

# C The Church

Lesson Commenced: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Checked: \_\_\_\_\_

This study looks at one of the most confusing and misunderstood doctrines of the Bible. People have all kinds of ideas as to what a church really is. Some people think it is a **building** (a cathedral, or some place of worship). Others think of a church as a **denomination** (a human organization) and speak of the "Catholic Church," the "Presbyterian Church," the "Baptist Church," etc. Many Christians conceive the "Church" as consisting of all born-again believers in the world, a kind of "**invisible, universal**" church.

Our task is to put aside these notions and determine what **God** says a church is in His Word.

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## THE CHURCH IS A NEW TESTAMENT INSTITUTION.

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Look up: *Matthew 16:18*. This is the *FIRST* mention of the Church in the Bible.

A. Who founded (built) the Church? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Look up: *John 1:42*. What is the meaning of Peter's name? \_\_\_\_\_

**Note** : Peter's full name is *Simon Peter bar Jona*.

C. Look up: *1 Peter 2:3,4,6-8*. Who did Peter identify as the "Rock" upon which the Church would be built? \_\_\_\_\_

**Note**: The Old Testament is primarily addressed to the **nation** of Israel. The New Testament is mainly addressed to **churches**. DO NOT CONFUSE THE TWO. The Bible makes the distinction in *1 Corinthians 10:32*.

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## THE CHURCH IS AN ASSEMBLY.

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The word "church" (or "churches") is found 114 times in the New Testament, and is rendered from the Greek word "EKKLESIA."

This word 'ekklesia' has only one meaning – “a company of people called out for a specific purpose.” It has its roots in the democracies of the Greek city-states, when the Town Crier would call out the citizens to a meeting to conduct business.

In *Matthew 16:18*, the Lord Jesus did not change the meaning of ekklesia, but He distinguished it from other assemblies of the day with the personal pronoun “MY.”

Thus a New Testament church is the “Lord’s Assembly.”

### **THERE ARE FOUR IMPORTANT FACTS CONCERNING AN “ASSEMBLY.”**

A. An assembly must be LOCAL.

1. People cannot “come together” and yet be all over the world! For example, an automobile is an “assembly” of many and various parts: How absurd to think of it as being everywhere – a “universal car”!!!
2. In all but about 15 instances, where it is used in a “generic” or “institutional” sense (that is, any church in general, no church in particular), the word “church” or “churches” is **always** used in connection with definite, geographic localities.
3. Look up the following Bible references and write down the actual cities or regions where some **real** churches were located:

*Romans 16:1; I Corinthians 1:2 ; I Corinthians 16:1,19 ; II Corinthians 8:1; Colossians 4:16 ; I Thessalonians 1:1; I Peter 5:13 ; Revelation 2:1,8,12,18 ; Revelation 3:1,7.*

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4. For these reasons, the Bible knows nothing of a universal (catholic), world-wide “church.” The New Testament speaks of many churches which were all meeting in different localities.

B. An assembly must be VISIBLE.

1. People cannot “come together” and not be seen! Many like to talk about the “invisible church” (which allows them to move around in Christian circles) – but all the churches mentioned in the New Testament were “see-able.”
2. Look up *Philippians 1:27* and *I Thessalonians 2:17* and 3:6. The Apostle Paul, writing to the churches at Philippi and Thessalonica, desired to come and \_ \_ \_ these assemblies.

C. An assembly must be ORGANIZED.

1. An assembly is not a rabble (disorderly mob). The word "assembly" implies organization.
  - a. Look up: *Colossians 1:18*. A church is likened figuratively to a  
- - - - .  
The human body is an "assembly" of many parts; but does a pile of skin, flesh, organs, bones, etc., constitute a body? Of course not! They must be put together according to a plan. (See : *Psalm 139:14*.)
  - b. Look up: *1 Timothy 3:15*. Here, a church is likened figuratively to a  
- - - - . The house you live in is also an "assembly"; but does a pile of bricks, timber, plaster, nails, etc., constitute a house? Of course not! These things must be put together according to a plan or blueprint. Study *1 Corinthians 3:9-11,16*, where the Church at Corinth was likened to a temple.
2. A New Testament Church is to be organized — the blueprint is found in the New Testament.

