

THE CHURCH

We will focus on what the Bible says about the church. The New Testament church is the one Jesus died for, purchased with his blood, and is the one of which He is the head. We ought to be concerned with being a part of this church and no other! The world today sees the church through its own eyes. Some think of the church as a building; others think of it as a denomination. How does God define the church in the Bible?

The Church Is Made Up Of People

In Matt.16:16-18 Jesus says He will build his church. Eph. 2:19-22 tells us the church Jesus built was not made of brick and mortar but of people. In Acts 8:3 But Saul {began} ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. It is clear that the church was made up of people. In Rom 16:16, people greet people; buildings do not greet other buildings. There were, in fact, no church buildings prior to 3rd century A.D.

The Church Is Made Up Of Called and Saved People

The word "church," (ἐκκλησία) means "called out" (a group of people called together for a purpose). Christians have been called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:13,14) to serve Jesus. The church is made up of people who obeyed the gospel and are saved by Jesus. In Acts 2:41,47 saved people were added to the church. In Eph. 5:23 (cf. 1:22-23), Jesus is the Savior of the body or the church. The church is the saved; Jesus the head of the church and the Savior of his body.

The NT refers To the Church by Several Pictures:

1. As a family, it is a household (1 Tim 3:15).
2. As a government, it is a kingdom (Matt 16:18,19).
3. As an organism, it is a body (Eph 5:23).
4. As a dwelling place, it is a temple of God (1 Cor 3:16).

God Wills That His People Be One, United

In John 17:20-23 Jesus prayed for his disciples, that they might all be one. Paul instructed the Corinthians in 1 Cor 1:10-13 that they all agree, that they be of same mind and judgment and that there be no divisions among them. God wants His people to be one. Paul wanted the Ephesians to forgive one another and to forbear one another, "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). The basis for that unity came from the following verses. In Eph 4:4-6, Paul said,

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." Each of these "ones" has a meaning for us:

- * one body--one church, not many.
- * one Spirit--not many conflicting Spirits
- * one hope--by obedience to the gospel
- * one Lord--no presidents, popes or conferences
- * one faith--one system of doctrine
- * one baptism--no do-it-yourself practices
- * one God and Father--not many gods

Paul noted in 1 Cor 12:13 that we are all baptized into one body. That body is the church (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18,23). This being true, the church as the Bible describes it is not:

- * a collection of denominations with differing doctrines, practices, names, organizations, creeds, worship, and requirements for entrance.

- * interdenominational (allowing several all under one umbrella)
 - * nondenominational (not aligned with any particular one but having members in several)
- Rather, the NT church is Undenominational. The NT knows nothing of the whole concept of denominationalism, prevalent in our world today. The New Testament condemns the idea of sectarian names, division, and various false doctrines. In the New Testament, the church was merely the church. It is absurd to ask what kind of church it was, because there were no kinds. There was just the church! If we were to see the first automobile, we wouldn't ask what kind it is; for there were no "brands" of automobile. There was just an automobile.
- Some basic points to consider:
- * Matt 15:8,9, 13-14 Man-made religion will be uprooted.
 - * Gal 1:6-9 There is but one gospel.
 - * Col. 3:17 We are to do all in the name of the Lord.

Good News: One Can Be "Just A Christian" And Never Be A Member of Any Denomination

New Testament Christians were merely "Christians." There were no man-made names, creeds, practices, or organizations among them. You can practice the same thing by reading and following the Lord's instructions in the Bible, the word of Christ and avoid any man-made beliefs or practices. Jesus said in John 8:31,32 that the true disciples abide in His words. He reminds us in John 12:48 we will be judged by His words. It just makes sense to do God's will and follow the Bible in all we teach and do. This means giving up every man-made doctrine, idea, practice, name, or organization. It means observing all things that Jesus commands (Matt 28:19,20). The church as God's people love the Lord, love each other, share the gospel, help the needy, and follow every teaching of Jesus Christ.

