

# THE PLEA OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

In early life I decided to study the Bible in order to find out what I was required of the Lord to do. I searched the pages of the Bible daily, for I wanted to be infallibly safe. Being reared by Christian parents, I was encouraged to read and obey the Word of God. I was taught the doctrine of the Church of Christ and became familiar with its plea. As I grew older, I considered the plea made by several other religious bodies, and studied them with an open mind. I wanted the truth and it alone. I never did hear a man make a plea for the church he represented that I did not compare that plea with the Bible. That is just what we are asking the reader of this book to do. Compare every thing we say by the Bible, and if our plea does not stand the test in the light of God's Divine Word, then don't accept it. But if it does, will you accept it for the good of your own soul? If this book can help one soul to be saved, I will consider my work in writing it has not been in vain.

We will deal with many subjects in this book, but they will be handled in a very brief way, the Bible being our only guide. "Speaking where the Bible speaks, and silent where the Bible is silent." Creeds and disciplines, with all other doctrines and commandments of men, have no place in this book. We are not dealing with what others teach; we are dealing with the doctrine of the Church of Christ—the Church that is mentioned in the Bible—the one that was established by Christ himself. In order to have that Church, it must be more than the Church of Christ in name only. It must be scriptural in origin, organization, faith,

name, and practice. Let us keep these things in mind as we study the pages of this book.

## **The Creation of Man**

In Gen., Ch. 1, we are told that God created the heaven and the earth in six days and that He rested on the seventh. In chapter two, Moses explains this creation, telling how it was done. In Gen. 2:7, we read how man was created: “*And the Lord God formed man from dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.*” In chapter 1 and verse 27, we are told that man was created in the image of God. In Gen. 5:1, it says man was created in the likeness of God, and in Ecc. 7:29, Solomon says he was made upright. The fact that God made man on the sixth day is no reason that God had been working at creation for six thousand years, or a long period of time, as is commonly taught. God never brought but seven days into existence and He created the sun to rule them. This was done on the fourth day of His work. (Gen. 1:16) God never intended for the sun to rule any other days but the ones He created.

If man was created according to the theory of evolution, then let some one answer the following questions: Was there ever one species developed from another? Do any of the animals that God created in the beginning show any sign of changing now? Where did the soul of man come from? At what time in this development did man come in possession of his soul? Where will the soul of man go when the body dies? If God gave this soul to man, why have man to develop through inferior animals? What has the evolution given that God could give without it? When did the work of the evolution cease to operate? Is there any sign that it will begin again? If Christ and the Apostles could endorse the history of creation given by Moses in Gen. 2:3 without changing it, what right has the man who endorses evolution to criticize it? If evolution is true when it says that men lived before Adam, why did Paul say that Adam was the first man? (Cor. 15:44)

## **The Fall of Man**

When God created Adam and Eve, He put them in the garden of Eden and gave them a law forbidding them to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the penalty for disobeying that law being death. (Gen. 2:16-17) The serpent was more subtle than any other beast of the field and was used by the devil to tempt these people. And when the devil tempted them they yielded, therefore came under the penalty God had pronounced. They could no longer be in the presence of their God inasmuch as God is without sin and no sin could be in His presence. They were driven from the garden. But before they left the presence of their Creator, a promise was made in Gen. 3:14-15 and that was the promise of the coming of the Saviour. This showed that He would bruise the head of the wicked one but He would have to suffer because of it. Man is now in need of a Redeemer. He is lost.

## **Christ Prophesied of**

When God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac, his son, and he had gone as far as God would let him go, he made him this promise, "*And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed.*" (Gen. 22:18) Paul says in Gal. 2:16 that seed was Christ. Moses said He was to be a Prophet. (Duet. 18:15) Isaiah said he was to be the son of a virgin. (Isa. 7:14) He also said He would be the Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6). He was to be as a lamb led to the slaughter. (Isa. 53) He was to be King. (Ps. 24:7-10) And also the Lord, our Righteousness. (Jer. 23:6)

## **In the New Testament He Is Called**

The Son of God. (John 3:16-17) The First Begotten. (Heb. 1:6) Lord of Lords. (Rev. 17:14) Mediator. (Heb. 8:6) Priest. (Heb. 3:1) King of Kings. (Rev. 19:6) Judge. (Matt. 16:27) Shepherd.

(John 10:11-14) Head of the Church. (Eph. 1:22-23) The True Light. (John 1:4-9) The Way. (John 14:6) The Truth. (Rev. 3:7). The Life (John 11:25) The Saviour. (Titus 2:13)

## **Christ Made the Atonement**

We have noticed that man was tempted and that he yielded to the tempter, therefore becoming a sinner; he then needed a Saviour that he might be led back to his God. God made a plan by which that could be done. That plan originated in the mind of God and was delivered to man by Christ coming into the world. But the atonement was not made in the birth of Christ. It was made in his death. The atonement was in the blood. It took the blood of the Blessed Savior to reach that man who had fallen from God. Please remember this—the animal of the old law had to be slain for the atonement to be made, so under the new law the Lord had to be slain in order for us to be saved. The plea of the Church of Christ is that we cannot be saved out of that blood. The Church was bought with His blood. (Acts 20:28) Justified by His blood. (Rom. 5:9) Redemption through His blood. (Eph. 1:7) Forgiveness of sins through His blood. (Col. 1:14) Without shedding of blood is no remission. (Heb. 9:22) Sanctified by the blood of the covenant. (Heb. 10:29) Redeemed by the blood of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:19) The blood of Christ cleanses from sins. (1 John 1:7) We are washed from sins in His blood. (Rev. 1:5)

## **The Witnesses of Christ**

In order for us to know anything about that great atonement being made for us, there had to be testimony given by some one; and in order for that to be done, the Lord, while here on earth, selected twelve men to be his witnesses, whom He called Apostles. They were called and sent under the first commission. (Matt 10) This Commission was to the Jews only, but after Christ died and took the old law out of the way and made it possible for the Gentiles to be fellow-heirs with the Jews, then he put these

same Apostles under a different commission. This one is recorded in Matt. 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16. This commission was given to the world—all nations. Under the first commission they were told to preach “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand;*” but in the last commission they were commanded to preach the gospel.

But we want the reader to see that these Apostles were the witnesses of Christ. This is plainly set forth in Luke 24:44-48. Christ said to them: “*Ye are witnesses of these things.*” And again in Acts 1:8, we read this: “*Ye shall be witnesses unto me.*” The idea in the world today that we are witnesses of Christ is unreasonable to say the least. No man can be a witness of something he has not seen. These Apostles did see the Lord. They were with Him personally. They saw the miracles He performed. They saw Him die for the sins of men, and they were with Him after He was raised from the dead. Yes, these men were truly witnesses of Him.

## **The Holy Spirit Given to the Witnesses**

Before the Lord died, He promised these witnesses that He would send them the Holy Spirit. (See Luke 24:44-50) In verse 49, He said, “*Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with the power from on high.*” This promise was given to the same men again in John 14:15-17. This promise was explained to these witnesses (The Apostles) in verse 26 of this chapter: “*Bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*” This could not mean us for up until that time He had told us nothing, but He had talked to the Apostles. In John 15:26, Christ promised the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and in verse 27, He tells why they are to receive it: “*Ye shall bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning.*” This could not refer to any one but the Apostles as they were the only one that had been with Him from the beginning. Again in John 16:13, He gave another reason for the Apostles receiving this Holy Spirit: “*To guide them into all truth.*”

In Acts 1:4, the Lord told the Apostles not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, and in verse 5, He said: “*Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*” In verse 8, He told them that they would receive power when they received this baptism of the Holy Ghost. In Acts, chapter two, we find these witnesses, the Apostles, at Jerusalem, where the Lord told them to be, and we see them receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit just the way the Saviour said they would receive it. This was promised to the witnesses He had chosen and here those witnesses have received it. I want the reader to notice carefully that the multitude was not present when the Apostles received this. We are told by some that the antecedent of the pronoun “they” and “them” (Acts 2:4) was the multitude or the three thousand that accepted the teaching of the Apostles at this time. But notice this—the “they” and the “them” received it according to verse four, and according to verse six this was noised abroad, and the multitude came together. This plainly shows that the multitude was not there when the “they” and the “them” received it.

