

What is the Church of Christ

Lesson Text: **Matthew 16:18**

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Many people in many communities have heard about the churches of Christ.
 - 1. Numbers have asked,
 - a. "Who are these people?"
 - b. "What—if anything—distinguishes them from the hundreds of other churches in the world?"
 - 2. Perhaps even visitors often wonder:
 - a. "What is their historical background?"
 - b. "How many members do they have?"
 - c. "What is their message?"
 - d. "How are they governed?"
 - e. "How do they worship?"
 - f. "What do they believe about the Bible?"
 - 3. These are good, honest, and fair questions.
 - 4. This study will set forth an answer to the question, "What is the Church of Christ?"
- B. Some preliminary observations:
 - 1. Only Christ has the authority to say what the church is and what Christians should teach.
 - 2. We believe the church today should be the same as the church of the New Testament in:
 - a. Organization.
 - b. Name.
 - c. Worship.
 - d. Law of conversion.
 - e. Principles of Christian living.
 - 3. While members of the church of Christ realize their own personal weaknesses and shortcomings, we they believe in the all-sufficiency and perfection of God's plan for the church.
 - 4. Members of the church of Christ believe that the whole structure of Christianity rests upon the divinity of Christ and His resurrection. **1 Corinthians 15:14** - "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty."
 - 5. Members of the church of Christ hold that the New Testament writers were inspired men of God and believe, therefore, that the New Testament is true and contains the final and complete revelation from God to man.
 - a. **John 16:13** - "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

- b. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."
 - c. **Jude 3** - "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."
6. Members of the church of Christ believe that the Old Testament was also inspired; however, that as a part of God's eternal plan it was only a preparation or "tutor to bring us to Christ" (**Galatians 3:24**).
- a. The New Testament teaches that the Old Law was "blotted out," taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross. **Colossians 2:14** - "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."
 - b. When the old law was abolished, the new and better covenant came into effect.
 - 1. **Hebrews 8:6-9** - "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.
For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.
Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--
not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord."
 - 2. **Hebrews 9:15-18** - "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.
For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.
Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood."
7. Following the New Testament as a rule of faith and practice and the Old testament as an example, members of the church of Christ purpose to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.
- a. **Hebrews 8:5** - "Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

- b. **Romans 15:4** - "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

ONLY THE NEW TESTAMENT SERVES AS A RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

- A. We believe to subscribe to any creed other than the New Testament, to refuse to obey any New Testament command, or to follow any practice not sustained by the New Testament, would be adding to or taking away from the teachings of God. **Galatians 1:6-9** - "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

Which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

- B. The New Testament reveals that God has vested "all authority" in Christ (Matthew 28:18), and that Christ serves as God's spokesman today. **Hebrew 1:1-2** - "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."

1. Since the New testament also sets forth Christ's instructions to His disciples, it alone must serve as the basis for all religious teaching and practice.
2. This is fundamental with members of the church of Christ. We believe that teaching the New Testament without modification is the only way to lead men and women to become Christians.

- C. The first members of the Lord's church accepted the apostles' teachings as infallible and final. **Acts 2:42** - "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

1. However, before long, some began to teach and practice things different from the apostles' teaching.
 - a. Such a departure from sound doctrine was predicted by New Testament writers in their warnings.
 1. In **Acts 20:29-30**, the apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."
 2. In spite of these injunctions, from the beginning of the second century through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, one departure after another followed until

the church in organization, worship, and teaching was vastly different from the church of the New Testament.