Why Becoming A Member Of The Lord's Church Is Necessary

1. *Because God adds all the saved to His church* (Acts 2:41,47, Col. 1:13,14). Since repentance and baptism leads to salvation (it, the remission of sins), and since the baptized were added unto them, and since the saved were added to the church, the Lord by the same act both forgives sin and adds one to His church.
2. *Because members of the church have been released from their sins by the blood of Christ* (Rev 1:4-6). When John wrote the seven churches of Asia, he was speaking to a people who had come into a kingdom and were priests to God. John taught that "we" Christians "are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one," There are but two kingdoms: the domain of darkness and the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13).
3. *Because Jesus Christ is the Head of His Church and the Savior of His Body* (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). Jesus Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). We have no record anywhere in the New Testament that the blood of Jesus ever purchased anything but the church. His kingdom (Rev 5:9,10, Matt 16:18,19).
4. *Because men are reconciled to God in the Body through the cross* (Eph. 2:11-22). The church, which is His body (Eph. 1:22,23), is able to draw near to God because the blood of Christ has cleansed it. If one is not reconciled to God, one is alienated from God. God reconciles people to Himself in one body, the church.
5. *Because members of the church are members of God's Family* (1 Tim 3:15; Gal. 3:26,27; 1 Cor. 12:13). God's household is His family, the church. To be God's child one must be baptized into the body of Christ, which is the church. One is either in God's family or Satan's family. Baptism is the time one becomes a child of God and enters that body.
6. *Because only members of the church have their names written in heaven* (Heb. 12:23; Rev. 20:

15; Luke 10:20). Only the ones whose names are written in heaven will escape the lake of fire and brimstone. The Lord has added those who are saved to His church and to that heavenly list.

Organization of the Church

Jesus is the Head of the Church

- * Jesus has all authority (Matt. 28:18; John 3:35)
- * Jesus is prophet (Deut. 18:15); priest (Heb. 7:17,21,28); and King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14)
- * Jesus' Teaching is the Standard of Judgment (John 12:48; Matt. 7:21-17) Jesus is the only head and only Lord of His church (Eph. 4:4-6)

Elders or Overseers are to shepherd the Church

- * Three Designations of the Same Office. Cf. Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet. 5:1-5
- 1) elders or presbyters (Acts 14:23; 15:2; 20:7; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 5:17. Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1)
- 2) overseers or bishops (Acts 20:28, 1 Tim 3:1, Tit. 1:7)
- 3) shepherds or pastors (Acts 20:28, Eph 4:11, 1 Pet. 5:1-5)
- * Qualifications of Elders or Overseers (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9)
- * Women were not to have authority over men (1 Tim. 2:8-15)
- * Shepherds are to watch for the souls of members (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5)

Deacons or Servants

- Qualifications of deacons and their wives (1 Tim. 3:8-13)
- Served with elders (Phil. 1:1)
- Appointed to take care of special tasks of the church (Acts 6:3-6)

Evangelists, Preachers, or Ministers

- Evangelist is one who brings the gospel, "the good news" (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5)
- Minister (or servant) is one who serves God (1 Tim 1:12; Acts 9:15)
- The Work of a Preacher, evangelist.
- * evangelize (Rom. 1:14-16; 10:14,15)
- * edify the local church (Eph. 4:11-16)
- * contend for the faith (Jude 3, 1 Tim. 1:3, 2 Tim. 4:1-5)
- * train others to teach the doctrine of Christ (2 Tim. 2:2)
- * pray for open doors (Col. 4:2,3)
- * set an example of a believer (1 Tim. 4:12)
- * reprove evildoers and false teachers (lit. 1:10-14)
- * correct those ensnared by the devil (2 Tim 2:24-26)

Members of the body of Christ

- * All members are necessary and vital to the work (1 Cor 12:12-27)
- * Each member is expected to do his part (Eph. 4:11-16, Rom 12:3-8, 1 Pet 4:10,11)
- * Members have a responsibility to respect and submit to elders (Heb 13:7,17. 1 Tim 5:17-19)
- * Members have a responsibility to evangelize and to keep each other in the grace of God (Gal. 6:1; Matt. 28:18,19; Mark 16:15,16; James 5:19,20; Jude 22,23)

The Church, the Kingdom, the Body and the House of God

- It is called the Church in its Relation to the World (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28)
- It is called the Kingdom in its Government (Matt. 16:19; Col. 1:13)
- It is called the Body in its Relation to Christ (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22,23)

It is called the Household in its Relation to God (1 Tim. 3:15)

When Was the Church-Kingdom Established?