## **The Bible**

Now keep in mind the promise made to the Apostles that when they received the Holy Spirit it would guide them into all truth. Our plea is that the Holy Spirit did that very thing, and that all-truth is recorded in the Bible, and that it is necessary to accept that all-truth in order to be saved. The Holy Spirit led the Apostles to tell what every lost soul must do to make heaven their home. That all-truth is found in no other book but the Bible. Let us notice what that book will do for us. It will convert the soul. (Ps. 19:7) It will make us free. (John 8:32) It will sanctify. (John 17:17) It will give us an inheritance. (Acts 20:32). It contains eternal life. (John 6:68) It is the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:19). It is the word of life. (Phil. 2:16). It is quick and powerful. (Heb. 4:12) It is perfect. (James 1:25) It will purify. (1 Pet. 1:22-23) Nothing can be added to it, or taken from it. (Rev.

22:18-19) It will never be destroyed. (1 Pet. 1:25) It will judge us at the last day. (Rev. 20:12) We are commanded to preach it, (2 Tim. 4:2) and in doing so we must rightly divide it. (2 Tim. 2:15)

## **Believe the Bible**

Our plea is that all the Bible must be believed, not just part of it. The only way that we can ever expect to be saved is to take the Bible as our guide, and we can't do that unless we believe it. But so often we hear people say we will accept what is in the New Testament but will not believe what is in the Old, therefore, we will reject the Old Testament entirely. But let us notice how far we can go with that. I can't reject Moses' account of the creation recorded in Gen 1-2, and not reject Christ for He endorsed what Moses said. I must believe what the Old Testament says about the destruction of Sodom, recorded in Gen. 19; for Christ endorsed that in Luke 17:28-29. I must believe what is said about the children of Israel at Mount Sinai recorded in Ex. 19:20, for the New Testament endorses it in Heb. 12:18-21. We must believe the history of Israel crossing the Red Sea for Paul shows they did do that in 1 Cor. 10:1. There has been much said about Jonah and the whale, denying the story as a matter of fact, and asserting it to be impossible for the whale to swallow Jonah. But I must believe that in order to accept Christ as my Saviour. For if I deny what is said in the Old Testament about it, I must also deny Christ. For Christ said it was true. Hear Him on the subject. Matt. 12:40: "*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly...*" There is no argument against that unless we deny the language of Christ. There are many more examples that we could bring but space forbids. But these are enough to get in the minds of the readers what we mean. In Rom. 15:4, we are told: "*That whatsoever was written before time was written for our learning.*" We are taught that we are to believe what the Lord has written. In believing that, we believe that Christ is the Son of God. Faith comes by hearing. (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31) We cannot be saved without faith. (Heb. 11:6) It is the substance of things

hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1) We walk by faith. (2 Cor. 5:7) Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Rom. 14:23)

## **Obeying the Commands of the Bible**

There are commands in the Bible that have been given to all classes of people. Some of them have served their day and passed away with the old law, or covenant. The animal sacrifice was a command to the people that lived under the old law. The giving of one tenth was also to those that were under that law, but was never given to the church. The command of fleshy circumcision was given to Israel but never to the members of the body of Christ. The Ten Commandments were also given to the children of Israel but never to the Church. These, with many other commands recorded in the Old Testament, served their purpose and passed away when the old law was nailed to the cross. (Col. 2:14-15) But let us never overlook the fact that there are commands of the New Testament that we must obey if we reach heaven. We cannot be saved by faith alone for that doctrine is not taught in the Bible. King Agrippa believed and he said that he was almost persuaded to become a Christian, which shows that he was not a Christian. (Acts 26:27-28) James shows that faith without works is as dead as a body without the spirit. (James 2:26) Paul made it plain in 2 Thess. 1:7-9, that we must obey the Gospel to be saved. That Gospel is to be preached. (Mark 16:15-16) This same Gospel is to be believed. (Rom. 1:16) And it must be obeyed and we here mention some of the commands connected with that Gospel. Remember we cannot believe and obey the Bible without believing and obeying the Gospel.

In Luke 13:3-5, the Lord showed that we must repent or perish. Repentance is connected with conversion. (Acts 3:19) It is a command. (Acts 17:30-31) It is the Lord's will that we repent. (2 Pet. 3:9) The goodness of God leads us to repentance; (Rom. 2:4) and Godly sorrow worketh repentance. (2 Cor. 7:10) In the



Bible commands, we learn that we are to confess Christ before men. (Matt. 10:32) and that the confession is to be made with the mouth. (Rom. 10:10) The example of that is given in Acts 8:37-38. In Acts 10:48, baptism is given as a command. Let us see what this baptism is for. In Matt. 28:18-19, it is connected with the great commission. It is connected with salvation in Mark 16:15-16. It is for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38) It is to wash away sins. (Acts 22:16) It brings us into Christ. (Gal. 3:27). It brings us into the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12-13) It is the answer of a good conscience. (1 Pet, 3:21) It is the likeness of a birth. (John 3:3-5). It is a burial. (Rom. 6:1-6) It is a spiritual circumcision. (Col. 2:11-12) It is the likeness of a planting. (Rom. 6:6) There is one baptism. (Eph. 4:5) In order to have that one baptism, it takes the coming to the water. (Acts 8:36) The going down into the water. (Acts 8:38) The coming up out of the water. (Matt 3:16) It takes much water. (John 3:23)

Our plea is that when these commands are obeyed we are then in Christ. To be in Christ is to be free from condemnation, (Rom. 8:1-2) because we are a new creature. (2 Cor. 5:17) To be in Christ is to be in the body of Christ. The same thing that brings us into Christ brings us into his body. (Gal. 3:27 and 1 Cor. 12:12-13) Inasmuch as the body is the Church (Col. 1:18 and 24; Eph. 1:22-23) then when we are in the body of Christ we are in his Church. Inasmuch as the blood dwells in the body, then when we come into the body, the Church, we are in contact with His blood. (Acts 20:28) The same is true of the spirit. Reason teaches us that the spirit dwells in the body. The same is true of the spirit of the Lord. If I want to come in contact with the Lord's spirit I must come into his body, the Church. I can't be saved by His spirit independent of the other items mentioned. Also keep in mind that we are not only to get into Christ, but we are to abide in Him. (John 15:7) And abiding in Him, we can die in Him, as is taught in Rev. 14:13.

## **God's Part and Man's Part in the Plan of Salvation**

Anything that man could not do for himself in the saving of his soul God willing did that for him. But God is not going to do something for us that we are able to do for ourselves. That being true, there are some things that God did, and there are some for us to do. God did His part through Christ, and we are to do our part by accepting Christ.

