

The New Testament Church

Part 14: What It Means To Be a Member of the New Testament Church

I Corinthians 12:12-27

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Unfortunately the church of our Lord does not occupy the place in the hearts of men that it should.
 - A. The vast majority reject the church in any form (denominations included); e.g., many claim such things as “boating on the lake is my church,” or “playing 18 holes on Sunday morning is my church.”
 - B. Many who even claim to be “Christians” reject the church (denominations included); they are against what they call “organized religion” and the church bears the brunt of their criticism (I agree if what you call “organized religion” is exemplified by the denominational world.).
2. Many reject the “church” due to the fact there’s so much hypocrisy (e.g., tele-evangelists).
 - A. I wouldn’t argue, because they are right! It’s true! The “religious world” is rife with hypocrisy!
 - B. Peter addressed this in his second epistle: **2 Pet. 2:1-2**: *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”*
3. **3** When one talks of the one true church revealed in the New Testament, even more reject the church.
 - A. I’ve said it several times from this pulpit: The NT doctrine concerning the singular nature of the church (i.e., “one body” of Eph. 4:4) is by far the most controversial teaching in the Bible.
 - B. When we published weekly articles in the local paper in Michigan; lessons on the singular nature of the church generated, by far, the most letters to the editor.
 - (1) These letters were far from complimentary or in agreement with this profound NT truth.
 - (2) I was accused of being such things as a “sheep stealer” and an “agent of Satan.”
4. Sadly, most people have totally bought the false concept of denominationalism concerning the church:
 - A. In their mind, every denomination is a legitimate part of the “mystical body of Christ.”
 - B. “We may be traveling different paths, but we are all going to the same place (i.e., heaven).”
 - C. Some even take this concept to the extreme that as long as your religion is “sincere” you are going to be saved (even without Christ! e.g., Islam, Buddhist, pagan, etc.).
5. **4** People fail to realize salvation is found only in the one true church Jesus built (Matt. 16:18), of which He is the foundation (I Cor. 3:11), head (Col. 1:18) and Savior (Eph. 5:23).
 - A. They find NT teaching on this subject repugnant and those teaching it as arrogant bigots! “You think you’re the only ones going to heaven!”
 - B. However, by rejecting the one true church of the NT folks are robbing themselves of God’s greatest blessings, the spiritual blessings “in Christ,” and of the hope of eternal life.
 - C. The one true church of the NT is incomparably greater than all human institutions, whether sectarian (i.e., denominations) or fraternal (e.g., Lions Club, Rotary Club).
6. **5** The purpose of this lesson is to examine what it means to be a member of Christ’s church.
7. As we go through this lesson I want all who hear to keep this in mind:
 - A. What I will be discussing concerns the one true church revealed by God in the New Testament.

- B. We are not discussing some denomination called the “Church of Christ.”
- C. We are discussing what the Bible, the truth (Jn. 17:17) teaches about the NT church; not what some “religious organization” says about the church.
- D. Whether those who call themselves the “church of Christ” (or any other name for that matter) are a part of the one true church revealed in the New Testament is not the issue.
- E. We will examine that issue in a future lesson; but let us simply examine what we know is right and cannot be wrong about the church for it comes only from God’s word.

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. **6 The Grandeur and Glory of the Church:** Although we’ve already covered some of this ground, we need to be reminded of some very important facts about the NT church that reveal its grandeur and glory. Its grandeur and glory distinguish it from all of its competitors.

A. **God is its author; it is of divine not human origin:**

- (1) It is God’s temple: **Eph. 2:21**: “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,”
- (2) It is God’s dwelling place: **Eph. 2:22**: “in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
- (3) It is not built by man: **Heb. 8:1-2**: “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.”
- (4) Its builder is Jesus: **Matt. 16:18**: “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”; **Psa. 127:1**: “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it;”
- (5) It must be handled with great care: **1 Cor. 3:10-12**: “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
- (6) It alone is recognized by God as His own work: **Matt. 15:13**: “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”
- (7) It wears God’s name: **Eph. 3:14-16**: “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,”
- (8) It is God’s institution: **1 Cor. 1:2**: “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:”

