

The New Testament Church

What is the New Testament Church? Is the Church a continuation of Israel? When did the Church begin? Who is the head of the Church? What is the mission and purpose of the Church? Who are the members of the Church? How does one become a member of the Church? Is there a difference between the invisible Church and the local Church?

These are all extremely important questions regarding the doctrine of the Church. There is only one place to find the answers to these questions, and that one place is the Word of Almighty God, the Holy Bible.

In order to obtain the correct Biblical answers, one must obey God's commands for proper Bible interpretation.

1. One must be born-again.

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” (John 16:13)

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness

unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:10-16)

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63)

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” (1 John 4:6)

2. One must be willing to abandon all predetermined ideas which were received by tradition from your fathers.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,” (Philippians 3:3-8).

3. One needs a willingness to study and rightly divide the Word of Truth.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

4. Do not take Scripture verses out of context. Avoid private interpretations that contradict any other parts of Scripture. Scripture must harmonize with Scripture.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:20-21)

5. The test of any doctrine is whether or not it is Scriptural.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

When men, religious denominations and religious leaders ignore God’s rule for proper Bible interpretation, they are guilty of promoting false doctrine and in many cases end up preaching a false gospel.

Some with a very sincere heart have echoed the following remarks. “If one is born-again, what difference does it make if one wants to believe that the Church started before Pentecost or after Pentecost? What difference does it make if born-again believers have different views on the doctrine of the Church?”

Beloved, it makes a big difference! First of all, it was this type of thinking that gave birth to the New Evangelical Movement started by Dr. Harold Ockenga and continued by Billy Graham. Before I continue in our study of the New Testament Church, I feel the need to address the importance of doctrine.

The Apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 4:3, warns us of the day when men will not accept sound doctrine. “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;*”. Well, that day has arrived. In three of the pastoral epistles (1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus) the word doctrine is used 16 times.

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine to both Timothy and Titus. Timothy, Paul’s son in the faith, is commanded not to allow the teaching of false doctrine. “*As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,*” (1 Timothy 1:3). One cannot be a good minister of the Lord Jesus Christ if he does not teach and preach sound doctrine. “*If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.*” (1 Timothy 4:6)

Young Timothy was also commanded to separate from those who did not teach or preach sound doctrine. “*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according*

to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.” (1 Timothy 6:3-5)

To hold to the attitude that doctrine is not important is unbiblical, for God’s Word commands **ALL** born-again believers, not just pastors, to separate from those who teach false doctrine. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” (Romans 16:17-18)*

The Lord Jesus Christ makes it clear that doctrine will separate. *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.” (Matthew 10:34-36). “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.” (Luke 12:51-53)*

Not only will doctrine separate, but it will also bring together those of like precious faith. *“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary*

the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” (Acts 1:14). “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

Without sound doctrine one will not be able to worship God in spirit and in truth. *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23-24).* One who is holding onto false doctrine cannot claim he is worshiping God in truth. There is no truth outside the Word of God.

No matter how sincere one is there are serious consequences for teaching contrary to God's Word. Scripture reveals the seriousness of all false teachings and calls it blasphemy. Read the case of Hymenaeus, Philetus and Alexander who taught false doctrine pertaining to the believer's blessed hope. *“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.” (1 Timothy 1:19-20).* *“And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” (2 Timothy 2:17-18)*

False doctrine leads to false conduct and confusion. We know that God is not the author of confusion. Finally, when one holds to teaching and preaching false doctrine he is calling God a liar.

What difference does it make if born-again believers have different views on the doctrine of the Church? It's a serious

problem! If one is off on the doctrine of the Church, there are other areas where he is wrong. For example, many Baptist hold several different unscriptural teachings pertaining to the doctrine of the Church. Examples:

1. The many different Baptist teachings on the origin of the New Testament Church include:

- The Church started before Pentecost
- The Church started with John the Baptist
- The Church started in Matthew 16
- The Church started in Matthew 26
- The Church started in John 20
- The Church started with Paul in Acts 28

2. There is no invisible Church (Universal Church)

3. You must be re-baptized to become a member of a Baptist Church

To hold to these teachings:

- one has to remove the Church from Grace and put the Church under the Law
- one has to deny all dispensational views in Scripture
- one must believe the Church is preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom
- one must deny the Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- one must deny the working of the Holy Spirit

- one must believe there is no difference between Israel and the Church
- one must deny that the Church was a mystery to the Old Testament saints and prophets
- one must deny that God purchased the Church with His Own blood.