Christ brought to this world a gospel that was able to save the human family. (Mark 16:15-16; Gal. 1:8-10) It is our part to believe that gospel. (Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16)

Christ brought to this world the grace that is able to save men. (Eph. 2:5-8) It is our part to let that grace lead us to repent of our sins. (Rom. 2:4)

Christ brought to this world a name in which salvation was placed. (Acts 4:11-12; Eph. 3:14-15) It is our part to confess that name before man. (Matt: 10:32; Phil 2:8-11)

Christ brought His blood to this world and shed it that man could be saved. (1 John 1:7; Pet. 1:18-25) It is our part to be baptized into that blood. (Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:27) Christ established His Church here on earth. (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:25-27) It is our part to become a member of that Church. (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:18)

It was Christ who went away to prepare a place called heaven. (John 14:1) It is our part to live a faithful life that we can enjoy that place when life is over. (Rev. 2:10; Rev. 22:14)

## **Conversion**

We make the plea that every responsible person must be converted in order to be saved. Infants and those who are not responsible are not lost and do not need conversion. The word “convert” means to change or turn, and unless we turn from our evil ways, God will not accept us. Conversion takes place with us, not with God. We do the converting, or turning, and the Lord does the pardoning. By reading the following references we plainly see that we are commanded to be converted. (Matt. 18:3; Matt. 13:15; Acts 3:19; Acts 28:27; James 5:19-20) There are three changes that must take place in the life of one to have a Bible conversion; and for these three changes to take place, we must open our heart to the word of God. (Ps. 19:7) These three changes are: the change of mind, the change of conduct, and the change of state.

The carnal mind must be changed to a spiritual mind. (Rom. 8:6) That change is brought about by faith. When we believe the word of God, it is then that we lose the desire to follow the wicked one. The conduct is changed by repentance, as repentance means to reform. (2 Cor. 7:10) The one thing that changes the state is obedience. (Rom. 6:17-18) We must obey that form (mould) of doctrine that is set forth in the first part of that chapter. Christ died for sin; we must die to sin. Christ was buried after he died; and after we die to sin, we are to be buried with Christ in baptism. Christ was raised from the dead; and we must be raised from the waters of baptism to walk a new life. When we have done that, we have experienced the three changes that must take place to have a true case of conversion. (Rom. 6:1-6)

At this point we are often asked if all the cases of conversion recorded in the New Testament are the same? To this we answer, No, the cases of conversion that took place before Christ died that are recorded in the first four books are different from the cases recorded after Christ died. We will just mention one case before

the death of Christ, the thief on the cross. He did not have to obey the form of doctrine that Paul gave in Rom. 6, due to the fact that he lived, was converted, and died under a different law than we are under. He died under the old law when they were commanded to keep the Ten Commandment law. There is no testament of force until the death of the Testator. (Heb. 9:17) The New Testament was not in force when the thief on the cross died. But fifty days after the resurrection of Christ, and on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, that New Testament that we are now under was executed. Christ had then died and was buried and resurrected, and had gone back to the Ancient of Days and sent the Holy Ghost as He said He would. From that time on, every case of conversion reported in the book of Acts is the same. Each one heard the Word preached. They believed the Word when they heard it. They obeyed the word when they believed it, just as we have tried to present it on this subject. Please read the history of the cases of conversion in Acts 2; 8; 9; 10; 16; 22.

## **What We Are Called and Why**

The Lord's people are called saints (Eph. 2:19; Jude 3) because they are set apart for the service of God. They are called brethren (Col. 1:2; 1 John 3:14) because of their relationship in one family. They are called the Elect (Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10) because they are chosen of God in Christ by the gospel. (2 Thess. 2:14) They are called children of God (Rom. 8:16; Eph. 5:1) because of their relationship to the Father. They are called disciples (Acts 20:7) because they are learners under the instruction of their Blessed Master. They are called Christians (Acts 11:26) because they are followers of Christ and citizens of His Kingdom. They are called soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3) because they are all in the same army fighting the good fight of faith. (1 Tim. 6:12) We make the plea that these names were worn by authority and were given by inspiration.

## **What We Should Be**

We make the plea that if we are saved at the judgment we must be a Christian. (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16) A member of the body of Christ. (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 12:4-5) A member of the Church Christ built. (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; Heb. 12:22-23) A member of the family of Christ. (Eph. 3:14-15) A citizen in the kingdom of Christ. (Col. 1:13; John 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 15:24) A soldier in the army of Christ. (Heb. 2:10; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:6-8) A lively stone in the house of Christ. (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5) A sheep in the fold of Christ. (John 10:11-16; Ps. 23) An heir with Christ. (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7; James 2:5)

## **The Blood of Christ**

We make the plea that there is no way of being saved only through the blood of Christ. This is made very plain in 1 John 1:7 and 1 Pet. 1:18-25. But in order to be saved by the blood we must accept everything that is connected with that blood. We can't be saved by any kind of blood; it must be the blood of Christ. His blood was shed in order that His testament would be in force. (Heb. 9:16-17) Therefore, we must accept the testament. His blood was given for the Church. (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27) Therefore, we must accept that Church. Christ's blood is found in his body, therefore we must be a member of that body. (Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 5-23) Paul says in Rom. 6:1-6 that we are baptized into the death of Christ; therefore we must be baptized because it is an act that connects us with the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is connected with the Gospel. (1 Cor. 15:1-3) Therefore we must believe and obey that Gospel to be saved. (2 Thess. 1:7-9) Christ spoke of the communion as being the body and the blood of the Lord. (1 Cor. 11:24-25) Therefore, to live a Christian life, we must carry out the communion service as He taught it. Christ is the head of His family. (Eph. 3:14-15) The same blood that flows from the head of the family is the same that must be in the

members of that family; therefore we must be a child of that family to come in contact with that blood by which we are saved.

## **Christ Built His Church**

We are told in Matt. 16:18, that Christ would build His Church. We make the plea that Christ did build it and that He still adds those to it who obey His law. (Acts 2:47) It took the blood of Christ for that Church to be established (Acts 20:28). He gave himself for that Church. (Eph. 5:25) By doing that, he became the head of it. (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23) He made a way by which we can enter His Church. (John 10:9; John 14:6) The only way to get into His church is through Christ, the door. Christ, the builder of His Church, is the only one who had a right to name it and He did that. It is called the Church of Christ. (Rom. 16:16) It is called the Church of God. (1 Tim. 3:15) It is called the Church of the Firstborn. (Heb. 12:22-23) We are asked why is the Church called by three names instead of one? It is like this. Christ wears all three of these names. Of course he is called Christ. He is called God. (Heb. 1:8) He is also called the Firstborn. (Col. 1:18) These are the only names connected with the Church that Christ built. But we are again asked if there is anything in a name? Yes. Peter says salvation is in the name of Christ. (Acts 4:11-12) The family of the Lord wears His name. (Eph. 3:14-15) If you pay me a debt and I give you a receipt for that payment, you would want my name to it instead of another. If I gave you a check in payment of a debt, you would want my name to that check instead of some other name. We know that there is a great deal to a name when it comes to business affairs. Well, there is just as much in a name when it comes to religious affairs.

This Church that Christ built requires of us no other book but the Bible.

The Bible is the only guide it has. (John 8:32; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)

It honors its builder by wearing His name. (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16)

It is composed of baptized, penitent believers. (Acts 2:38; Acts 2:47)

It presents the plan of salvation. (Eph. 3:10-21)

It permits its members to have the communion every Lord's Day. (Acts 20:7)

It presents an infallibly safe way. (Matt. 7:13-14)

It will suffer no one to come between the members and the head. (Col. 1:18)

Its acts of worship are opened to all Christians. (1 Cor. 11:24-34)

To sum the whole thing up, we wish this impressed: It has a scriptural name, (Rom. 16:16) an infallible head, (Col. 1:18) a sure foundation, (Eph. 2:19-21) a perfect guide, (James 1:25) a living Advocate, (1 John 2:1) a complete organization, (Col. 2:9-10) an open door, (John 10:9) a wise builder, (Matt. 16:18) and is the oldest. (Acts 2:47) If there is a church established before this one, it is too old to be the Church that Christ built; and if there is one established since then, it is too young to be the one mentioned in the Bible.