D. An assembly must be CONSTITUTED.

1. By this we mean it must be made out of the right components. How absurd to assemble a motor vehicle out of milk, leaves, and uranium!! How foolish to build a house out of paper, bandages, and meat!!
2. So too, a New Testament Church is not to be made up of just anything—or anyone. God specifies the correct components in the New Testament.
3. Write out *Acts 2:41*.

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(Circle the following words: RECEIVED, BAPTIZED, ADDED.)

This verse gives God's order and qualifications for church membership:

- a. Receive the Word of God = \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Baptism.
  - c. Added to the church. (See also: *Acts 2:47; 5:14*.)
4. This is the **only** Scriptural way by which people become members of a Baptist church — salvation first, then baptism.

## DEFINITION

**A New Testament Baptist Church is  
an organized assembly of baptized believers.**

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## THE CHURCH HAS A "HEAD."

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Man-made religious organizations have their heads — presidents, popes, moderators, superintendents, etc. Each New Testament Baptist church also has a Head — but One vastly different from any of the above.

Look up: *Colossians 1:18* and *Ephesians 5:23,24*.

- A. Who is the Head of each New Testament Baptist church?

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- B. Each church is to be S \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ to its Head.

- C. Look up: *Galatians 3:1* and *5:7*. In what way is a church subject to its Head?

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**Note:** Jesus Christ is not a "figure-head." Any "church" which is not subject to Him and His laws is out of control.

No church has the right to make laws — it may only obey the laws already given by the Head through His Word.

***A church without a living Head is dead!!***

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## THE CHURCH HAS OFFICERS.

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- A. Look up: *Philippians 1:1*. What are the 2 offices in a church?

\_\_\_\_\_, (elders, pastors) and \_\_\_\_\_.

- B. Look up: *1 Timothy 3:1-13*. This reference gives the qualifications required for these two offices.

**Note:** The terms "bishop," "elder," and "pastor" are used interchangeably in the New Testament. We prefer to use the term "pastor" because the other two have been given unBiblical ecclesiastical connotations.

C. MY PASTOR :

1. Look up: *I Peter 2:25* and *5:4*. Who is the Chief Pastor of my Church ?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The word "pastor" means **shepherd** . Look up *I Peter 5:2* and *Acts 20:28*. What does the Bible call the church in relation to its pastor?  
The F \_\_\_\_\_.
3. According to *I Peter 5:2*, what is the duty of the pastor?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. According to *Ephesians 4:12-14*, why has the Lord given my Church a Pastor?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. According to *Acts 20:17,28-31*, how will my Pastor protect me?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. According to *Hebrews 13:7*, I am to R \_\_\_\_\_ my Pastor and F \_\_\_\_\_ him.
7. According to *Hebrews 13:17*, I am to O \_\_\_\_\_ my Pastor and S \_\_\_\_\_ to his leadership in the Church.

***How Should I Address My Pastor?***

Many feel unsure as to what they should call their Pastor in conversation. There is no God-given title for a pastor, and it is unwise to refer to him as "Reverend" or "Father." (See: *Psalm 111:9* ; *Matthew 23:9*.)

However, just as we train children not to call their parents by first names out of respect for their place and authority, and thus with their teachers and policemen, etc., it is right to show similar respect to the man God puts over you in your Church.

My Pastor prefers to be addressed as:  
\_\_\_\_\_

***You And Your Pastor.***

Give your pastor your confidence, love, encouragement, and constant prayers. Be his co-worker. Go to him in your difficulties; call him when in need. He is best able to help you with counsel from the Word of God. **Never** make him your idol — keep your eyes on the Lord, but neither harshly criticize your pastor or be a party to scheming against him.

Read: *I Thessalonians 5:12,13* and *I Timothy 5:17-19* .

Love and appreciate the wife of your pastor also. She holds no office in the Church and has no authority — yet she is so important to her husband's ministry.

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## THE CHURCH MAKES DECISIONS.

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A true New Testament Baptist Church never **makes** laws — it simply follows its Lord's commands as set forth in His Word. In a practical sense, a church often needs to make decisions in keeping with this principle. Unlike the hierarchical systems of many religious bodies, Baptist churches practice what is known as *Congregational* church government, where the congregation decides.