When it comes to spiritual things, many are willing to accept what they are taught based on the person's credentials, rather than on the Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded the Jewish people to search the Scriptures and warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”* (John 5:39). *“How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”* (Matthew 16:11-12)

Let us now look unto God and our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, as we seek His guidance. We will search the Scriptures to find the answers to our questions pertaining to the doctrine of the Church. So please, get your Bible (KJB) as we now compare Scripture with Scripture.

What is the Church? First of all the Church is not a continuation of the Dispensation of Law or a continuation of Israel.

The Word of God makes a very clear distinction between “Law” and “Grace” and puts each in its own separate dispensation.

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17)

“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” (Luke 16:16)

The Law was not given to the Gentiles.

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:” (Romans 2:14).

The law was given exclusively to Israel not to the Church. Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath, not the Church.

God gave to the nation of Israel, through Moses, the great code that we call the Mosaic Law. It consisted of 613 commandments covering all phases of life and activity. It revealed in specific detail God’s will and standards. This Dispensation of Law covered from the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai until Calvary, *“when the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom”*, thus exposing the holy place. From Calvary unto the day of Pentecost was a transition period from Law to Grace.

The Law was not given to justify men. *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20).* *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Galatians 2:16).* The Law was given that men might know what sin is, *“for by the law is the knowledge of sin”*. The Law was given to be our schoolmaster to lead men to the Lord

Jesus Christ. *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”* (Galatians 3:24-25)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the end of the Law, for He and He alone was able to fulfill every *“jot and tittle”* of the Law. Christ fulfilled all that the Law demanded. *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* (Matthew 5:18). *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”* (Romans 10:4)

We are now in the Dispensation of Grace, also known as the Church Age. The Church is not the Kingdom. The Nation of Israel, the wife of Jehovah, was promised the kingdom. The Church, the Bride of Christ, was promised the rapture. Israel is an earthly people; the Church is a heavenly people.

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:” (Ephesians 1:3). *“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”* (Ephesians 2:6).

For one to deny the glorious earthly Kingdom of Christ (where He will rule and reign for a thousand years in Jerusalem from the throne of David), they would have to totally ignore over one third of the Word of God.

“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” (Daniel 2:34-35)

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” (Daniel 2:44-45)

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13-14)

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” (Jeremiah 23:5)

“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.” (Zechariah 14:9)

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

These are just a few of the many Scripture verses that make reference to the Messianic earthly reign of Christ.

In order to completely understand the difference between the New Testament Church and the Kingdom we must first distinguish between the phrases, “Kingdom of God” and the “Kingdom of Heaven” and the “New Testament Church”.

The terms “*kingdom of God*” and “*kingdom of heaven*”, while not one and the same, are sometimes used interchangeably. We must always refer to the context in which the phrase is being used to get the correct meaning. The differences between them are not inherent in the words themselves, but in their usage. When one understands the Scriptural differences between the Kingdom and the Church, it will be very clear that the Church **could not have** started before Pentecost.

The “*kingdom of God*” is inward and spiritual. Notice how the Lord Jesus Christ answered the religious leaders. “*And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*” (Luke 17-20-21). We also read “*For the kingdom of*

God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 14:17)

One can only enter into the kingdom of God by being born-again. Jesus made that very clear when He said to Nicodemus, “...*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3-5)

Therefore, the kingdom of God refers to the spiritual kingdom made up of born-again believers. It is a perfect kingdom.

The phrase “*kingdom of heaven*” is a New Testament term which is specific to the Gospel of Matthew and is mentioned 32 times. There are three phases of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew’s gospel.

The first phase is the period when the kingdom is “*at hand*”. “..*Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” (Matthew 3:2). This was from the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist to the rejection of the King.

It is no mystery that God is going to set up a visible kingdom here on earth. Based on His foreknowledge through the Holy Spirit, God has revealed to us His plan and purpose for Israel and His glorious kingdom. God foreknew of Israel’s lack of faith and disobedience right up to the final rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, Israel’s Messiah and King.