B. **7 Christ is its Savior, head and foundation:**

- (1) Christ gave Himself for it: **Eph. 5:25-27**: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

- (2) Christ purchased it: **Acts 20:28:** “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”
- (3) Christ is its head: **Col. 1:18:** “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”
- (4) It is Christ’s body: **Eph. 1:22-23:** “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”
- (5) Christ is its high priest: **Heb. 10:19-22a:** “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,”
- (6) Christ is its Savior: **Eph. 5:23:** “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” (cf. **Acts 4:11-12:** “This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”)
- (7) Christ is our representative in heaven: **1 Jn. 2:1-2:** “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

C. 8 It has a grand and glorious mission: it is designed to save the souls of men by the preaching of the gospel.

- (1) It is the “pillar and ground of the truth”: **1 Tim 3:15:** “but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (Why? **Eph. 2:20:** “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,”).
- (2) Sending agency for gospel preaching the gospel: **Rom. 1:16-17; Rom. 10:11-15:** “For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’ 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’”; **Acts 13:1-3:** Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”; cf. **Phil. 4:15-16**
- (3) Wisdom of God made known by it: **Eph. 3:10-11:** “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,” (NIV)
- (4) God is glorified in it: **Eph. 3:21:** “to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

D. 9 All spiritual blessings are in it:

- (1) It is the “fullness” of Christ: **Eph. 1:23:** “which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

- (2) All “spiritual blessings” are “in Christ”: **Eph. 1:3**: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,”
 - (a) Christ’s body and church are one and the same: **Col. 1:18**: “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (cf. Eph. 1:22-23)
 - (b) Christ and church inseparable: **Eph. 1:22-23**: “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”
 - (c) Hence, if “every spiritual blessing [is] in Christ” and the church is “the fullness of Him,” then it follows that we can only partake of the blessings of Christ by being in His church.
- (3) In it we are reconciled to God: **Col. 1:18-20**: “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” (cf. Eph. 2:16)
- (4) Entrance into church and into Christ upon same conditions and by same process: **Gal. 3:26-27**: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”; **Acts 2:41**: “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”; **Acts 2:47**: “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

2. **10** What church membership means:

A. **Membership in the New Testament church means**:

- (1) One is member of the “body of Christ”: **1 Cor. 12:12-13a, 27**: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”
- (2) One is a worker in the Lord’s vineyard: **Matt. 20:1**: “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.”; **1 Cor. 3:9**: “For we are God’s fellow workers...”
- (3) One is a living stone in God’s spiritual temple: **1 Cor. 3:16**: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”; **1 Pet. 2:5**: “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
- (4) One is a priest: **1 Pet. 2:9**: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”
- (5) One is married to Christ: **Rom. 7:4**: “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.” (cf. Eph. 5:23, 25, 27)
- (6) One is a citizen in Christ’s kingdom: **Col. 1:12-13**: “giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,” (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24)

- (7) One is a child in God's family: **Gal. 3:26-27:** "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (cf. **1 Pet. 1:4:** "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,"; Rom. 8:17)

B. II Membership in the New Testament church means enjoyment of God's grace for His children:

- (1) Fatherly watch, care, and protection:

1 Pet. 3:12: "For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

1 Pet. 5:6-7: "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Phil. 4:5-7: "Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

1 Cor. 10:12-13: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

- (2) Fatherly provision of all needed things:

Matt. 6:33-34: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

2 Cor. 9:6-11: "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. 9 As it is written: 'He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.' 10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God."

Psa. 84:11: "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

- (3) Fatherly correction and discipline:

Heb. 12:5-11: "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

'My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.'