## **Congregations**

In our plea, we try to make it plain that this Church that Christ built is divided into different congregations, and that these congregations are located in different localities. But keep in mind that Christ is the head of all. To explain what we mean by that, there were seven churches of Asia—seven congregations.

The Lord has made it plain that each congregation is to be under officers of its own—men who are selected and appointed over that one congregation; but they do not have authority over any other congregation. There are two offices in the church. The bishops, commonly called elders, and the deacons. These are the only officers on earth connected with the Church. In Acts 14:23, we are told that they ordained elders in every church, and the same principle is set forth in Titus 1:5. One elder cannot be over more than one congregation. The qualifications of these men are given in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1.

The qualification of elders are divided into four parts: personal—blameless, not unruly, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, sober, just, holy, temperate, vigilant, of good behaviour, patient, not quarrelsome, not covetous, of good report from without; domestic—husband of one wife, rules own house well, faithful children; social—lovers of hospitality, not accused of riot, lovers of good men; congregational—feed the flock, take oversight willingly, not lords, examples to the flock, able to exhort and convince the gainsayers, not a novice, apt to teach, first to be proven. The Lord intended for men to have these qualifications or they would not have been placed in the Bible as they were.

These elders are to rule well, (1 Tim. 5:17) and they are to be counted worthy of double honor when they do that. (1 Tim. 5:19) These elders are to feed the flock which is among them. They are forbidden to become lords over the congregation. To be lord is to be a lawgiver, and there is no law to be in the church but that which came from heaven. When any elder makes a law of his own and places it over a congregation, he is lording it over the flock, and therefore, is not worthy of double honor because he is not ruling well. These bishops are to give account for the flock. (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7-17) They are the stewards of God, (Titus 1:7) therefore they must be faithful. (1 Cor. 4:2)



In connection with these elders there should be deacons. (Phil. 1:1) The qualifications of these men are recorded in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. While there is a responsibility resting on the deacons, yet it is not as great as that resting on the elders. The deacon's work is to see about the financial part of the congregation, while the elder's work is to see after the spiritual part. These men should work together in all things, and feel free to advise each other in the spirit of the Lord, never reaching the place where they let their office exalt them in any way. They should always keep in mind they are only servants in the Church the Lord died for.

## Worship in the Church

There are three kinds of worship mentioned in the Bible, but only one kind that the Lord wants in the Church He built. In Mark 7:7, the Lord speaks of a vain worship that is carried out by the doctrines and the commandments of men. In Acts 17:23, we find this statement: "*Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship.*" But in John 4:23, the Lord said for us to worship "*in spirit and in truth.*" Our plea is that we must worship Him that way in order for it to be acceptable with the Lord. This worship must be according to truth and in the right spirit or God will not accept it.

We wish to notice the acts of worship set forth in the Bible.

Prayer is an act of worship. We are commanded to pray everywhere. (1 Tim. 2:8) We are to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) and in Luke 18:1, Christ said, "*Men ought always to pray and not to faint.*" In other words, because our prayers are not answered we should not become discouraged.

Singing is another act of worship. (Eph. 5:19) We are commanded to sing, Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. How sing them? Making melody in our heart to the Lord. (Col. 3:16) Again we are commanded to sing, to teach and admonish, singing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. How sing them? With

grace in our heart to the Lord. In Heb. 2:12, we are told to sing them in the Church, and this should be done considering the statement of Paul in 1 Cor. 14:15: “*I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also.*”

We are asked many times why we do not have music in connection with our singing. The Lord did not put it there and we have no right to go beyond that which is written. The darkest day in the history of the Church was when innovations began to be brought into the Church to entertain the people. Among those things that were brought in were the musical instruments. There is no man who can put those things in the Church and truthfully say he is doing it by the authority of the Lord. In Matt. 17:5, God said that we are to hear Christ. He is the one that speaks with authority, and when He doesn't speak, then we are to be silent. The instruments of music found their way into the worship just like every other innovation by majority vote. The Pope of Rome found his way into that place because he was voted there. The confessional box did the same thing. Our plea is that there cannot be a thing connected with the Divine worship that the Lord did not put there. We are commanded to walk by faith, (2 Cor. 5:17) and there can be no faith where there is no testimony.

There is not a place on record where the Lord ever said to have instrumental music in the worship in the Church. But we are told by many inasmuch as they had it in the Old Testament, we are to have it now. If that is a safe rule to follow, then we can have the animal sacrifices as they were connected under the old law. In 2 Chron. 29:20-28, you will notice in verse 27 of the chapter that the music began when the offering began and in verse 28 the music stopped when the offering ceased. Now if this is an argument to be made in favor of the instrumental music, then the same argument gives us the right to bring in the animal sacrifice. They stood together under the same law. But those things

belonged to the law of Moses and not to the New Testament, therefore they have no place in the Church.

Another act of worship is the communion. The Lord instituted this just before His death. (Matt. 26:26) The disciples observed it on the first day of the week after the Church was established. (Acts 20:7). It didn't just happen to be on the first day of the week when the disciples met to break bread as is sometimes taught. You will notice that Paul and his company tarried at Troas seven days. Our plea is that the first day of the week is the day that the Lord appointed for his people to meet to break bread. The Church at Corinth observed this as is plainly set forth in 1 Cor. 10:16, and in 1 Cor. 11:23-34. This, with all other acts of worship, is an open worship. You will notice that Paul made it plain when he said, "*But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup,*" and this we should do today just as it was commanded then.

There is another act of worship and that is the contribution. In Acts 2:42, it is made plain that the early disciples practiced these things. In 1 Cor. 16:1-3, they were commanded to lay by in store on the first day of the week as they had been prospered, and in 2 Cor. 8:12, we are told there is to be first a willing mind when we give, and in 2 Cor. 9:7, we are to give as we purpose in our heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. We make the plea that this is God's plan to take care of the finance of the Church. If the members of the Church will do their duty, there will be money enough to take care of these things.

Many years after God gave this plan, men seemed to think they could change it, and they started to raise money for the Church by having suppers, fairs, and many other things not mentioned in the Bible. These things were brought in with many other innovations by the majority vote. If we are to be a Bible people, we must follow the Bible, and it is just as dangerous to go

beyond what is written as it is to come short of what is written. Yes, we make it plain that we must have all items of worship in the Church just the way the Lord put them there. In order for the Lord to accept our worship, the right thing must be done, in the right place, at the right time, and in the right way.

## **The Work of the Church**

We make the plea that there is work to be done in the Church that is just as necessary and important as the worship. We can't have the Church of Christ without the true worship; neither can we have it without the work the Lord commanded. Every religious act that is to be carried out by disciples of the Lord must be done through the Church. Paul said in Col. 2:10, "*And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power.*" I dare not set up any other institution through which to do this work that the Lord wants done. It all can be done through the Church that He died for, at the same time the Church receiving the glory. (Eph. 3:21) We make the plea that mission work should be done, and it must be for the Lord commanded it. But the Church is to do the work. 1 Thess. 1:8: "*From you sounded out the word.*" The Church sounded it out. The Church is to make the plan of salvation known. (Eph. 3:10) In other words, we do not believe in keeping up a middle man through whom to do mission work. When the Church gives the money, it goes direct to where the work is to be done.