Before Acts 2, the Church-Kingdom is spoken of as Future

- 760 B.C. kingdom established in the "last days" (Isa 2:2,3; Joel 2:28)
- 600 B.C. to be established in the days of those kings (Dan. 2:44)
- 555 B.C. the ancient of days (Dan. 7:13,14)
- 28 A.D. John the Baptist, Jesus, twelve and seventy says kingdom is "at hand" (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:19).
- 29 AD. Jesus prayed for it to come (Matt. 6:9,10)
- 30 A.D. Jesus predicted that He will build it (Matt. 16:18,19)
- 30 AD. Jesus predicted some living would see it come with power (Mark 9:1)
- 30 A.D. the kingdom shall come (Luke 22:18; 19:11)
- 30 A.D. the disciples were waiting for it (Mark 15:43; Acts 1:6)

The Church is Established In 30 A.D.). In Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost

In these "last days" (Acts 2:17)

At Jerusalem (Luke 24:47)

3000 Added to them (Acts 2:4 1)

Roman Kings in power (Dan. 2:44; Luke 2:1)

Christ Risen and Exalted (Acts 2:22-3 6)

During Lifetime of Disciples Standing in Jesus Presence (Mark 9:1)

Kingdom Came with Power (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4)

After Acts 2, the Church-Kingdom is spoken of as a Present Reality

- 30 A.D. the church is a functioning body of people (Acts 2:47; 5:11)
- 37 A.D. the church is persecuted (Acts 8:1)
- 45 A.D. the church is active (Acts 13:1-3; 14:27)
- 63 A.D. the church-kingdom is in existence (Col. 1:13,14; 1 Tim 3:15)
- 96 A.D. the kingdom has been purchased by the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:4-6; 5:9,10)
- 96 A.D. John is in the Kingdom (Rev. 1:9)

The Falling Away and The Restoration

The Prediction of the Falling Away

- Acts 20:29-30 savage wolves will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them
- 2 Thess. 2:3-13 Apostasy will come before the day of the Lord. Those who did not love the truth will be sent a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, because they did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness.
- 1 Tim. 4:1-3 some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons
- 2 Tim. 3:1-13 evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived
- 2 Tim. 4:1-5 the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.
- 2 Pet. 2:1-3 false teachers will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them; and many will follow their sensuality.

Manmade, Unscriptural Practices which are Evidence of a Departure:

Date	Practice
103	Holy Water
110	Single Bishop replacing plurality of elders
140	Lent
185	Infant Baptism
230	Doctrine of Purgatory
240	Intercession of Saints
251	Pouring for Immersion
325	Council of Nicea
394	Latin Mass
500	Confession to Priests
606	First Universal Pope (Boniface III)
667	Instrumental Music in Worship
1063	Celibacy of Priests
1248	Indulgences
1311	Sprinkling Authorized
1545	Images or Icons Venerated
1870	Pope Declared Infallible

<h3>Denominational Churches And their Date of Origin</h3>
--

A.D.

606	Roman Catholic Church with first pope
1054	Division between Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches
1530	Lutheran church (Martin Luther)
1535	Church of England (Episcopalian)
1536	Presbyterian church (John Calvin)
1607	Baptist church (John Smyth)
1650	Quakers (George Fox)
1684	Congregational churches
1729	Methodist churches (John Wesley)
1830	Mormon church (Joseph Smith)
1831	Seventh-Day Advent (Ellen G. White)
1865	Salvation Army (William Booth)
1859	Christian Church (Midway, Kentucky)
1875	Jehovah's Witnesses (Charles T. Russell)
1879	Christian Science (Mary Baker Eddy)
1895	Nazarene Church (P.F. Bresee)
1898	Pentecostal Holiness
1914	Assembly of God

Matt. 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

Matt. 15:13, 14 "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.

Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

John 8:31,32 "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Gal. 1:6-9 "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed."

2 John 9-11 "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds."

The Udenominational Nature of New Testament Christianity

Definitions:

Church: (ἐκκλησία) "called out" referring to a "called out body of people."

The word "church" is used in three different ways in the New Testament. It is most often used to refer to the world-wide body or kingdom of Christ, comprised of all who have obeyed the gospel and were added by the Lord to the number of the saved in His body (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23,25). Baptism (immersion in water for the remission of sins) is the point at which one enters the body and is added to the church (Acts 2:41,47; 1 Cor. 12:13). Used in this universal sense, "church" is always used in the singular; there is "one body" or one church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22,23).

A second use of the term "church" refers to the local congregation, so that the Scripture refers to the "church of God in Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2), "the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2), or the "seven churches in the province of Asia" (Rev. 1:4). One should not assume that these are different kinds of churches (as denominations, which have different names, creeds and practices). The New Testament knows nothing of the denominational concept. The New Testament knows of only one universal church identifiable in local congregations, so that Paul speaks of the "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16).

A third use of the term "church" is a reference to the assembly of the local congregation as in 1 Cor. 11:18 or 14:34. In the New Testament "church" never referred to a physical building, though it is commonly used for that today. The church is made up of people, living stones. Other terms that are synonymous with "church" include temple, vineyard, kingdom, body, household or family of God.

Denomination: The organized grouping of congregations with similar names, creeds, beliefs, structures and practices. The word "denomination" refers to "A class, kind or sort designated by a specific name: ecclesiastically a body or sect holding particular distinctives." (*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*)

Denominationalism suggests that each denomination is a part or a division of the whole, that all of the denominations put together actually make up the universal church. This concept is wholly foreign to the New Testament, since Jesus only built one church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22,23). Factions in the church is regarded in the Bible as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), and those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Pluralism is the belief that there can be different groups with many names, creeds, organizations, and practices and that these denominations can co-exist with the approval of God. This belief is clearly denied by the Scriptures. Jesus prayed for His people to be one (John 17:20-23); division is condemned (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Rom. 16:17-19); and Jesus identifies the true disciples as those

who abide in his teaching (John 8:31,32; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11). The obvious consequence of pluralism is that there is no such thing as heresy or false doctrine. That there is such a thing as false doctrine and that it is condemned is clear from the Scriptures (Matt. 7:15-20; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 Tim. 3:1-4:5; 2 Pet. 2:1-22).

**Which of These Two Concepts
Is Biblical and Founded upon Rock
And which is Unbiblical and Founded upon Sand?
Matthew 7:24-27**

Denominational churches
“Undenominational” NT Church

The

Denominational churches

The “Undenominational” NT Church

Divided

United (Acts 2:43-47)

Many Bodies

One Body (Eph. 4-6; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; John 17:21)

Many Theologies

One Faith (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3)

Human Practices

Only Divinely Authorized Practices (John 14:12)

Human Creeds

No Creed but Christ (Matt. 7:21; John 12:42)

No Heresies Possible

False Doctrines Possible (Gal. 1:6-9)

False Teachers Tolerated

False Teachers are not tolerated (2 John 10)

Many Names

Name of Christ (Col. 3:17; Acts 4:12)

Human Organizations (presidents, headquarters, diocese, synods, etc.)