- A. Look up: *Acts 6:1-5*. Who chose the seven deacons?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- B. Look up: *Acts 1:15-26*. What preceded the vote of the whole church in electing a successor to Judas? P \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .
- C. According to *Matthew 18:17*, what is the highest decision-making body in spiritual affairs?  
The C \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .
- D. According to *Matthew 18:18*, the decisions of a church congregation are ratified in H \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

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## THE CHURCH IS AN INDEPENDENT INSTITUTION.

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A. Each New Testament Baptist Church Is Independent.

In *Acts Chapter 15*, men from the Church at Antioch came to the Church at Jerusalem to consider a matter of extreme doctrinal importance. After they determined the teaching of God's Word on the matter (*verses 15-18*), the issue was resolved. Even then, the Church at Jerusalem HAD NO AUTHORITY over the Church at Antioch. Their sentence was that "...we trouble not them..."; and they simply wrote a letter making a request. See: *verse 19*.

This is a far cry from the hierarchical religious systems of man — where the various congregations within a denomination are controlled and dictated to by "higher authorities."

B. Churches Are To Be Separate From Governments.

1. The Word of God teaches a **complete** separation between the spiritual and the secular. See: *Matthew 22:21b*.
  - a. Christians are to be law-abiding citizens. *Romans 13:1-7*
  - b. Christians may disobey a civil law **only** in the case where they are compelled to disobey God's law. *Acts 5:29*
2. Governments should not involve themselves with the establishment or support of any particular religious group, except to offer security and protection as it would for all citizens of the land.

C. Churches May Scripturally Co-operate With Other Churches.

Independence does not mean isolationism. Baptist churches may Scripturally co-operate in certain areas with other Baptist churches of like faith and order – provided such co-operation is voluntary, and does not violate the sovereignty, independence, and autonomy of each church.

1. New Testament churches worked together to support missionaries. See: *I Corinthians 16:1-3 ; Acts 11: 22-26 ; II Corinthians 8:9 .*
2. New Testament churches worked together in social relief. *Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:25,26 .* This financial assistance was a gift, not a loan.
3. New Testament churches were involved in regional fellowship.

<i>Galatians 1:2</i>	Churches (pl.) of	_____
<i>I Corinthians 16:19</i>	Churches (pl.) of	_____
<i>Galatians 1:22</i>	Churches (pl.) of	_____

See also: *Colossians 4:16* , where two churches were to share the Scriptures and other apostolic writings.

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## THE CHURCH IS A COMMISSIONED ORGANIZATION.

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- A. The Lord Jesus Christ established His churches to continue His work here on Earth. This is not a social ministry, but a spiritual one. Just before the Lord returned to Heaven, He left His Church with what is known as the "Great Commission."

B. Look up *Matthew 28:19,20*. List below the verbs (actions) in these verses:

1. \_ \_ \_ ye .
2. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ all nations.
3. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ them.
4. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ them to observe.

C. This Great Commission is repeated in each of the Gospels and in the Book of Acts. Read them and see exactly what the mission of a Baptist church is.

(*Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8. Also, I Corinthians 15:58.*)

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## THE CHURCH HAS ORDINANCES.

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- A. BAPTISM will be taught in Study #9.
- B. The LORD'S SUPPER will be taught in Study #12.

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## THE CHURCH IS TO BE FINANCED.

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TITHING will be taught in Study #20.

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## THE CHURCH AND ME.

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Having learned these many things about the New Testament Church, how should it be applied?

Listed below are some practical suggestions for you to receive great blessings from your Church:

- A. JOIN IT.
  1. It is God's will for every born-again believer to be a member of a sound, Bible-believing, New Testament Baptist church.
  2. Look up *Acts 2:47*. "The L \_ \_ \_ \_ added to the \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ D \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ such as should be saved."
  3. Look up *I Corinthians 12:18*. God has \_ \_ \_ \_ the \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ in the \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .

B. LOVE IT.

A Christian ought to love the things his Lord loves. Look up *Ephesians 5:25*.  
Christ \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Himself for it.

C. SUPPORT IT.

1. Your Church is the place where you will grow, find comfort and fellowship, and serve the Lord. Write out *Hebrews 10:25*.

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2. Plan now to attend as many of the services and meetings of your Church as you can. Decide in your heart *never* to miss a service unless providentially hindered.

**READING ASSIGNMENT:**

Read through *I Timothy Chapter 3*.

**MEMORIZATION:**

Try to commit to memory *Hebrews 10:25*