- b. History records that innovations introduced included:
 1. Church offices unauthorized in the Scriptures.
 2. The creation of a special clergy.
 3. Religious councils to decide church matters of organization, worship, and doctrine.
 4. Sprinkling substituted for immersion and the sprinkling of infants.
 5. Addition of instrumental music to the worship.
2. At the close of the Middle Ages many religious leaders rebelled against the ecclesiastical authority and practices of the Roman church.
 - a. They pleaded for the full authority of the Bible in matters of religion.
 - b. Chief among these men were Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli.
 - c. Followers rallied around the reformers, and unfortunately their teachings eventually crystallized into many creeds.
 - d. Thus followed the era of denominationalism, with different groups springing up everywhere, each with its peculiar name, organization, doctrine, and practice.
3. In the late 1700's men of different denominations, studying independently of each other in various parts of the world, began to ask:
 - a. Why not go back beyond denominationalism and beyond Roman Catholicism to the simplicity and purity of the first century church?
 - b. Why not take the Bible alone and once again continue "steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship . . ." (**Acts 2:42**)?
 - c. Let us, they said, plant the same seed that the apostles and first century Christians planted, and let us be Christians only, as they were. "The seed was the Word of God." (**Luke 8:11**).
 - d. The men pleaded with all others to throw off denominationalism, to throw away human creeds, and to follow the Bible.
 - e. They taught that nothing should be required of people as acts of faith except that which is evident from the Scriptures.
 - f. They emphasized that going back to Bible does not mean the establishment of another denomination, but rather a return to the original church.
- D. This we believe, is the only safe pattern. We humbly cherish the hope that we today are following this pattern set forth in the New Testament . . . it is our only rule of faith and practice.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

- A. Members of the church of Christ contend that the church was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ . . . in 30 A.D. . . . in the city of Jerusalem.

- B. The prophet Isaiah said in **Isaiah 2:2-3** - "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

Many people shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

1. The expression, "Jehovah's house," refers to the church. **1 Timothy 3:15** - ". . . I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
2. Every phrase of Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, the record of which is given in Acts 2.
 - a. Isaiah said the church would be established in "the latter days." Peter, on Pentecost, referred to this time as being the "last days" (Acts 2:16-17). This marks the fulfillment of the first phrase of the prophecy.
 - b. Next, Isaiah said God's kingdom would extend its blessings to include "all nations."
 1. **Acts 2:5** tells us that on Pentecost there were in Jerusalem, ". . . Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven."
 2. **Acts 2:39** tells us that the new kingdom was for these Jews, and their children, and all that are "afar off." The phrase, "afar off" refers to the Gentiles. **Ephesians 2:11-13** - "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh-- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--
 That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."
3. Christ had also told His apostles in **Luke 24:47** that ". . . repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
3. During His earthly ministry, Christ declared, ". . . The time fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel."
 - a. John the Baptist also said in **Matthew 3:2** - ". . . The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - b. "At hand" means imminent or nearby, but not an accomplished fact.
 - c. When Jesus spoke the words of **Matthew 16:18**, "Upon this rock I will build (future tense) my church," the establishment of the church was obviously a future event.
 - d. In **Mark 9:1**, Jesus told those standing there that the kingdom would be established during the lifetime of some of those to whom He was speaking. "And He said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."
 - e. Jesus further said that the kingdom would come with power, and that the power would come when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles. **Acts 1:8** - "But you shall

receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- f. The Bible says in **Acts 2:1-4**, “Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit . . .”

- C. Before the day of Pentecost all scriptural references to the establishment of the church indicate it as a future event (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-2; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 3:1-2; Matthew 16:18; Mark 9:1; Matthew 6:9-10). After Pentecost, the church is spoken of as an existing institution.

1. **Acts 2:47** - “. . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”
2. **Colossians 1:13-14** - “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

NAME OF THE CHURCH

- A. The term “church of Christ” is not used as a denominational appellation. It is simply a descriptive term indicating the fact that the church is the possession of Christ.
- B. This is not an exclusive term to designate the church, because the New Testament also refers to the church as:
1. The church of the Lord. Acts 20:28
 2. The body of Christ. I Corinthians 12:27
 3. The house of God. I Timothy 3:15
 4. The church of God. Galatians 1:13
 5. The church of the Firstborn. Hebrews 12:23
- C. These are all terms which show possession . . . they point to the Lord as owner of the church.
1. Members of the church of Christ believe it right to wear a name which gives honor and glory to Christ.
 2. Salvation is in Christ’s name. **Acts 4:12** - “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
 3. According to **Colossians 3:16-17**, we are to do all things in the name of Christ. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