Preaching is a part of the work of the Church. Each congregation has a right to say the amount of preaching it needs. It is not the amount of preaching that makes a Church untrue to the Lord, but it is the kind of preaching it has and endorses. (2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2) Teaching is also a part of the work of the Church, and congregations should be just as anxious to develop the talents of the ones who can teach as they should of the ones that can preach. Taking care of the sick, and the fatherless, and the widows is a part of the work of the Church,

and unless it is done the Church is coming short of its duty. (James 1:27)

We accept the Church that is mentioned in the Bible as being the only divine institution for the following reasons: It is the only institution on earth that has Christ for the head. (Col. 1:18) The only institution that has the blood of Christ in it. (Acts 20:28) It is the only institution that wears the name of Christ by divine authority. (Rom. 16:16) It is the only institution of which the Lord is the Saviour. (Eph. 5:23) It is the only institution that He has promised to deliver to the Father. (1 Cor. 15:24) This being true, we are duty bound to give the glory to the Lord through that sacred institution.

## **The First Day of the Week**

While the old covenant stood, the Lord commanded the people under that covenant to observe the Sabbath day. But when the Lord took that covenant out of the way, He brought in another covenant and with He brought in another day. The idea is often presented that when Christ died on the cross, He only took one of the Ten Commandments out of the way and left the other nine to be observed by the Church. But that is not true as He took them all out of the way—not just part of them. Every command of the Ten Commandments was destroyed and Christ brought in a new law complete. Everything that is in the Church must be placed there by the authority of Christ and not because it was taught under the old law.

There are some commands in the Church similar to those taught under the old law, but they are no part of the old law. The Sabbath of the old law was never given as a command until after Israel left Egypt. Moses makes this plain in Duet. 5:15. Nehemiah says in his book, chapter 9:13-14, that the Sabbath was made known to them on Sinai.

Let us notice to whom the Sabbath was given and why. Also what was commanded in connection with it. No fires to be built on that day. (Ex. 35:3) Could not bake or boil. (Ex. 16:23) The Priests were to offer a sacrifice. (Num. 28:9) Compel all to keep it. (Ex. 20:10-11) Stone those who break it. (Ex. 31:14) Their cattle must also rest. (Ex. 20:10-11) Kept from evening until evening. (Lev. 23:32)

Our plea is that the Church cannot observe the Sabbath as it is given here, therefore, it is not binding on us now. The Jews were to keep it. *"I gave them my Sabbath."* (Ex. 20:12) *"Given you the Sabbath."* (Ex. 16:29) *"Ye shall keep my Sabbath."* (Ex. 31:13) *"It is a sign BETWEEN ME AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL."* (Ex. 31:17) *"Israel shall keep the Sabbath."* (Ex. 31:17) It was classed with other holy days. (Lev. 23; Num. 28:2-16) It was abolished with them. (Col. 2:14) It is not binding on the Church. (Acts 15:9, 24, 29; Gal. 3:10; Gal. 5:4) Paul in speaking of the Sabbath said it was a shadow. (Col. 2:16-17) The Church is not under the shadow and never was. It would be impossible to have a shadow without the substance and Paul tells what the substance is in Col. 2:17: *"Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ."* So we are the members of the body that the things of the old law were only a shadow of.

We make the plea that the Lord selected the first day of the week as the day in which His people would meet and worship Him. In Acts 20:7, they met on that day to break bread, and 1 Cor. 16:1-2 shows that this was their day of meeting as the Lord told them to give of their means on that day. He exhorted them not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. (Heb. 10:25) The first day of the week is a memorial day to the disciples of Christ. Please notice this. It was on that day that Jesus rose from the dead. (Mark 16:9) It was on that day He appeared to His disciples. (Mark 16:9-10) The great commission was given on that day. (Mark 16:15-16) It was a day of rejoicing. (John 20:20) It was the birthday of the Church. (Acts 2) The Apostles kept it. (Acts

20:7) They met and worshiped on that day. (1 Cor. 16:1-3) John calls it the Lord's day. (Rev. 1:10) There is not a greater day in the history of the world than that day. Christ brought life and immortality to light in His resurrection from the dead and it was on this day that it was done. We should never let the first day of the week pass that we do not worship the Lord. It was on that day that the devil lost the battle against Christ. He had put Him to death and had Him in a sealed tomb, but on that day Christ came forth from the dead a resurrected Saviour.

## **The Law a Shadow**

The Bible makes it plain to us that there have been two covenants. God made one with Israel when he took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. That covenant was made at Sinai. The other one was made at Jerusalem when the kingdom was started. I want the reader to know that the Ten Commandments and the covenant that God made with Israel WAS ONE AND THE SAME THING. I know it is often said that the old covenant is gone, but that we are under the Ten Commandments. That is impossible as we hope to be able to show by the Bible. In Ex. 20, the Ten Commandments are given, and they are later written on two tables of stone, and are not two different things, as is so often taught. When Christ took that covenant out of the way, he took the Ten Commandments, also. In Deut. 9:9-11, Moses said, "*The Lord gave me the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant.*" Moses said the tables of stone were the tables of the covenant. But hear Moses again on this subject in Deut. 4:13: "*And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, EVEN TEN COMMANDMENTS; and he wrote them on two tables of stone.*" No statement could be plainer than this one. He says the covenant and the Ten Commandments are the same. Again in Ex. 34:28, we read this: "*And he wrote upon the tables THE WORDS OF THE COVENANT, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.*" Moses said they were the same thing, and we teach it that way. Paul made it very plain in Heb. 8, and also

in 2 Cor. 3:3-11, that the covenant God made then was taken away. The law passed away at the same time of the covenant. (Gal. 3:19) It was to stand until the seed was to come, and in Gal. 3:16, we see that the seed was Christ. So the law cannot be of force after Christ came and fulfilled it, for it was then that He took it out of the way.

In Gal. 3:24, the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ. In verse 25, since faith has come we are no longer under the school-master, therefore we are not under the law this side of the death of Christ. In Gal. 4:21-31, it is plainly shown that we are the children of the new covenant and not of the old. In Jer. 31:31-34, the new covenant was prophesied of and Paul explains this in Heb. 8. We can't be under both of these covenants at the same time.

In the first place, we as Gentiles were never under the old covenant, or law, as it was never given to anyone but the Jews. (Matt. 10:5-6) The old law promised the land of Canaan and not heaven. It inflicted the death of the body. We can't be justified by it. (Gal. 3:11) It was weak. (Rom. 8:3) It is dead. (Rom. 7:4) Those under it have fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:4) It made nothing perfect. (Heb. 7:19) It was not faultless. (Heb. 8:7) It was a yoke. (Acts 15:10) It has been abolished. (Eph. 2:15) It was nailed to the cross. (Col. 2:14-15)

Many things of the old law were shadows of the new law. Space forbids us giving all but we will mention a few. The tabernacle was built by Moses; the Church was built by Christ. The tabernacle was built by the authority of God; the Church was built by the authority of Christ. (Matt. 16:18) God showed his approval of the tabernacle when he sent the cloud; Christ showed his approval of the Church when he sent the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2) The tabernacle was built of lifeless material; the Church is built of lively stones. (1 Pet. 2:5) The tabernacle was dedicated by the blood of animals; the Church was dedicated by the blood of