First there was the calling of Abraham and four hundred years later God called Moses to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. When in the promised land for about 400 years,

the nation of Israel rejected the theocracy. They cried out to Samuel to give them a king so they can be like the other nations. They continued their rejection of the theocracy right up to and through the Babylonian Captivity, which started the beginning of the “Times of the Gentiles”. After 600 years of the “Times of the Gentiles” had run its course, God once again offered to Israel the promised kingdom, by the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary the birth of the King of the Jews. The Kingdom was not a mystery to the children of Israel. The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah and Malachi all prophesied about the earthly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ which they looked forward to. Israel did not comprehend that the suffering had to precede the glory. Daniel the prophet never saw the break between the 69th week and the 70th week. This period of time that is between the cross and the crown, the suffering and the glory, this present dispensation of Grace was a mystery. The mystery was the New Testament Church.

We are told in the Gospel of John that “*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*” (John 1:11). This first phase of the kingdom of God in Matthew started with the King’s forerunner, John the Baptist, as he announced that the Kingdom was “*at hand*”.

It is important that we stop here and examine who John the Baptist is and his role. There are some Baptist that believe the New Testament Church started with him.

John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. He and his mission were foretold by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3) and by the prophet Malachi (Malachi 3:1). Notice the message John the Baptist was preaching. “*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And*

saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Matthew 3:1-3)

In the Gospel of Matthew we see the gospel of the kingdom mentioned three times: 4:24; 9:35; 24:14. “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*” (Matthew 24:14). What is the gospel of the kingdom? The gospel of the kingdom is the good news that God plans to set up a Messianic Kingdom on this earth where the Lord Jesus Christ will rule and reign for a thousand years from the throne of David in Jerusalem.

There are two preachings of this gospel mentioned. The first preaching began with the ministry of John the Baptist and the second preached by the twelve apostles in Matthew 10 (please read). From this portion of Scripture it is very clear that the Church could not have started with John the Baptist or when the twelve were sent out by Christ. Also notice that in Matthew 10:5-7 they were instructed “*These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand*”. The gospel of salvation is for the whole world, but the disciples preached that which was exclusively for the nation of Israel. The next time this gospel of the kingdom will be preached will be after the Church is raptured, as prophesied in Matthew 24:14.

This is not a contradiction to the Apostle Paul’s warning. “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert*

the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:6-9)

The Apostle Paul is referring to the Gospel of Christ “*for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*”. The gospel of the kingdom is not for salvation but for a witness. It is proclamation that the time has come to set up the kingdom. Based on Matthew 24:14, we see that this gospel of the kingdom will be preached by those who shall be commissioned to bear this good news to all the nations. We also see that Christ Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will come to occupy the throne of David and regather the nation of Israel to their promised land.

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation,

spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)" (Matthew 24:4-15).

Let us now look at the baptism of John: *"And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."* (Matthew 3:6). The baptism of John was a witness, one being identified to the kingdom, not being identified to the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither was he baptized in the name of Jesus. There is no way that the baptism of John can be compared to believer's baptism as mentioned in Acts chapter 8. In Acts 19:1-7, the Apostle Paul did not accept John's baptism as being the same as believer's baptism, even though they were preaching that Jesus was the Christ.

The second phase of the kingdom of heaven began with Israel's final rejection of their King recorded in Matthew 11 and 12. This is known as the mystery phase of the kingdom of heaven, described in the seven parables which are given in Matthew 13. This phase of the kingdom encompasses all Christendom. Christendom is a term that applies to all earthly religions that claim to be Christian, whether they are true or false, liberal or fundamental. Therefore the tares and the bad fish in the parables of Matthew 13 refer to the false religions in operation and the leaven refers to the false doctrines being promoted in this dispensation. Please read Matthew chapters 11 through 13. This phase of the kingdom, also being a mystery, was not foretold in the Old Testament due to the fact that this form of the kingdom was to take place between the two advents of Christ.

The children of Israel were expecting the Lord Jesus Christ to bring in the kingdom in His first advent. *"And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."* (Luke 19:11)

The third phase of the kingdom of heaven is the prophetic phase of the kingdom. This was no mystery, for the Old Testament prophets foretold in great detail the splendor of this Messianic Kingdom on earth. God's chosen people Israel were looking forward to it. This phase covers the period when the kingdom is set up after the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He will sit on the throne of His father David and reign for one thousand glorious years. This has been referred to as the Millennium.

The ministry of John the Baptist and John's baptism are dealing with the kingdom, not the New Testament Church. John was the forerunner announcing the coming of the King. *"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."* (Luke 1:17). The Jews sent priests and Levites to ask John if he was Elijah. (Read John 1:15-34; Malachi 4:5; Isaiah 40:3). Why? Because they were looking for the promised kingdom.

