike are daily adjustments that a believer makes in three important relationships: 1) Relationship with persons of the Godhead; 2) Relationship with the system of the world; 3) Relationship with other members who are part of the Body.

These three relationships become the focal point of most of the exhortations found in the N.T. In fact, Dr. Chafer observed: "The relative importance of these three separate relationships may be seen in the fact that they comprehend practically all hortatory (exhortation) portions—about one-half—of the Epistles of the New Testament" (Vol. 4, p. 195). These areas are all intertwined and no believer will attain a Christlike status until all three relationships are being developed. Each of these relationships needs to be carefully considered for it is right here where victory is determined in daily life:

### **(Relationship #1) - Relationship with Persons of the Godhead.**

The N.T. Grace Age believer who is becoming like Jesus Christ will consider this to be the supreme relationship above all other obligations. Christlikeness cannot and will not be attained without a sustained relationship with persons of the Godhead.

New Testament Grace Age believers are responsible and accountable to God to develop in their relationship with the Godhead. This development includes areas of morality and spirituality. In order to grow in a relationship with God, one must be intensely dedicated to understanding God's written Word, one must be committed to prayer and communication with God, one must be willing to offer praise to God and to respond obediently to the mind and will of God, which are clearly found in His Word. One must yield to the Holy Spirit who longs to make the believer like Christ and take one deep into a relationship with God.

The truth is if this relationship is truly supreme in one's life, then the other two relationship areas will be no problem. There must be an intense passion to fellowship with the Godhead, to have a personal relationship with God. All passages that give us insight into a good and deep relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit will become extremely important to us. We will want to understand as much as possible so this relationship can be developed.

### **(Relationship #2) - Relationship with the system of the world.**

In John 17:14, 16, Jesus Christ, while having a personal discussion with His Father, twice stated that we are not of the world just as He wasn't of the world. There could not possibly be a more disengaged relationship with the world than the one Christ had. Since positionally we are citizens of heaven and we are called strangers, sojourners and pilgrims just passing through this world, it is obvious that Grace Age daily living will have a definite connection to our relationship with this world. Specific Grace Age teaching shows up concerning this relationship with Satan and this world. There are four world-relationships which are addressed for N.T. life:

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### **World Relationship #1** - Our relationship to Satan and his forces.

In this relationship there is only and always conflict and war. Since Satan and his forces are superior to us, the battle cannot possibly be won in any other way but a grace principle of faith. The Scripture is very specific to point out that God has given the believer the power (I John 4:4) and the armor to defeat Satan (Eph. 6:10-12).

It is very evident that victory will be accomplished by faith implementation, not works.

### **World Relationship #2** - Our relationship to the world's system.

By the term "world" we are not referring to the material universe which has been created by God, nor are we referring to the world of humanity for whom Christ died; we are referring to an entire highly organized system headed by Satan, which is set up independent of God and His Word. The system of the world embraces an entire sphere of human life which includes its institutions, ideals, philosophies, religions and goals. It is a system that promotes self, greed and prosperity. It is a system designed to lure one away from God. Concerning this system the Grace Age believer is warned not only not to love it (I John 2:15-17), but to reprove it (Eph. 5:11). This reproofing does not preclude a wise walk (Col. 4:5-6), but this reproofing is our assignment. It is the Word of God that will transform the mind of one to the point where he sees the world system for what it is and is able to reprove it.

Something is drastically, spiritually wrong with a Grace Age believer who is totally captivated and dominated by the world's system. In every age there have always been Demas types who love this present world (II Tim. 4:10). They buy into the deception and miss a wonderful life that really counts for God.

### **World Relationship #3** - Our relationship to human government.

It is right here where many believers miss a wonderful relationship with God. This is somewhat of a strange thing, but it is obviously one that is a key to Grace Age life. On the one hand we are admonished to wage warfare against the world. On the other hand we are told to submit to governing authorities in the world.

There can be absolutely no doubt that Satan does have great control and power over the controlling world governments of this Grace Age—Luke 21:24; Luke 4:5-7; Matt. 4:8-9. However, when one reads Rom 13:1-7, one quickly realizes that this human government is ultimately under the sovereign control of Almighty God. We have direct mandates from God as to our attitude toward governmental leadership (I Pet. 2:13-17). We are instructed to honor political leaders, not demean them or criticize them or lead insurrection movements against them. Unfortunately, it appears as though many churches and many of God's people do not grasp this. Until one relates to governing power with this mindset, real spirituality is lacking. One may profess to be spiritual, but one does not possess real biblical spirituality.

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**World Relationship #4** - Our relationship to the unsaved as individuals.