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For

they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. *11* Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Jas. 1:2-3: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, *3* knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. *12* Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

(4) Right to appeal to God as Father:

1 Pet. 3:12: “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

Matt. 7:7-11: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. *8* For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. *9* Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? *10* Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? *11* If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”

(5) Fellowship with the saints:

Phil. 2:1-4: “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, *2* fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. *3* Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. *4* Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (cf. Phil. 4:14-18)

Rom. 12:10: “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;”

(6) Hope of an eternal inheritance:

1 Pet. 1:3-5: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *4* to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, *5* who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Gal. 3:29: “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Rom. 8:14-17: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. *15* For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ *16* The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, *17* and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

C. 12 Membership in the New Testament church means a life of holiness, sanctification, and justification:

- (1) “Washed, Sanctified, and Justified”: **1 Cor. 6:11:** “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

- (2) “Called to be saints”: **1 Cor. 1:2**: “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” (Recall Pope Benedicts’ beatification of Junipero Serra.)
- (3) A “holy calling”: **Eph. 4:1**: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,”; **2 Cor. 7:1**: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
- (4) A calling to “depart from unrighteousness”: **2 Tim. 2:19**: “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” (John Kerry and Roman Catholic marriage annulment)

STOP (Part 1)

3. **13** Responsibilities of church membership:

A. **Local church membership**: **

“Since the congregation is the only unit of organization known in the New Testament for carrying forward the work of the Church, it follows that for a Christian to be in full fellowship with the Church, he must be associated with, be a part of, and amenable to a local church. There is no such thing in the New Testament Scriptures described as ‘Membership at large’ in the Church of God.

Paul in his work always associated himself with a congregation of Christians (Acts 9:26-30; 13:1-3; 14:25-28).” (Cogdill, Roy, *The New Testament Church*, p. 38)

B. **14** Subjection to elders of local church:

- (1) Elders to exercise oversight of local church: **1 Pet. 5:1-5**: “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. 5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders.”

- (2) Members obligated to obey elders (within bounds of Scripture; **1 Cor. 4:6**: “...not to think of men above that which is written...”):

Heb. 13:17: “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

1 Tim. 5:17-18: “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’”

C. **15** Participation or fellowship in the work of the local church:

- (1) Prepared for every good work: **Titus 2:11-14**: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”
- (2) Bear fruit: Jn. 15:1-8; **Lk. 6:44**: “For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.”

- (3) All have a share in the local work: **Eph. 4:16:** “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”
- (4) Our work, must be our work: **Gal. 6:4-5:** “But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load.”

D. 16 Preservation of unity, peace and harmony of the body:

- (1) Must not contribute to division within the body: **1 Cor. 1:10:** “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”
- (2) No hierarchy in the church: **1 Cor. 12:12-26; esp. 1 Cor. 12:24b-25:** “But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.”
- (3) Avoid anyone causing division: **Rom. 16:17-18:** “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.” (cf. 1 Tim. 6:3-4; Titus 1:10-11; 2 Jn. 9-11)
- (4) Personal obligation to pursue unity: **Eph. 4:1-3:** “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

E. 17 Preservation of the purity of the church:

- (1) Christ died to establish its purity: **Eph. 5:25-27:** “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

- (2) We must maintain this purity:

2 Tim. 2:19-22: “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ 20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

1 Tim. 6:11-12a: “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...”

1 Tim. 4:12: “...be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

1 Tim. 5:22b: “...nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.”

Phil. 1:27: “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,”

2 Thess. 3:6: “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”

F. 18 Bearing of fruit insofar as the mission of the church:

- (1) It's the reason we're united with Christ: **Rom. 7:4:** "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."
- (2) Bearing fruit is prerequisite to be in fellowship with the Lord: Jn. 15:1-8; **Jn. 15:8:** "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.";
- (3) Each member must share in this mission: Eph. 4:16; **1 Thess. 1:8:** "For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything."

4. **19 Salvation and church membership:** "God does the saving. Salvation is the pardon or forgiveness of God—the 'blotting out' of our sins. The church, then, does not do the saving. The question is, 'Can one enjoy the salvation that God has provided without being in the Church of God?' (Cogdill, Roy, *The New Testament Church*, p. 40)

A. Essentiality and importance of the church seen in Christ's attitude toward it:

- (1) He valued it enough to purchase it: **Acts 20:28:** "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (**Eph. 5:25:** "gave Himself for her")
 - (a) Christ's willingness to pay the ultimate price for the church shows He thought it to be essential!
 - (b) We must imitate Christ in this regard: **Phil. 2:5:** "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,"