Notice what the Lord Jesus Christ had to say about the ministry of His faithful servant John the Baptist. *"And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."* (Matthew 17:10-13)

John was a mighty prophet of God and one whose life was used to bring glory to God. He had no problem understanding and accepting his God-given role as *"The voice of one crying in*

the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord”, and for being a close friend of the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords.

The final phase of the kingdom of heaven is when it merges into the kingdom of God when Christ, having “*put all enemies under his feet,*” and “*shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father*” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

The confusion existing today concerning the Church is the product of those who wrongly divide the Word of truth. We cannot take the promises God made to His earthly people, Israel, and apply them to the New Testament Church. Israel is not the New Testament Church and the Church is not Israel. Israel and the Church are not one and the same!

It is impossible to place the origin of the Church in previous dispensations, because during that time the Church was a mystery. It was hidden from the prophets. They did not understand the Scriptures which spoke first of the sufferings of Christ and then of His glory. They saw His coming into this world, and they saw the kingdom age, but the valley between His first coming and His second coming was a mystery.

The Seventy weeks of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27) is a perfect example of this hidden mystery. This break between the 69th week and the 70th week was the hidden mystery which is now revealed by God. This hidden mystery is the New Testament Church, the Body and Bride of Christ. God revealed the first mystery pertaining to the Church to the Apostle Paul. The Church is one body that will be made up of both Jews and Gentiles as explained in Ephesians, chapters 2 and 3. The second mystery pertaining to the Church as the Bride of Christ is explained and revealed in Ephesians chapter 5.

A mystery in Scripture is a hidden truth “*which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,*” and then revealed by God through the Holy Spirit in God’s appointed time. “*Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*” (Ephesians 3:5).

The first mystery revealed pertaining to the New Testament Church is the mystery of the Church, as one body made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and is found in Ephesians, chapters 2 and 3.

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:” (Ephesians 3:1-11).

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye 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 ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:11-22)

The Apostle Paul makes it crystal clear that he did not receive this revelation from any man, any denomination, or from the religious leaders of his day, but it came directly from God. The mystery of the Church (the invisible Church) that was hid in God, is now revealed and the Church is the **body of Christ** made up of all those who are born again, whether Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, young or old.

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22-23)

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” (Colossians 1:18)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and this Headship was not possible until after He rose from the dead and was seated at the right hand of God. The Church was not started by any man no matter how godly that person may have been. Scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ, God, is the creator of all things. Christ Jesus is the only true foundation, the solid rock which HE will build HIS Church upon. *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11).*

Not only does the Word of God reveal the mystery pertaining to the Church but also without controversy proclaims Pentecost as the official birthday of the Church! This should not come as a surprise to any believer. Even though the Lord made reference to His Church in Matthew 16:18: *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* notice *“I will build my church”* is future tense. Scripture teaches that Christ is the rock, not Peter, not John the Baptist, and not any of the Apostles. Remember the Church is not an organization, a building, a religion, a denomination, or the nation of Israel, but it is the **BODY OF CHRIST!**

The Church is the Body of Christ of which He is the Head, and 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 reveals how this Body is formed and how one is added to the Church of the living God. *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of*

that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” This is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places the born-again believer into the BODY OF CHRIST, the Church. This Baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place the very moment one is born again.

The moment we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour we are made partakers of the divine nature, the new birth (2 Peter 1:4). Our spirit is quickened (Ephesians 2), our sins are washed away, our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, we are given eternal life (John 3:16), we are justified (Romans 5), we are sanctified and we are made possessors of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 6:19), which literally means that the Holy Spirit dwells in the believers.

Also, another mystery that was hidden was the Mystery of the Indwelling Christ, “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:27). Israel and the Old Testament saints did not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, for Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit would come and rest upon them. We are sealed unto the day of redemption by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). We are made members of the Body of Christ by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which took place for the very first time in Acts chapter 2, the day of Pentecost.

There might be some who do not believe in the Invisible Church. They will have a hard time accepting what God’s Word has to say. Keep in mind as I already stated, the very moment a person is truly born-again according to the Word of God, even before he partakes of Believer’s Baptism or joins a local church, he is every bit as saved and a member of the New Testament Church, the Body of Christ as any other born-again

believer who has received Believers Baptism, and been an outstanding member of a local church for 50 years.