Christ. (Heb. 9:11-15) Priests offered sacrifice for the people; (Heb. 10:1) in the Church we offer our bodies a living sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1) Priests washed in the laver; (Ex. 30:18) we are baptized into the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12-13) Then they put on the priestly garments; (Ex. 40:12-13) now we are to put on Christ. (Gal. 3:27) The seven lamps gave light in the tabernacle; (Ex. 25:37) God's word is the only light in the Church Christ built. (2 Tim. 3:16-18; Ps. 119:105) Then they ate the shewbread each Sabbath; Christians break bread on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7). Altar of incense burned perpetually; Christians are to pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5:17). In the tabernacle God met with the Priests; the Lord meets with His disciples in the Church. (Matt. 18:20) God told what should be done and how in the tabernacle; Christ tells what must be done and how in the Church. They could worship only as God said; we can worship only as instructed in the new law. (Rev. 22:18-19) No strange sacrifice could be offered under the old law. The doctrines of men are not to be accepted in the Church. (Mark 7:7; Col. 2:21-22) They came under that old covenant by a natural birth, but we come under the new covenant by a new birth—the water and the spirit. (John 3:3-5)

## **The Falling Away**

We make the plea that after one has become a Christian, it is possible for him to become involved with the affairs of the world to the extent that he can fall away so as to be finally lost. This, I am sure, is made very plain in the Bible as I hope to be able to show you. Adam and Eve fell from the favor of God. (Gen. 3) Israel fell from the favor of the Lord. (Num. 14) Parable of the ten virgins—all virgins, but not all of them were wise. (Matt. 15:1) Parable of the talents. (Matt. 25:14) Wolf catcheth the sheep. (John 10:12) Fall of Judas. (Matt. 26:47; John 17:12; Acts 1:10-17) Possible to be cast away. (1 Cor. 9:24) Possible to fall away. (Heb. 4:11; Heb. 6:1-6) Possible to be entangled. (2 Pet. 2:20) Bring upon themselves destruction. (2 Pet. 2:1) Angels cast

out. (2 Pet. 2:4) Remove the candlestick. (Rev. 2:1-5) Let no man take thy crown. (Rev. 3:11) Devil can devour. (1 Pet. 5:8) Possible to fall from grace. (Gal. 5:4) Possible to forget he was once purged from his sins. (2 Pet. 2:11) This plainly shows that one can fall away and be finally lost.

But we want to make it plain that the soul that has fallen away can come back to the Lord and obey His commandments and the Lord will forgive. We have a case of that kind mentioned in Acts 8. Here is a man who had been baptized. (Verse 13) He stepped aside from the truth to the extent that he had fallen away from the Lord. He became sorry of his conduct and the Apostle Peter told him what to do in verse 22: *“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”* Our plea is that though one can fall away so as to be lost, yet it is possible for that lost soul to repent and pray God and that God will pardon, just as it is given in this 8th chapter of Acts.

## **The Kingdom of Christ**

We make the plea that Christ came to earth and established His kingdom just as the prophets said he would. In Isa. 2:2-5, the prophet looked down the stream of time and saw the Lord bringing into existence His kingdom. He said it was to be established in the last days. That does not mean just before the Lord comes again, but there have been three ages of religion and the last days here mean the last age. This is made plain in Heb. 1:1-2: *“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”* So this kingdom was to be established in the same days that God was to speak through His Son. That is the Gospel age and that is the one in which we are living now. Daniel prophesied of the same kingdom in Dan. 2:44.

But we now turn our attention to what is said in the New Testament regarding this kingdom. In Matt. 3:2, we hear John preaching, *“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* In Matt. 10:7, we

hear the Apostles preaching the same thing, “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” We do not want the reader to be confused on this expression, “at hand.” It does not mean something that has already come but it carries with it the thought of something that is drawing near. Paul explains it in 2 Tim. 4:6-8: “*The time of my departure is at hand.*” He had not departed yet, but that time was drawing near. That is the same thought when he speaks of the kingdom being at hand. It is drawing near. Christ told his people to pray for His kingdom to come. (Matt. 6:9-15) In Mark 9:1, Christ told His disciples that some of those men that were with Him would not die until the kingdom came with power. Now some of those men are still living, or the Lord was mistaken, or the kingdom has come.

Now we know that none of them are living, that Christ never did make a mistake; therefore, the kingdom did come as he said it would. In Col. 1:13, Paul said, “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.*” Again in Heb. 12:28, we read, “*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear.*” And then again in Rev. 1:9, John said he was in the kingdom; and again in 1 Cor. 15:24, Paul said that when Christ comes again. He will deliver the kingdom to the Father. He is not coming to earth to start the kingdom as some would have you believe, but to take it home to the Father.

The Lord said in Mark 9:1 that the kingdom was to come with power. Now read Acts 1:8 and you will notice the power was to come with the Holy Ghost. Now these three came at the same time—the kingdom, and the power, and the Holy Ghost. If we can find when one came to know we are at the right place to find when the other two came. In Acts 2, we read where the Holy Ghost came therefore according to promise, the power came, and also according to promise the kingdom came. It was to have its beginning in the last days and it was to begin at Jerusalem. (Isa.

2:1-5) In Acts, they are at the right place, Jerusalem, and they are at the right time—the last days. The kingdom was preached in promise until the second chapter of Acts, but there is not a place this side of Acts 2 where any of them preached “*The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” From that time on they went out and told the people that the kingdom had come and pled with them to become citizens of it.

Now in order for there to be a kingdom, it is necessary for there to be a king. Christ is that king. (Ps. 24:7-10) Ezek. 21-25 shows the king was coming, and in Rev. 19:16 John shows that Christ is that king. He is not coming to earth to become king; He is already made king according to the references given above.

In order for there to be a kingdom there must also be a law to govern that kingdom. That law is the New Testament. (2 Cor. 3:6) And Matt. 17:5: “*Hear ye Him.*” Matt 7:24: “*Hear these sayings of mine, and doeth them.*” And right here we want the reader to remember that the law that was to govern this kingdom was given at the same time, and the same place the kingdom was established. (Acts 2) Please notice again Isa. 2:1-5. It was here that the first Gospel sermon was preached in fact, and there is no one who can preach that Gospel without telling of the law that was given to govern the kingdom.

There also must be subjects for a kingdom. They are the ones who obey the laws of that kingdom. Rev. 22:14 says, “*Blessed are they that do His commandments.*” 1 John 5:1-3. There were three thousand that obeyed the King’s commands the day the kingdom was established and the Lord added them to the Church. (Acts 2:47) When any one obeys the commands that come from the king he is then made a citizen of that kingdom. It is then that he has a right to the communion table that the Lord has placed in his kingdom. (Luke 22:30) The Lord’s table was placed in the Lord’s kingdom for the Lord’s people to partake of on the Lord’s day to keep in memory of the Lord’s death *until He comes*. This in itself

is enough to prove that the kingdom has already come. The communion was to be observed by Christians to keep in memory the Lord's death *until He comes*. It will not be necessary to have the communion after the Lord comes. If the kingdom has not come then we cannot have the communion, for the table was to be placed in his kingdom, and if the Lord waits to establish his kingdom when He comes again, then we won't need the communion as it was to be observed *until he comes*, NOT AFTER HE COMES. Reading 1 Cor. 11:24-34 shows that it is to be observed now.

In Zech. 6:12, the prophet said that Christ would be a Priest. He is that now. (Heb. 4:14) Not only was he to be a Priest but He was to sit and rule on His throne. That is just what he is doing now. He is the one with all authority, (Matt. 28:18-19) and the only one with the right to say what will be in His kingdom. "*Hear ye Him.*" (Matt. 17:5)

## Unity

We make the plea that we should work for unity among the Lord's people, that anything that Christ would pray for we should labor for. In John 17th chapter is recorded the prayer that Christ prayed to His Father just before His death, and we hear Him saying this prayer, verse 21. "*That they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" We hear Him again in verse 23, "*That they may be made perfect in one.*" Now Christ prayed not for union but for unity. That very thing He prayed for the Apostles taught. (1 Cor. 1:10) All speak the same thing—that there be no divisions among you, perfectly joined together. Paul in Rom. 16:17 gave the command, "*Mark them that cause divisions.*"

We are asked so often how we can have that unity that Christ prayed for. The answer is plain, I am sure. He tells us in Eph.