One Lord (Eph. 4:5)

Baptism Choices: Sprinkling, Pouring or Immersion

Baptism is Immersion (Eph. 4:5; Rom. 6:4)

Religious Titles ('Father,' 'Reverend,' or 'Mother Superior')

No titles (Matt. 23:5-12)

Instrumental Music in Worship

Worship by Singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)

Women Preachers and Leaders

Women Not to Teach or Have Authority (1 Tim. 2:12)

Entertainment blended in Worship

Worship in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24)

Baptism of Infants

Baptism of Penitent Believers (Acts 2:38; 8:36-38)

Some Important Lessons:

1. It matters what one believes (John 8:31,32; 2 Thess. 2:11,12).
2. Division is never right in the sight of God (John 17:20-23; 1 Cor. 1:10; Gal. 5:19-21).
3. It matters what name one wears (Acts 4:12; 11:26; 1 Cor. 1:11-13; Col. 3:17).
4. It matters how men worship God (John 4:23,24; Matt. 15:8,9; Col. 2:20-22).
5. Christ shed His blood to build one church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; 20:28; Eph. 1:22,23; 4:4).
6. It matters to God whether or not we support error (2 John 9-11; 1 Tim. 4:1-3).

Can We Restore the New Testament Church?

The restoration principle pleads for a return to a standard, a norm. It involves the belief that going backwards to the source of truth can make progress. Specifically, it means going back to the Bible as the voice of authority in Christianity. It pleads for the recognition of the New Testament Scriptures as the guidebook of the church. In recent years people have questioned whether the idea is a valid one and whether we can restore the New Testament church? We mean by that restoring the ideals and patterns that God wills and can be found in the New Testament.

Some are saying that we ought to be like Christ but that it is not necessary to restore the church today to the ideals presented in the books of Acts and the epistles.

Examples of Restoration in the Old Testament

- 2 Kings 18:3-6 Hezekiah restored Israel's worship of God, by destroying the idols, cleansing the temple and keeping the Passover. The Passover had not been kept fully since the time of Solomon. Hezekiah's father was the wicked Ahaz. (8th Cent. B.C.)
- 2 Kings 22:8-11 Josiah, in the 18th year of his reign, read a copy of the Law, found by Hilkiah the priest, while they were repairing the Temple. Josiah instituted sweeping changes, ending idolatry, and restoring worship and the Passover according to the Law! (7th Cent.)
- Jeremiah 6:16 Jeremiah called for the people to return to the old paths and walk in them. (7th Century)
- Ezra 7 Ezra by the grace of God went back to Jerusalem because "he had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (7:10).
- Anytime men stray from the will of God, there is the necessity of restoration!

Jesus Pointed To The Need To Do God's Will

Jesus emphasized the changeless nature of the Word of God by saying, "It is written." (Matt. 4:1-11). In his discussions He often said, "Have you not read?" Or "Is it not written...?" Or "What is written in the Law?" Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was a kind of "restoration" sermon pointing people back to God's will rather than popular religion.

The New Testament Warns of Departures from the Faith

1. Acts 2:42 The apostles, disciples were at first steadfast in their devotion
2. Acts 20:28-31 Paul warned the Ephesian elders
3. 1 Timothy 4:1-2 some will abandon the faith to follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons
4. 2 Timothy 4:1-5 Paul's warning to Timothy of false teachers
5. 2 Peter 2:1-3 Peter's warning of false prophets

Some of the Departures of Men

Men began teaching unscriptural doctrines and practicing things, which were completely different from the church one can read about in the New Testament. It was different in name, in doctrine, in worship, in organization, and in mission.

Some innovations: (new practice not found in the Bible) include: Holy Water (113 A.D.); Lent (140 A.D.); Penance (157 A.D.); Infant Baptism (185 A.D.); Intercession of Saints (240 A.D.); Sprinkling for Baptism (250 A.D.); Sacrifice of Mass (370 A.D.); Celibacy of Priests (425 A.D.); Purgatory (230 A.D.); Confession to Priests (500 A.D.); Pope (606 A.D.); and Instrumental Music (670 A.D.). Human creeds, traditions, and the laws of men came to be as authoritative as the Scriptures.

The Reformation Came About when Men Sought Change

Tired of Roman rule, people throughout Europe began thinking about going back to the Bible as the sole authority for their faith. Martin Luther said: "To reform the church by the (early church) fathers is impossible; it can only be done by the Word of God." Huldreich Zwingli and John Calvin: "insisted that nothing should remain in the church which was not expressly authorized by Scripture.

As time went by many different Christian groups began springing up, each with different names, creeds, organizations, and forms of worship.