ORGANIZATION OF THE LORD’S CHURCH

- A. The church of Christ has no earthly headquarters, and no universal organization.
 - 1. Each congregation is autonomous or “self-ruled” . . . that is, independent of every other congregation.
 - 2. While congregations may cooperate in the accomplishment of good works, their autonomy is carefully maintained.
- B. We believe that the organizational pattern of the church is divine in origin.
 - 1. Jesus Christ is recognized as the supreme ruler over the church. **Colossians 1:18** - “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” No fallible man serves as earthly head over the church.
 - 2. The sole unit of organization in the church of Christ is the local congregation. Each congregation is separate and independent in its government.
 - 3. Christ has delegated authority in the management of the local congregation to the elders, also known as pastors or bishops . . . three different terms referring to the same office. (Acts 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:5).
 - a. There is a plurality of elders in every congregation.
 - 1. **Acts 11:30** - “This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”
 - 2. **Acts 14:23** - “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”
 - b. The qualifications of elders are described in:
 - 1. 1 Timothy 3:1-7
 - 2. Titus 1:5-9
 - 4. The church of Christ also has a special group of men called deacons.
 - a. They serve under the direction of the elders.
 - b. Their qualifications are given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13
 - 5. The church of Christ also has men known as preachers (1 Timothy 2:7), ministers (1 Timothy 4:6), or evangelists (2 Timothy 4:5)
 - a. They likewise serve under the direction of the elders of the local congregation.
 - b. We do not refer to our preachers with the term “Pastor” believing that this term, as used in the New Testament, refers to those men who have the oversight of the congregation.
 - c. Neither do our preachers assume religious titles such as “Reverend,” inasmuch as this term is used only one time in the Bible (Psalm 111:9), and in this instance it refers to God.
 - d. We believe the New Testament makes no distinction between so-called “clergy” and “laity,” and that preachers are no more worthy of titles than other members of the church.

WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

- A. In **John 4:24** we read: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." From this passage we learn three things.
 1. Our worship must be directed to the right object . . . God.
 2. It must be prompted by the right spirit.
 3. It must be according to truth.
 - a. To worship God according to truth is to worship Him according to His word. **John 17:17** - "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."
 - b. This means we must not exclude any item not found in His Word.
 - c. It also means we must not include any item not found in His Word.
- B. We walk by faith in matters of religion. **2 Corinthians 5:7** - "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
 1. Faith comes by hearing God's Word. **Romans 10:17** - "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 2. Thus, anything not authorized by the Bible cannot be done by faith. **Romans 14:23** - ". . . For whatever is not from faith is sin."
- C. We believe the Bible gives us instruction regarding five items of worship, and these we attempt to follow:
 1. Teaching or preaching God's Word. Acts 2:42; 20:7
 2. Praying. Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:17
 3. Giving of our means.
 - a. We do not teach the law of tithing, as we believe that law was included with the rest of the Old Testament when it was nailed to the cross. **Colossians 2:14** - "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."
 - b. We do, however, believe that it is unthinkable that we who live under a better law with better promises would with our great prosperity, consider giving less than 10 percent of our income to the Lord.
 - c. We teach that members of the church are to give liberally and cheerfully. 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
 - d. We do teach that every man is to give according to the way he has prospered. **2 Corinthians 16:2** "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."
 4. Singing.
 - a. One of the things which people most frequently notice about the church of Christ is that we sing without the use of mechanical instruments of music.
 - b. Simply states, here is the reason for this: We feel we are to worship according to God's instruction in the New Testament, and the New Testament leaves instrumental music out. If we use the mechanical instrument we would have to do so without God's authority.