4:1-6: one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. That is the foundation of unity. In Eph. 2:14-16, it is made plain that Jew and Gentile were made into one body by the cross. To have this unity we must acknowledge that God is the only God to worship, that Christ is the only Lord in authority. We must preach that one faith once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3) We must practice that one baptism that Paul explained in Rom. 6:1-6 and Col. 2:11-12. We must work for that one body, the Church. (Col. 1:18) And in doing that we must give the glory to God through that body and not through another. We must follow that one spirit and live the life that it teaches, and then we can rejoice in that one hope. This is the unity that Paul explained in Eph. 4:1-6.

We cannot expect to have unity if we will substitute something for what the Lord has given. In James 4:12 we are told that there is one Lawgiver. Christ is that lawgiver. We are to hear Him. (Matt. 17:5) If we will hear Him, and then do just what He says the result will be unity, not division. Division is caused by some one not heeding what the Lord said. To have unity we must stand for the letter of the law in the right spirit. We need never expect to have unity unless we work for it, and we are not working for it unless we treat others as we want them to treat us. (Matt. 7:12)

## **The Second Coming of Christ**

Yes, we make the plea that Christ will come again, but not for the same purpose He came before. In Heb. 9:28, we find it plainly stated in this language, "*So Christ was one offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall. He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*" There is no place in Bible that tells the date of His coming. He says He doesn't know. (Mark 13:32-33) There have been many guess at the time He would come but that is the part that belongs to God Himself, and it is not revealed

even to Christ. It is up to us to be prepared to meet Him when He comes.

We wish to notice a few things that will happen then. Every eye shall see Him. (Rev. 1:7). His second coming will be seen by all. (Luke 17:24) He will come as a thief in the night. (1 Thess. 5:2) He will not come at a time we are expecting Him. (Matt. 24:42) He will come when all things are fulfilled. (Acts 3:19-21) He is coming in flaming fire. (2 Thess. 1:7-9) The dead will be raised at His coming. (1 Thess. 4:16) The living will be changed when He comes. (1 Thess. 4:16-17) All nations will appear before Him at His coming. (Matt. 25:31-32) He will come with the glory of His Father. (Matt. 16:27-28) He will come with His saints. (Jude 14) He will come to execute judgment. (Jude 15) The world will be destroyed when He comes. (2 Pet. 3:10-12) There will then be a new heaven and a new earth. (2 Pet. 3:13) He is coming as He went away. (Acts 1:10-11) He is coming for His kingdom. (1 Cor. 15:24) He is coming to reward the righteous. (John 14:1-3) He is coming to punish the wicked. (2 Thess. 1:7-9) In connection with His coming all will be resurrected. (John 5:28-29; John 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:34-58)

And in connection with that will be the judgment. All will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. (2 Cor. 5:10) All must give account of self at the judgment. (Rom. 14:12) Christ ordained to judge the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42) This will be done at the appearing of Christ. (2 Tim. 4:1) The unjust will be punished at that time. (2 Pet. 2:9) The books will be opened and each one judged according to the deeds done in the body. (Rev. 20:12) The righteous will receive the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10) They shall enter into the city. (Rev. 22:14) They shall rest from their labors. (Rev. 14:13) They can enjoy the mansions prepared for them. (John 14:1-3) They can live in that house not made with hands. (2 Cor. 5:1)

## Eternal Punishment

We make the plea that there is a place of eternal punishment for the wicked. Mark 9:43-49 shows that it is eternal. “*The worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.*” (Matt. 25:26) Christ said, “*All these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*” Notice that one of these is to last as long as the other. If hell is only a short time, heaven will the same. But we are told many times that the word everlasting does not mean forever. Let us see. Here is what the Bible says about it. Matt. 19:29, “*Everlasting life.*” John 3:16, “*Everlasting life.*” Rom. 16:26, “*The everlasting God.*” 2 Pet. 1:11, “*Everlasting kingdom.*” Matt. 18:8, “*Everlasting Fire.*” Matt. 25:46, “*Everlasting punishment.*” 2 Thess. 1:7-9, “*Everlasting destruction.*” The word everlasting as we have used it here comes from the same word and means the same thing. If it does not mean without end when it speaks of punishment, then it does not mean without end when it speaks of life, God, and the kingdom.

The same is true of the word eternal. Many times we are told that it does not mean without end of time, but we will notice that. Matt. 25:46, “*Eternal life.*” Heb. 9:14, “*Eternal spirit.*” Heb. 9:15, “*Eternal inheritance.*” Mark 3:29, “*Eternal damnation.*” Now if it does not mean without end when it speaks of damnation, then it does not mean without end when it speaks of life, Spirit or inheritance.

We are told again that the only hell that is mentioned in the Bible is the grave. That cannot be true for the following reasons: Matt. 5:22, Hell is connected with fire, and the grave is not spoken of as such. Matt. 10:28, Both soul and body in hell. This cannot have reference to the grave for the soul does not go to the grave. In Matt. 23:33, Damnation is connected with this hell. If that means the grave, then infants go to a state of damnation when they are buried. But the Bible does not teach that.



Now we are told again that this torment does not mean forever as we speak of it. Let us see what that means. Heb. 1:8, "*Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.*" Rev. 5:13, "*The glory of Christ is to be forever and ever.*" Rev. 14:10-11, "*Smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.*" Rev. 11:15, "*Christ is to reign forever and ever.*" The expression "ever and ever" as we have used it here, comes from the same words each place and means the same thing in the different places that we have used it. If it does not mean something without end when speaking of punishment, then it does not mean without end when speaking of God, Christ and the Christian living forever. In other words God, Christ, heaven and torment is to continue the same length of time.

This place of eternal torment was never prepared for man. Christ said in Matt. 25:41, "*It was prepared for the devil and his angels.*" God is not to blame for any one going to that place. He warns us every hour of our life to stay away from the road that leads to it. But if we travel that road and go on into eternity and have to spend it in this place of torment, we have no right to blame the Lord for it. He has done all we could ask Him to do to make it possible that we can escape that awful place. If we travel the road that leads to heaven that is our choice but if we travel the road that leads to eternal hell that also is our choice and we are the guilty party if we go there.

I have heard the statement made "if my folks go to hell I want to go with them." The living might say that, but the dead do not. The rich man wanted his brothers warned that they come not to the place where he was, as he was in torment. In order that we escape that place the Lord provided the following: a Saviour that is able to save all that will come to Him; a Redeemer that is able to redeem from sin; an Advocate that is able to plead our case for us; a Mediator that is able to go between; a place where we can meet with our Lord, THE CHURCH; a home that we can enjoy after death. These are the things provided that we might escape the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

## **The Dark Ages**

What we mean by the dark ages is the time when the truth was taken from the earth, and the Lord's people were persecuted to the extent that millions of them died for the cause of Christ. This falling away was mentioned by the writers of the New Testament and was foretold many years before it came to pass. Christ foresaw it when he warned the disciples to beware of false prophets. (Matt. 7:15-20) Paul saw it when he warned the elders of grievous wolves who would not spare the flock. (Acts 20:28-30). He warned the brethren in 2 Thess. 2, even telling them that it was working then and he further told what kind of men would be the ones to bring about this falling away. (2 Cor. 11:12-14) He warned them again in 1 Tim. 4:1-2 and in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, Paul pictures to Timothy what an awful thing the falling away would be. Peter takes up the same subject in 2 Pet. 2:1-2, and then Jude warns the people of the same thing. (Jude 4) John comes up with his warnings on the same question in 1 John 4:1.