A Grace Age believer must develop a consistent compassionate attitude for lost people as Christ had when He died for them. We should endeavor to reach people with a message that sinners can now be reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:14-15, 20). Spiritual people will do their best to win souls.

We must remember that it is the Holy Spirit who actually does the work of conviction in accordance with the elective purposes of God; however, it is our responsibility to share the truth with the lost. From our perspective, we must attempt to become all things to all men that we might win some.

**(Relationship #3)** - Relationship with other members who are part of the Body.

The N.T. Epistles emphatically discloses a fellowship and kinship within the family of God which exists in no other association of people in this world. There is specific conduct that a Christian is to maintain in view of a fellow believer.

There are at least seven specific relationships which may be categorized under the heading of Christian conduct toward another member:

**Category #1** - A New Testament believer's relationship with other members.

The underlying principle which is clearly revealed in several N.T. passages, which one member is to have toward another member, is that of love. In fact, in the embodiment of the first commandment Christ gave in Grace Age teachings of the Upper Room Discourse, He said, "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

This important principle is seen time and time again in the N.T., and a few examples will suffice:  
Rom. 12:9 - "Let love be without hypocrisy."

Eph. 5:2 - "...and walk in love just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us..."

I Thess. 4:9 - "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another."

Heb. 13:1 - "Let love of the brethren continue."

I Pet. 4:8 - "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins."

I John 3:14 - "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren."

I John 4:7 - "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

I John 4:11 - "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

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Now the kind of love which we are to have for the brethren is not an out-of-control, emotional, nonsense kind of love; it is the type of love God has for us which is very controlled and calculated. This kind of love is not one of total toleration, but one of timely confrontation. It is a love that demonstrates a consistent kindness as opposed to harshness and hostility (Eph. 4:31-32). It is a love that is submissive and sacrificial (Eph. 5:21; I Pet. 5:5). It is a love that thinks in terms of helping with another's need (Gal. 6:10; I John 3:17). It is a love that supports another in prayer (Eph. 6:18). This is how the believer is to relate to other members.

**Category #2** - A New Testament believer's relationship to those in the Church who are in authority .

There are three words which clearly sum up how the N.T. believer is to relate to those who are in the Church that are in positions of authority: 1) They are to respect; 2) They are to obey; 3) They are to submit.

There is an abundance of N.T. data which communicates these concepts for Grace Age life: I Thess. 5:12-13 - "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."

I Tim. 5:17 - "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."

Heb. 13:7 - "Remember those who led you, who spoke the Word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith."

Heb. 13:17 - "Obey your leaders, and submit to them: for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

This is explicit instruction from God concerning the attitudes and actions one is to have toward leaders in the Church. Perhaps one of the best illustrations of this may be taken from the life of our Lord. When He saw the children of Israel being dominated by power-crazed Scribes and Pharisees, He admonished the people of Israel to still submit to them, but not to become like them (Matt. 23:3). When an innocent David was being hounded by a demonically charged King Saul, he refused to take up his hand against him. He was respectful, submissive and obedient for he knew God had chosen Saul.

**Category #3** - A New Testament believer's relationship between husbands and wives .

There is an abundance of Grace Age instruction which is very precise and explicit concerning this relationship. We may sum up Grace Age instruction in the following way:

- 1) The husband is the head of the home. I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23
- 2) The wife is to submit to her husband. Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; I Pet. 3:1, 5
- 3) The wife is to love her husband. Titus 2:4
- 4) The wife is to care for the home. Titus 2:5

## ECCLESIOLOGY (69)

- 5) The husband is to love his wife. Eph. 5:25, 28, 33; Col. 3:19
- 6) The husband is to sacrifice for his wife. Eph. 5:25b
- 7) The husband is to leave his family and cleave to his wife. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6; Mark 10:7-8; Eph. 5:31
- 8) The husband is to provide for his family. I Tim. 5:8
- 9) The wife is to respect her husband. Eph. 5:33; I Pet. 3:2
- 10) The wife is to develop a precious, gentle and quiet spirit before her husband. I Pet. 3:4
- 11) The husband is not to be embittered against his wife. Col. 3:19
- 12) The husband is to understand his wife. I Pet. 3:7a
  
- 13) The husband is to realize he is stronger and the wife is weaker . I Pet. 3:7b
- 14) The husband is to honor his wife. I Pet. 3:7b
- 15) Both husband and wife are responsible to meet each other's physical needs. I Cor. 7:3-4

This is the way a Grace Age marriage is to work. This aspect of the Christian life is very clear and, as Dr. Chafer said, very “explicit.”