- c. We can read every verse in the New Testament on the subject of music in worship in a minute's time:
1. **Matthew 26:30** - "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."
 2. **Acts 16:25** - "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."
 3. **Romans 15:9** - ". . . I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name."
 4. **1 Corinthians 14:15** - ". . . I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."
 5. **Ephesians 5:19** - "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
 6. **Colossians 3:16** - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
 7. **Hebrews 2:12** - ". . . In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."
 8. **James 5:13** - ". . . Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms."
- d. The mechanical instrument of music conspicuously absent in these passages.
- e. There are two kinds of commands given in the Bible: Generic and Specific. Note some examples:
1. Build an ark — **Generic** command: didn't specify the tools to be used.
Use Gopher wood — **Specific** command: eliminated all other wood.
 2. Naaman was told, go dip in Jordan River 7 times — Go is generic: didn't specify how to go.
Dip in Jordan 7 times — **Specific**: Had to be the Jordan River and it had to be 7 times.
 3. Go into all the world and preach the gospel — **Generic**: didn't specify the means of transportation.
Preach the gospel — **Generic**: didn't specify how to preach (radio, TV, pulpit, visuals, etc.)
The gospel — **Specific**: Eliminates preaching anything other than the gospel.
 4. Music is a **Generic** term, because there is more than one kind.
 - a. If the Lord had commanded "Make Music," we could comply with the command by vocal, instrumental, or both.
 - b. But singing is a **specific** term. Inasmuch as the Scriptures all point to singing, this restricts the music to vocal.
- f. The first appearance of instrumental music in church worship was not until the 6th century A.D. There was no general practicing of it until the 8th century A.D.
- g. It has long been opposed by leading religionists.
1. John Calvin, a great protestant reformer and one of the founders of the Presbyterian Church, said, :Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no

more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law.”

2. John Wesley, a great man, a protestant reformer, and the founder of the Methodist Church, when asked about the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship replied: “I have no opposition to the organ in our chapel provided it is neither seen nor heard.” (Clark’s Commentary, Vol. 4. p. 686)
3. Another great religious leader, Charles Spurgeon, who preached for 20 years in the Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle in London, to ten thousand people every Sunday, never allowed mechanical instruments in his services. When asked why he did not use them he replied by quoting **1 Corinthians 14:15** - “. . . I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.” Then he declared. “I would as soon to pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.
- h. Consider the foregoing conclusions in view of **2 John 9** - “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”
6. The Lord’s Supper.
 - a. This is a memorial inaugurated by Jesus Christ on the night of His betrayal.
 1. **Matthew 26:26-28** - “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.
Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.
For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”
 2. It is observed by Christians in memory of the Lord’s death. **1 Corinthians 11:24-26** - “And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”
In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”
For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”
 3. It is communion of His blood and body. **1 Corinthians 10:16** - “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”
 - b. Members of the church of Christ observe the Lord’s Supper on the first day of every week.
 1. Such pattern is set by this New Testament example. “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them . . .” **Acts 20:7**
 2. Notice, they met on the first day of the week to observe the Lord’s Supper.
 3. It is quite true that it doesn’t say “the first day of every week.”

4. In the Old Testament passage of Exodus 20:8, when God said, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," the Jews understood "the Sabbath day" to mean every Sabbath day.
5. By the same token, we take "the first day of the week" to mean every first day of the week."
- c. Historians testify that the Lord's Supper was observed every Lord's Day.
 1. In his *History of the Christian Religion and the Church*, Neander wrote: "As we have already remarked, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was still held to constitute an essential part of divine worship on every Sunday . . . and the whole church partook of the communion."
(Vol. 1, p. 332)
 2. Eusebius, who has been called the father of ecclesiastical history, said: "From the beginning the Christians assembled on the first day of the week, called by them the Lord's Day, to read the Scriptures, to preach, and to celebrate the Lord's Supper."

GOD'S PLAN FOR MAN'S SALVATION

- A. Members of the church of Christ believe there are certain steps which must be taken, in obedience to the commands of the New Testament. We believe that these steps bring about salvation and at the same time make one a member of the church.
- B. These steps are four in number:
 1. **FAITH . . . Believe**
 - a. Faith and believe are derived from the same Greek word.
 - b. Faith results from hearing the Word of God. **Romans 10:17** - "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - c. Faith is essential to salvation.
 1. **Mark 16:16** - "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."
 2. **John 8:24** - "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."
 3. **John 20:30-31** - "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;
But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."
 4. **Hebrews 11:6** - "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."
 2. **REPENTANCE . . . Repent of Sins.**
 - a. Repentance is a change of mind which causes one to turn away from sinful practices.
 - b. Repentance is a command of God.