- Martin Luther (1530) Lutheran Church/Lutheran catechism

- John Calvin (1536) Presbyterian Church/Westminster confession of faith
- Henry VIII (1552) Episcopal Church/Book of Common Prayer
- John Smyth (1607) Baptist Church/Standard Manual
- John Wesley (1729) Methodist Church/Methodist Discipline

As men came to America, seeking religious freedom, they began to want something other than the denominational and sectarian faiths they found. They wanted two things: (a) to go back to the Bible alone; and (b) unity among Christians.

The Restoration of the New Testament Church

Men began to say: "Let us cast aside all denominational names, creeds, doctrines and practices which divide the Christian world and just wear the name 'Christian' and be only members of the New Testament church." Their plea: "Where the Scriptures speak we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." They sought to go back to the New Testament and practice only those things taught there. They believed the Bible was the seed of the Kingdom (Luke 8:11), which would produce only Christians, members of the Lord's church, as it had done in the first century. We are born again by the incorruptible seed of the Word (1 Peter 1:23-25). What the seed produced in the first century, it would produce "in like kind" in any century.

Why the Restoration Is A Valid Concept

1. The Eternal Nature of the Gospel.

- Matthew 28:18-20 making disciples of Christ till the end of time
- Matthew 24:35 Christ's Words will last beyond this life
- Jude 3 the faith was once for all time delivered to the saints

2. The Teaching of Christ Demands Obedience

- John 8:31-32 abide in word to be true disciples
- John 12:48 we will be judged by the teachings of Christ
- Matthew 7:21 not everyone who claims to be a Christian will be saved
- Galatians 1:6-9 those who teach a different gospel will be condemned
- 2 John 9-11 we are not to fellowship those who teach false doctrines

3. God Expects His People to Come Out of Sin When They Learn the Truth--Repentance!

- Revelation 2:14-16 Church at Pergamum commanded to repent of their doctrinal error and toleration
- Revelation 2:20-23 the church at Thyatira commanded to quit tolerating the false teaching of Jezebel
- Titus 3:9-11 we must reject a factious man (i.e., one who teaches a heresy to the dividing of the church)
- Romans 16:17-18 we must mark and turn away from those who cause dissensions and teach deceptive things
- Titus 1:9-11 elders have responsibility to keep church pure and free from those who oppose the truth

Restoration is actually repentance from doctrinal error.

Have We Restored the New Testament Church Today?

Generally speaking, in those doctrines and practices that are most essential, we have gone back to the New Testament patterns and followed them. To the extent that we are following the New Testament teaching, we have restored the church today!

The question arises, "Can we know the truth?" The Bible everywhere assumes that men can know the truth and can believe and practice it (John 8:31,32). We have the promise that we will be guided into all truth (John 16:12,13).

Are we perfect? No! Do we have a corner on truth? No! Are there things we must still repent of? Yes! Are there things we could do better? Yes! Once people have become New Testament Christians by obedience to the gospel and seek to practice the will of God, they have begun the journey of restoration--they are Christians and in God's kingdom. Obviously all of us can mature and grow in our knowledge of the will of God.

Restoration in many ways is a process. As we learn what is true and that we are to change, so must we change. Restoration is repentance, and as we repent from wrong thinking we restore truth. Churches of Christ say, "Tell us what the Bible teaches and where we are deficient, and we will listen."

Conclusion:

Can We Restore the New Testament Church? Yes! And by all means we should restore it to the ideals Christ demands. Restoration begins with each individual converted to the Lord and willing to put Him first in every respect. Are there things in your life you need to restore?

The Unity of the Church

The prayer in John 17 may truly be called the Lord's prayer--it was uttered just before He went to Gethsemane. Here Jesus pours out His heart to the Father, requesting that He "sanctify them in the truth." He asks that they may all be one so that the world may believe. He prays they may be one so that the world may know that the Father sent Jesus and loved them as He did Jesus. The Lord wanted the love of the Father to be in them (26).