We have mentioned only some of the places where these warning were given, and now let us see what did happen. Jerusalem was destroyed in the year of 70 A.D. John was banished to Patmos in the year of 96 A.D. Polycarp was martyred in 160 A.D. Constantine united church and state in 323. The Nicene creed was written 325 A.D. Papacy began 589 A.D. Pope Boniface was made head of all the churches 606–610. Bible reading was prohibited, 1229. Indulgences, 1248. Wickiffe died 1384. John Huss was burned July 6, 1415. Jerome was burned May 30, 1416. Luther was born Nov. 10, 1483. Tetzal put out his doctrine of indulgence in 1516. Luther answered Tetzal in 1518. Luther nailed ninety-five theses to the Wittemburg church on Oct. 31, 1517. Luther was excommunicated May 25, 1521. Luther and those that stood with him started one of the greatest movements that was ever started and that was the dawn of reformation.

Now during the times that these things were taking place the disciples were not able to meet as congregations. They were scattered as sheep without a shepherd and many of them died the most awful death that any one could think of. But the cause of Christ was to be brought to light again. Truth cannot die. It was never born and it can never die.

## **The Church This Side of the Dark Ages**

We are asked many times if the Church of Christ was taken from the earth during the dark ages, how do we know we have found that Church now? Don't let any one confuse you on this question by getting you to believe that the Church died during that period. The Church is the body, (Eph. 1:22-23) and Christ is the head of that body. (Col. 1:18) As long as the head lives the body lives and here is what the Lord said about that head. Rev. 1:18, "*I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and death.*" That is what Paul meant in Eph. 3:15, "*Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*" That part of the family in heaven is the head of the family. You have to kill the head of a family before the whole family is destroyed. You would have to kill the head of the body for the body to die, and you would have to kill Christ before you could kill the Church, for He is the head of it.

When the Pope took the Bible from the people it brought about what is called the dark ages. In order for us to have the light of the Gospel of the Son of God, it was necessary for the Bible to be delivered to the people again. That Bible was found by those who took part in the reformation and they did just what the Lord said the people did in Neh. 8:8. "*So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the meaning.*" Instead of using the word, reformation, it would be better to use the word, restoration. For these men did not reform anything but they restored it. There has been much said about the Campbells establishing the Church of Christ but that is not based

on facts. The plea that was made by the Campbells, Stone, Johnson, et al, was “Where the Bible speaks we will speak, where the Bible is silent we will be silent.” All that these men did was to restore to the world what Popery had taken from the world. As they read their Bible, they found that the gospel was preached in the early Church. (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; Gal. 1:8-10; 2 Thess. 1:7-9) They said we will preach that Gospel just like it was preached when the Church was established. They read in the Bible where people must have faith to be saved. (Heb. 11:6; Heb. 11:1; Rom. 10:17; Rom. 14:23; John 20:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 5:1) and and these men said we will teach faith just like they did then. It was nothing new but they restored that teaching to the world. They read where repentance is a command and the early disciples taught it. (Luke 13:3-5; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 2:4) Now these men said we will teach it just as it was taught then. They read where the early disciples taught that one must confess Christ before men, (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:36-38) and these men this side of the dark ages said we will teach it the way they taught it then. Then they read where the early Church taught baptism. (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 10:47-48). In the study of the Bible they found that the early disciples also taught there is one baptism and that it was burial. (Eph. 4:1-6; Col. 2:11-12; and Rom. 6:1-6) Now these men said we will teach just what the Bible teaches on that subject. They did not start something new; they only restored to the world what had been hid through the doctrine of popery for the past several years. They read that the early Church was called by the name of Christ, (Rom. 16:16) and they also found that there was something in that name. (Acts 4:11-12; Eph. 3:14-15) Now these men said we will teach that the Church is to wear the same name and they taught it that way. They also found that the disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread. (Matt. 26:26; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 1 Cor. 11:24-34) Instead of these men starting something new, they said we will teach the communion just the way it is found in the Bible.

They also read in the Bible that the early disciples gave on the first day of the week as they were prospered. (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:12; 2 Cor. 9:7) This was not a new doctrine but the one that was taught by the early disciples and was restored to the people by those who brought to light the plain teaching of the Bible. These men who found that the early disciples taught that “*We are complete in Him*” (Col. 2:9-10) That the Church was the only institution through which to do Church work. (Eph. 3:10 and 3:21) They taught the same thing, thus restoring to the world just what was set forth by the Apostles in the early Church. The men who took part in the restoration read where the early Church appointed elders in each congregation. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) That these men were to be qualified for that office. (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1) That these men were to feed the flock which was among them. (1 Pet. 5:1-3) So instead of starting something new regarding the eldership, they went back and taught just what they found in the Bible. They also read where the early Church sang praises when they came together. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; and Heb. 2:12) If we are going to have the same Church they had, then we have to teach just what they did.

They started nothing new—they just restored what had been hid from the people many years. The early disciples did not use musical instruments in the Church, therefore there is no room for them today. The early disciples taught that the first day of the week is the day for disciples to meet to worship the Lord. (Acts 20:7) Therefore to have the Church as the Lord established it, that same thing must be observed this side of the dark ages. The early disciples taught that the Bible was to be the guide. (John 8:32; John 17:17; Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) Those that had part in the restoration movement said they would take the Bible as their guide and do away with the doctrines and the commandments of men. There was nothing new in that—it was just restored to the people after being hid for sometime. These men also found that the early disciples taught that the Church was the institution

through which to do mission work, (1 Thess. 1:8) and they said we will do our mission work the same way.

Now when these men brought to light the Bible and its teaching, then all the Lord had taught in the beginning of the Church was brought back; therefore, it was not a Church like the one that Christ established, *but it is the same Church* that He established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ recorded in Acts 2. In order to have the Church of Jesus Christ on earth today, it has to teach the same thing that was taught by the disciples when it was first established.

So in summing the whole thing up let us note this fact: the Church of Christ established (Matt. 16:18) still lives on earth. Christ the head (Col. 1:18) is still in authority over that Church. The Bible is still the only guide that Church has. (2 Tim. 3:16-17) The name of Christ is the only name for that Church to wear. (Rom. 16:16) We become members of that Church when we obey the Gospel, (2 Thess. 1:7-9) and the Lord adds to it. (Acts 2:47) We are to worship the Lord in that Church. (Matt. 18:20) In that Church we are to wear the name of the Saviour. (Acts 11:26; Acts 4:11-12) In that Church we are complete in Him. (Col. 2:9-10) In that Church we are to give the glory to the Lord. (Eph. 3:21) In that Church we are to be faithful to the Lord. (Rev. 2:10) and that is done by following the teaching of 2 Pet. 1:5-9. Christ is the Saviour of this Church, (Eph. 5:23) and it will at last be delivered to the Father. (1 Cor. 15:24) And then when life is to be no more with us and we are called on to quit the walks of this life, then we can go home and dwell with the One who made this wonderful plan of salvation and with all who have accepted it.

I close this book with a prayer in my heart that the reader will read it carefully and prayerfully, and by doing so that it will help some one to have a desire to live a Christian life, and that it will also help them to do that. If for any reason that you do not understand fully what we have taught, or if you wish to know

more about the plea of the Church of Christ, the writer will be glad if you take the matter up with him. But let us keep this important fact in mind: *“Whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever, nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken away from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him.”* (Ecc. 3:14)

J. C. ROADY,  
Sullivan, Indiana

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