B. 20 Cannot be "in Christ" without being "in the church":

- (1) Can't be joined to the "head" without being in "the body": **1 Cor. 12:27:** "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:21-23
 - (a) Christians compose the "body of Christ."
 - (b) Christ "is the head of the body" and the body is "the church."
 - (c) Thus, it is impossible to be joined to the "head" without being "in the body"!
- (2) Christ is the King, the church is His kingdom: 1 Tim. 6:15 ("King of kings"); **Col. 1:13:** "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,"
 - (a) Christians compose the "body of Christ" and "the body, [is] the church" (Col. 1:18).
 - (b) "the church is subject to Christ" (Eph. 5:24); who rules as King of His kingdom.
 - (c) Thus, one cannot be a subject of the King without being a citizen of the kingdom (church).
- (3) Christ is the bridegroom and the church is His bride: Eph. 5:23-32
 - (a) In marriage, two become one (Matt. 19:5-6).
 - (b) We are undoubtedly married to Christ: **Rom. 7:4:** "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."
 - (c) If we are married to Christ we are joined with Christ, we are so joined through being in His body.
- (4) **21** To be in Christ is to be in His body, the church:

(a) Through the blood of Christ:

- (i) We become near to God through Christ's blood: **Eph. 2:13:** "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."
- (ii) Christ's blood cleanses our conscience: **Heb. 9:14:** "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"
- (iii) Christ blood washed us from our sins: **Rev. 1:5:** "...To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood..."
- (iv) Christ's blood redeems us: **Eph. 1:7:** "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..." (cf. Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)
- (v) Christ blood cleanses us of sin: **1 Jn. 1:7:** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

(b) But, Christ purchased the church with His blood: Acts 20:28

(c) Therefore, to be "in Christ," is to be in His "body," is to be in His church and only therein do we receive all these "spiritual blessings" (i.e., forgiveness, cleansing, redemption, etc.).

C. 22 All "spiritual blessings" are "in Christ":

- (1) All spiritual blessings are "in Christ": **Eph. 1:3:** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,"
- (2) Church is the "fullness" of Christ: **Eph. 1:22-23:** "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."
- (3) If the church is the "fullness" of Christ, and all "spiritual blessings" are "in Christ"; then it follows that all spiritual blessings must be in what makes Christ full, the church.

D. 23 Members of Christ's church have their names enrolled in heaven: Heb. 12:22-23:

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,"

- (1) If not enrolled in heaven, then lost: **Rev. 20:15:** "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."
- (2) Salvation is "in Christ": **2 Tim. 2:10:** "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."
- (3) Christ is Savior of the church: **Eph. 5:23:** "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body."
- (4) If those in the church "are registered in heaven" and have obtained "salvation...in Christ" and Christ is "Savior of the body"; then only members of His church are saved!

E. 24 Same process and conditions that save one from sin, makes one a Christian and adds one to the church:

- (1) Faith and baptism produce salvation: **Mk. 16:15-16:** "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"

- (2) Faith and baptism puts one into Christ: **Gal. 3:26-27:** “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
- (3) Faith and baptism adds one to the church: **Acts 2:38:** “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”; **Acts 2:41:** “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”; **Acts 2:47:** “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

5. 25 How to become a member of the church:

A. Testimony of Christ:

- (1) Must be born again: **Jn. 3:3-5:** “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ 4 Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ 5 Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’”
- (2) Must be converted:
Matt. 18:1-3: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ 2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’”
Lk. 13:3: “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”
- (3) Must obey the Great Commission:
Mk. 16:15-16: “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’”
Matt. 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

B. 26 Testimony of the apostles:

- (1) Foolishness of preaching saves: **1 Cor. 1:21:** “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”
- (2) Must hear God’s word to be saved: **Rom. 10:14-17:** “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’ 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘LORD, who has believed our report?’ 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
- (3) Must repent and be converted:
Acts 3:19: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,”
Acts 17:30: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,”