The word "ask" indicates that Jesus is requesting something of the Father on behalf of his followers. Here Jesus is actually praying for you and me (a precious prayer). He desires their unity built upon personal relationship and built upon love and obedience. The thing that sets Christians apart from the world is the truth (17). The thing that convinces the world Jesus is real is their unity.

God wants His people to be ONE

God knew that it is the nature of man to divide, to want to do things his own way, and to disagree with others. Among the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) are things which destroy unity:

- * enmities: hatred
- * strife: discord, fighting, competition
- * jealousy
- * outbursts of anger: fits of rage
- * disputes: selfishness, selfish ambition
- * dissensions: dividing into an opposing group (to cause two groups in the place of one)
- * factions: (heresies) Tit. 3:10,11 divisions organized into groups who oppose each other (Rom. 16:17)

People cause division by wrong attitudes and by teaching false doctrines (Acts 20:28-32). The Word of God and the love of brethren give an answer to division. Those who practice the works of the flesh will be lost. God expects His people to be loyal to or faithful to the truth and to conform to His teaching! (1 Cor. 1:10-15). Paul admonished Corinth "that you all agree" (lit., "speak the same thing"). This is a phrase of that looks back to the politics of Greece where men were united behind one person or city. Jesus did not want parties with loyalties to groups. He urged that there be no divisions (splits) among you (divided up and distributed out in cliques caused by opinions) but that you be made complete (whole or united) in the same mind (frame of mind or state of mind) and the same judgment (opinion, conviction) in both the theory and the applications of that belief. The Corinthians were quarreling (contentious). Their divisions were based on rallies around people: "Paulites," "Apollosites," "Peterites," and "Christians." This

partyism perhaps led people to give greater credit to men than to Jesus Christ.

Sectarianism is a mindset, driven by pride and is divisive. It says, "Everything I think is right; everything you think is wrong, because I'm me and you are you." In Eph. 4:1-7 Paul demanded the people recognize the oneness, the uniqueness, and the exclusiveness in all of Christianity:

- a. one body: the church Eph 1:22,23
- b. one Spirit
- c. one hope of your calling
- d. one Lord
- e. one faith--"the faith" that body of beliefs, which make Christianity unique
- f. one baptism
- g. one God

How Are Christians Able To Be United?

Unity comes through commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord! He is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God! Unity is relational (Jn 17:21). Since we are connected lovingly to God through the blood of Jesus, we are connected to all others who have been cleansed in the blood. Unity comes from putting Christ in a place of priority over all else. We are united to Him because of our faith, but our unity with Him also makes us united with all that belong to Him.

Unity comes through a commitment to love each other (John 13:34,35; Col. 3:12-15). Love is the perfect bond of unity. When we love the Lord, we also learn to love the brethren (1 John 4:7-11).

Unity comes through obedience to the teaching or message of Christ, the Bible. In John 14:15 obedience is relational. We show our love to Christ by obedience to His commands. Jesus said in John 17:20 that people believe through the "message." How can we ever be one with God and Christ and err from the message? 2 John 9-11 teaches that people who go beyond the message lose the relationship with Christ and the Father. Unity is linked to love, but it is also linked to staying within the teaching of the New Testament.

Our plea to go back to the Bible is a unity plea! It is founded on the only thing that can unite: faith, love, and obedience. Unity founded on sentiment and compromise is not the Biblical unity God wants, because it sacrifices the truth and allows men (and traditions) to take the place of the Lord.

Does the New Testament Contain Patterns For The Church?

The New Testament is God's written revelation for the church. While it is not written in "legal" language, it does contain the will of God in its commandments, in its teachings, and in its examples. It does reveal to us how we should live, work and worship so as to please God in every respect (Col. 1:9,10). These instructions can be regarded as patterns to be observed by the church in all places and at all times. The New Testament embodies "the faith that God has once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). We work with patterns everyday. Clothes are made from patterns; food is prepared from recipes; and concrete is set in forms. A pattern is a rigid requirement that demands exactness. The patterns of the New Testament are sometimes detailed and sometimes in principle. "There has to be pattern commands to which obedience can be given, since men cannot respond to a revelation amorphously" (i.e., not having any form).