### **Category #4** - A New Testament believer's relationship between parents and children .

There is absolutely no doubt that as the Grace Age draws near to its conclusion this relationship right here will have major problems. Paul, in speaking of the last difficult days of the Grace Age said that the prevailing attitude will be “disobedience” to parents (II Tim. 3:2).

Instruction concerning this relationship is clear and we may summarize it this way:

- 1) Children are to obey their parents. Eph. 6:1a; Col. 3:20
- 2) Children are to honor their father and mother. Eph. 6:2-3
- 3) Fathers are not to do or say things which would provoke children to anger. Eph. 6:4a; Col. 3:21
- 4) Fathers are to discipline their children. Eph. 6:4b
- 5) Fathers are to give biblical guidance and instruction to their children. Eph. 6:4c
- 6) Mothers are to love their children. Titus 2:4

Clearly these are Grace Age teachings for this relationship (i.e. Titus 2:11). We may expect as the Grace Age comes to its conclusion there will be a major breakdown, which is clearly prophesied, in this relationship.

### **Category #5** - A New Testament believer's relationship between employer and employee .

When the N.T. was written, this relationship was described in terms of master and servant. Many early believers earned a living and supported their families in the context of this relationship. The principles are sound as Grace Age instruction for any work environment.

## ECCLESIOLOGY (70)

- 1) Employees are to be obedient to the employer. Eph. 6:5a; Col. 3:22
- 2) Employees are to be diligent workers, not just when the employer is watching. Col. 3:22; Eph. 6:6
- 3) Employees are to be submissive to their employer. Titus 2:9a
- 4) Employees are not to be argumentative with their employer. Titus 2:9b
- 5) Employees are not to embezzle from their employers. Titus 2:10a
- 6) Employees are to consider their job to be service for God. Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:24b  
An employee is to consider his job to be a sacred entrustment from God.
- 7) Employees are to do their work realizing God is watching how they work and will reward one accordingly to how he worked. Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:23-25
- 8) Employers are to think and act the same way about their job. Eph. 6:9a
  - A. Employers are employers and they do have to govern employees. Eph. 6:5a
  - B. Employers should be diligent workers with their responsibilities. Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22
  - C. Employers should consider their job to be a service for God. Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:24b
  - D. Employers should consider their position to be a sacred entrustment from God. (*Ibid.*)
  - E. Employers are to realize God is watching how they treat employees and will reward them accordingly. Eph. 6:8-9; Col. 3:23-4:1
- 9) Employers are to not govern employees in a threatening way. Eph. 6:9a
- 10) Employers are to treat and compensate employees in a just and fair way. Col. 4:1

**Category #6** - A New Testament believer's responsibility to an erring brother.

The Church is not ever to become a place of total toleration of any person, saying and doing whatever he or she wants. When some brother or sister gets out of line, the strong, spiritually-minded believers have a mandate from God to do something about it. Loving confrontations and stern warnings are to be part of Church life. God demands his Church make judgment calls (I Cor. 5:13). There are times when total separation and excommunication is to be carried out and the Church is to stand together in this action.

There are many passages which speak of confronting an erring brother and some are stern and strong:

- 1) Rom. 16:17-18; 2) Gal. 6:1; 3) I Thess. 5:14; 4) II Thess. 3:14-15; 5) II John 1:9-11.

When it becomes necessary to carry out Church discipline the general procedure, which at times may be followed, would be:

1. Private confrontation. Matt. 18:15
2. Plural confrontation. Matt. 18:16
3. Public excommunication. Matt. 18:17
  - Public excommunication should include prayer for the erring brother (Matt. 18:18-19).
  - Public excommunication should be carried out before the whole Church (I Cor. 5:4).

There are some important observations we want to make concerning public excommunication:

## ECCLESIOLOGY (71)

1. Not always is it necessary to follow the above steps. Sometimes leadership may jump over the first two steps in view of the terrible nature of the sin (I Cor. 5:5).
2. The primary purpose of excommunication **is not** the restoration of the erring brother or sister; **it is** the purity of God's Church (I Cor. 5:6-7).
3. Excommunication means we cut off fellowship from a brother or sister and refuse to associate with them or eat with them (I Cor. 5:11).
4. Excommunication means whenever we have opportunity we admonish the brother or sister to repent and get right with God (II Thess. 3:15).
5. The determination of the excommunication will be determined by the leadership of the Church (I Cor. 5:3, 5; I Thess. 5:14).
6. The duration of the excommunication will be determined by the leadership of the Church (II Cor. 2:6-8).
7. Some of the specific things that may lead one to be excommunicated are:
  - 1) Promotion of heretical doctrine (Rom. 16:17);
  - 2) Sexual immorality (I Cor. 5:1, 11a);
  - 3) Covetousness – one who takes advantage of or cheats to get more (I Cor. 5:11b);
  - 4) Idolatry – one who dedicates himself to something other than God (I Cor. 5:11c);
  - 5) A reviler – one who continually verbally slanders people (I Cor. 5:11d);
  - 6) Drunkenness (I Cor. 5:11e);
  - 7) A swindler – one who is savagely greedy, who will hurt others to get more (I Cor. 5:11f);
  - 8) A lazy, undisciplined busybody (II Thess. 3:11-12).