- (4) Must be baptized into Christ: **Gal. 3:26-27**: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
- (5) Must obey the truth: **1 Pet. 1:22a**: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth...”
- (6) Must obey doctrine: **Rom. 6:17-18**: “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”
- (7) Must be led by the Spirit: **Rom. 8:14**: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”
- (8) Must be washed, justified, sanctified: **1 Cor. 6:11**: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”; **1 Cor. 1:2**: “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,”

C. 27 Teaching by figures:

- (1) The new birth: Jn. 3:3-5
 - (a) Begotten: Christians are “children of truth”:

1 Pet. 1:23: “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,”

Jas. 1:18: “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

1 Cor. 4:15: “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”
 - (b) Born of water and the Spirit: Jn. 3:5; Acts 2:38-41, 47; Gal. 3:26-27
- (2) Marriage to Christ: Eph. 5:23-30
 - (a) Acquaintanceship/courtship: **Jn. 6:44-45**: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”
 - (b) Love: **Jn. 14:15**; **1 Jn. 4:19**: “We love Him because He first loved us.”
 - (c) Ceremony:

Rom. 7:4: “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”

Rom. 6:3: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”

Gal. 3:27: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

D. 28 Examples:

- (1) Pentecostians: Acts 2
 - (a) Foolishness of preaching! 1 Cor. 1:21 What did they hear (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 6:45): death, burial, resurrection and exaltation of Christ: Acts 2:22-34

- (b) What they were told to do? Believe beyond doubt (Mk. 16:16), repent of sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30), be baptized in the name of Christ (Mk. 16:16; Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38): Acts 2:36-38
 - (c) What did they do? Gladly received the word, i.e., obeyed commands they were given (Acts 2:41).
 - (d) The result: They received remission of sins and gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; cf. 2:21) and were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47).
- (2) Samaritans: Acts 8
- (a) Foolishness of preaching! They heard Phillip preach Christ: **Acts 8:12:** “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ...”
 - (b) Obedied what Phillip preached: **Acts 8:12:** “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.”
- (3) Corinthians: Acts 18
- (a) Foolishness of preaching! They heard Paul’s preaching: **Acts 18:4:** “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”
 - (b) Obedied what Paul preached: **Acts 18:8:** “Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”
- (4) Ephesians: Acts 19
- (a) Foolishness of preaching! Acts 19:1-5, esp., v. 5: **Acts 19:5:** “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
 - (b) Obedied what Paul preached: **Acts 19:5:** “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
 - (c) Saved by faith:
Eph. 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”
Gal. 3:26-27: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
- (5) Note:
- “Every conversion in the book of Acts is but a repetition of this same story. The plan was: hear, believe, repent, confess faith in Christ, be baptized into Christ.”
- “Conclusion: When men obey the will of God their sins are pardoned and God recognizes and accepts them as His own children. They are added to the body of the saved and enjoy the privileges and share the responsibilities of that relationship. There is no such thing taught in God’s Word as being saved by one process and joining the Church by another.” (Cogdill, Roy, *The New Testament Church*, p. 43)

III. CONCLUSION: 29

- I. Being a member of the church found in the New Testament is a very profound and unique thing.
 - A. It is an entirely different thing than being a member of any of the 33,000+ “Christian” denominations (Catholic or Protestant).

- B. It is an entirely different thing than being a member of one of the various world religions (e.g., Buddhist, Hindu, Islam, etc.).
 - C. It is entirely different thing than being a member of any “organized religion,” or secular civic organization (e.g., Lion’s Club, Rotary Club).
 - D. Importantly, it is not necessarily synonymous with being a member of the “Church of Christ” (i.e., many groups using that name are nothing more than another denominational body!).
2. **30** One cannot become a member of the New Testament church by “joining” any church, regardless of that church’s name.
3. It’s simple: one becomes a member of the New Testament church when one:
- A. Hears the gospel: Rom. 10:17
 - B. Develops saving faith: Heb. 11:6; Jn. 8:24; Jas. 2:19
 - C. Confesses faith in Christ: Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37
 - D. Repents of sins: Acts 17:30; 2:38
 - E. Baptized: Mk. 16:16; Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41, 47
 - F. Remain faithful: **Col. 1:21-23**: “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard...”
4. Invitation

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