The Old Testament teaches that God is often interested in exactness of detail.

- Gen. 6:15,22; 7:5 God told Noah how to build the ark, and Noah did according to all that God commanded him.
- * Ex. 25:9,40; 26:30; 39:32,42,43 Moses built the tabernacle according to the pattern he was

shown on the mountain. Moses went so far as to examine all the work to see if had been done just as it was commanded.

- Lev. 10:1,2 Nadab and Abihu were killed because they offered a strange fire that the Lord did not command.
- 1 Chron. 13:7,10 Uzzah perished when he touched the Ark of the Covenant, which David brought to Jerusalem on a cart. David learned that God expected him to do things the right way (1 Chron. 15:2,12-15).

The New Testament encourages Christians to hold to the patterns that were delivered to them:

- 2 Tim. 1:13 "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus." A pattern is a "model," a "determinative example," a "standard."
- Rom. 6:17-18 "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were committed. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness." A "form" is a mold or a norm. The concept of a mold indicates an exact pattern, to which one who submits to God willingly shapes his life. There is a pattern of teaching in the Bible which reveals God's requirements for salvation.
- 2 Thess. 2:15 "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings (traditions) we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter." (teaching = tradition)

The New Testament Teaches the Importance of Correctness in Doctrine:

- 2 Tim. 2:15 "be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."
- Luke 5:14 And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."
- John 12:50 "And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."
- John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love."
- 1 Cor. 11:2 Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.
- 1 Thess. 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us {instruction} as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.
- 2 John 6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.
- 2 John 9-11 those who go beyond the doctrine of Christ are without God; we must not support false teachers
- Rev. 22:18,19 not adding or taking away from the prophecy; this is an echo of Deut. 4:2; 5:32; 12:32

What does it mean when God tells us?

- to do the will of my Father Matt. 7:21
- to observe the word of God Luke 11:28
- to abide in my word John 8:31
- to keep my commandments John 14:15
- to hear my voice John 18:37

Application of this point: Wise men do God's will; foolish men do not. (Matthew 7:24-27)

Patterns in the New Testament

1. Patterns of obedience to the gospel:

- the pattern of teaching adults before baptism
- the pattern of immersing in water
- the pattern of baptism prior to salvation

2. Patterns of worship:

- the pattern of singing hymns of praise (not playing or making vocal sounds that imitate instruments)
- the pattern of observing the Lord's Supper each first day of the week
- the pattern of contributing each first day of the week
- the pattern of men taking leadership roles in public worship

3. Patterns of organization:

- the pattern of autonomous congregations
- the pattern of a plurality of elders and deacons in each congregation
- the pattern of men taking leadership roles and meeting the Scriptural qualifications
- the pattern of the priesthood of all believers with no distinction between "clergy" and "laity"
- the pattern of not bestowing religious titles

4. Patterns of unity:

- the pattern of one, undenominational church, unifying its members and congregations by their relationship to God in obeying the gospel and following the Lord's teaching
- the pattern of marking and rejecting factious, false teachers
- the pattern of expecting all Christians to speak the same things and to be of the same mind and judgment

5. Patterns of Christian living:

- the pattern of a moral lifestyle and disciplining brethren who are unwilling to live morally
- the pattern of working to support oneself so that one might help others
- the pattern of forgiving and reconciling a brother
- the pattern of benevolent service to others in need
- the pattern of faithful attendance at the meetings of the church
- the pattern of persistent and fervent prayer

6. Patterns of evangelism:

- the pattern of preaching the gospel to all nations
- the pattern of training the Christian in the truth and practice of Christianity
- the pattern of restoring the erring brother

Patterns are found in Scripture sometimes in principles and sometimes in specific statements. If the New Testament was not written to instruct the Christian in how to live the Christian life, then for what possible purpose could it have been written?

If every leaf on every tree has a pattern, and if every cell in every person has a DNA pattern, and if the whole universe is laid out in a set pattern, why should it seem so strange that the church our Lord built and died for should have a pattern?