Dr. Chafer said, "If the erring brother proves to be persistent in his fault, **it is required** that he be debarred from the fellowship of believers until he has seen the error of his way."

**Category #7** - A New Testament believer's relationship to a weaker brother.

In this Grace Age, "the tender conscience" of a weaker brother or sister must always be considered. We do have freedom in Christ, but our use of freedom must always be tempered with how it may affect weaker believers. The one chapter of the Bible that gives us insight into this matter is Romans 14. From this chapter we observe the following:

- 1) The strong believer is one with faith that he has liberty in gray areas. 14:2a
- 2) The weak believer is one who believes he doesn't have liberty in gray areas. 14:2b
- 3) The tendency for the strong believer is to look with contempt on the weak believer. 14:3a
- 4) The tendency for the weak believer is to judge the strong believer for his use of liberty. 14:3b
- 5) The major gray areas were: eating meat sacrificed to idols (14:2); observing days (14:5-6); drinking wine (14:21).
- 6) Both kinds of believers are to realize the other is God's property. 14:4
- 7) Every believer is to be fully convinced in his own mind regarding the gray area. 14:5
- 8) Every believer is to think of living for the Lord and giving an account to the Lord. 14:6-12

## **ECCLESIOLOGY (72)**

- 9) Neither believer should do something that may cause the other believer to stumble.  
14:13, 21
- 10) Both types of believers must realize individuals see gray areas differently. 14:14
- 11) The strong believer must realize he can destroy a weak believer by use of liberty. 14:15
- 12) The strong believer must realize he can have his liberty branded as evil. 14:16
- 13) The strong believer must realize he is called to serve God in an acceptable way. 14:17-19
- 14) Both must realize consciences differ on gray areas, and there are private convictions.  
14:20, 22
- 15) Believers have a right to be happy in one's private use of liberty. 14:22
- 16) You have liberty in what doesn't condemn you; you don't in what does condemn you.  
14:22-23



## **ECCLESIOLOGY (73)**

### **(QUESTIONS IN HELPING US MAKE GRAY AREA DECISIONS)**

#### **1. QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE GODHEAD**

1. Is this act forbidden by the Word of God? Matt. 4:4; I John 5:3
2. Can I ask for God's help and blessing on what I am about to do? Phil. 4:6-7
3. May I do this for the glory of God? I Cor. 10:31
4. May I do this in the name of Jesus Christ? Col. 3:17
5. Can I really and truly thank God for this action? Col. 3:17
6. Can I do this to actually please God? John 8:29; Col. 3:23; II Tim. 2:4
7. Can I do this with the full knowledge that I am being watched by God?
8. Will participating in this action show my love for Jesus Christ?

#### **2. QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO OTHER BROTHERS AND SISTERS**

1. Will this act or can this action become a stumbling block to others? If someone saw me do this, could it hurt their spiritual life? Rom. 14:21; I Cor. 8:9, 13; II Cor. 10:32
2. Is this the best way to demonstrate the love of God for others? Rom. 13:8
3. Does this action exemplify the Christian life and a close walk with God?
4. Would this action be likely to draw others closer to Jesus Christ?
5. Will this action advance the cause of Jesus Christ?
6. Will this action edify others or build them up in their faith? I Cor. 14:26

#### **3. QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO OURSELVES**

1. Will this action hinder my spiritual life or enhance my spiritual life?
2. Will this action build me up in the faith and strengthen me? I Cor. 10:23
3. Will this action make me unequally yoked with an unbeliever? II Cor. 6:14
4. Does this action have the potential of enslaving me? I Cor. 6:12
5. Will the fruit of this action likely be good fruit for the glory of God? Gal. 6:7-8
6. Will this action be likely to bring me commendation or condemnation at the judgment seat of Christ? II Cor. 5:10
7. Can you do this action in all good conscience without any doubts? Rom. 14:23
8. Will this action make you more like Jesus Christ? II Cor. 3:18; I Pet. 1:21; I John 2:6
9. Does this action use or misuse my liberty in Christ? Gal. 5:1, 13
10. Would you want to be doing this when Jesus Christ returns—would it leave you to face Christ in confidence or shame? I John 2:28