1. **Acts 2:28** - "Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
2. **Acts 3:19** - "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."
- c. It is commanded for everyone. **Acts 17:30** - "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,
Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."
3. **CONFESSION . . . Confess Jesus Christ to be God's Son.**
 - a. This is an outward confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
 1. **Matthew 10:32** - "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven."
 2. **Acts 8:36-38** - "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?
Then Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him."
 3. **Romans 10:9-10** - "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
4. **BAPTISM . . . (Immersion in Water) for the remission of Sins**
 - a. Baptism is not taught by members of the church of Christ as a "church ordinance," but as a command of Christ.
 - b. Baptism is by immersion (burial) in water for the remission of sins.
 - c. The New Testament teaches baptism to be an act which is essential to salvation.
 1. **Mark 16:16** - "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."
 2. **Acts 2:38** - "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
 3. **Acts 22:16** - "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - d. Proper subjects for baptism are:
 1. Taught persons. Matthew 28:19
 2. Believing persons. Mark 16:16
 3. Penitent persons. Acts 2:38
 4. Persons who have confessed Christ. Acts 8:37
 - e. Scriptural baptism must be an immersion in water.

1. The Greek word from which the word baptize comes means “to dip, to immerse, to submerge, to plunge.”
2. The Scriptures always point to baptism as a burial.
 - a. **Romans 6:3-6** - “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?
 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”
 - b. **Colossians 2:12** - “Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”
- f. Baptism is extremely important because the New Testament sets forth the following purposes for it:
 1. It is to enter the kingdom. **John 3:3-5** - “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?”
 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”
 2. It is to contact Christ's blood. **Romans 6:3-4**
 3. It is to get into Christ. **Galatians 3:27** - “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
 4. It is for salvation.
 - a. **Mark 16:16** - “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”
 - b. **1 Peter 3:21** - “There is also an antitype which now saves us-- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”
 5. It is for the remission of sins. **Acts 2:38** - “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 6. It is to wash away sins. **Acts 22:16** - “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
 7. It is for entrance into the church.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 12:13** - “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

- b. **Ephesians 1:23** - "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Note that the church is the body and the body is the church.
- c. **Acts 2:47** - "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

C. Following obedience to these commands we believe it is important that the Christian live faithfully, because the Bible teaches the possibility of falling from the grace of God.

1. The apostle Paul said in **1 Corinthians 9:27** - "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."
2. In **1 Corinthians 10:12** he warned the Christians in Corinth, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."
3. In **Galatians 5:4** he told some of the Galatians they had "fallen from grace."
4. The Hebrews writer sounded this warning in **Hebrews 3:12** - "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."
5. In **Hebrews 6:4-6**, the same writer spoke of some who had fallen away and were crucifying the Son of God afresh. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."
6. In **1 Peter 1:5-10**, Peter urged Christians to constantly add to their lives Christian virtues in order to make their calling and election sure. "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble:

7. He also spoke of those who had known Christ Jesus, but who had reverted to their old ways. He said it would have been better for them never to have known the truth. **2 Peter 2:20-21** - "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."

8. Continued faithfulness is so important.

D. The work of the Church.

1. Christians are "to be ready for every good work" **Titus 3:1**
2. There are three major areas of work in which the church is to be involved.

1. Evangelism - Preaching and teaching the gospel throughout the world.
 - a. Matthew 28:19-20
 - b. Mark 16:15-16
2. Edification - Building up the members of the body.
 - a. I Thessalonians 5:11
 - b. Romans 14:19
3. Benevolence - Helping others
 - a. James 1:27
 - b. Galatians 6:10
3. These works are supported from the contributions that are made each Sunday.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Illustration of a blueprint.
 1. A blueprint followed will produce what was drawn.
 2. A blueprint followed in ten communities will produce the same structure in all ten communities.
 3. The Bible is our blueprint for producing the church of the first century.
- B. We cherish the hope that this study may aid your search for the truth.
 1. We hope that you will be possessed with love for God and a determination to be obedient to the commands of His holy Word.
 2. **Matthew 11:28-30** - "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
- C. Christ has a place in the church ready for you if you have a place in your heart and life ready for Him.
 1. Now is the time to obey Him.
 2. He will add you to His church that you can read about in the Bible.