Acts, chapter 8 gives us a perfect illustration: Phillip leading the Ethiopian eunuch to the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment the Ethiopian eunuch believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, even before he was baptized, he was already part of the Body of Christ and was a possessor of the Holy Spirit. Believer's Baptism, even though it is one of the two ordinances of the Church, does not place one into the Body of Christ, nor does it make him a member of the New Testament Church. A born-again believer can only be placed into the Body of Christ, which is the Church (the Invisible Church) by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which happens the very moment one believes. Since God makes it very clear that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit did not take place until the day of Pentecost, there is no way that the Church was in existence before Acts chapter 2. When Phillip departed from the Ethiopian eunuch, he was heading back to his homeland. At that time he was not a member of any local Church. If he were to die he would go to be with the Lord and if the Rapture took place he would have been caught up with the other believers.

The Bible teaches that there is an Invisible Church. It is the Body of Christ, made up of all those who are born-again, from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture. The importance of the local Church, which is God's ordained plan for reaching the lost and edifying the believers, is "*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*" (Ephesians 4:12). This is why it is extremely important, even though a born-again believer is part of the Body of Christ, he needs to be obedient to the Lord and to receive Believer's Baptism and to be part of a local, Bible believing church. There are several examples of local churches in the New Testament.

Before I move on to the second mystery pertaining to the Church, I would like to discuss the events leading up to the day of Pentecost.

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” (Acts 1:1-9)

The book of Acts picks up where the Gospel of Luke ends. It is the connecting link between the four Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. In Chapter 1 of Acts, we read about the apostles being instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ for forty days and *“commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”* The Lord

was also reassuring them of His promise to send the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit.

“And when the day of Pentecost was 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 all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4)

In Chapter 2 we read the inspired record of the fulfilled promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit, as promised in John 14:16-18; 15:26-27; and 16:7-11. Please pay close attention to the following Scripture verses! *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”* (John 7:37-39). On the Day of Pentecost all the promises Jesus made to His disciples pertaining to the coming of the Holy Spirit were fulfilled.

The Day of Pentecost was the birthday of the New Testament Church. Since that day, **the very second** a sinner believes in the finished cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ and accepts Him by faith, the Holy Spirit baptizes (Baptism of the Holy Spirit) that brand new born-again believer into the New Testament Church which is the Body of Christ. Even though the Lord Jesus made reference to the Church during His earthly ministry, it could not have come into existence until the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which happened for the very first time on the Day of Pentecost. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13 ; Ephesians 4:4-5)

Also, the Day of Pentecost was the beginning of a new dispensation, the Dispensation of Grace, also referred to as the Church Age, and it occurred with signs and wonders.

When we compare Scripture with Scripture and rightly divide the Word of Truth, it becomes obvious why Pentecost was chosen for that special day. The feast of Pentecost, under the Old Testament economy, was in celebration of the firstfruits, and the Lord Jesus Christ was the firstfruits from the dead. *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.”* (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

We need to be very careful that we do not misinterpret or get the wrong idea of what the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is. As we've just seen from Scripture, it sheds light on the mystery of the New Testament Church (Ephesians 3:5-6). The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a second blessing or filling that happens at a later date after one's salvation. It is a one time occurrence happening at the moment of one's conversion. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is when the believer is baptized into (placed into) the body of Christ, the New Testament Church, which Jesus Christ is the head and foundation. On the Day of Pentecost there were signs and wonders that also accompanied the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, but that was a one time occurrence. Now from that day forward one receives the Baptism, the Indwelling and the Sealing of the Holy Spirit at the moment of one's conversion.

The great second mystery pertaining to the Church, the Body of Christ, is revealed in the 5th Chapter of the Book of Ephesians.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5:22-32)

In these verses the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, uses the relationship of marriage between a husband and his wife to illustrate the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. Please pay close attention to the following verses. *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* The great mystery revealed is that those who are born-again, from the Day of Pentecost until the Rapture, are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones, and on that glorious day will be presented to Christ *“a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”*. We see from this portion of Scripture those who are members of the New Testament Church are also part of the Bride of Christ.

There are two “Brides” mentioned in the Bible: one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament.

The “Bride” referred to in the Old Testament is Israel, the Bride of Jehovah. God divorced Israel because of her iniquities and unfaithfulness. God promises in His Word to restore Israel, take her back, when she ceases from her adulteries. Read the following Scripture references: Jeremiah 3:1-20; Hosea; Isaiah 54:5-8.

The “Bride” mentioned in the New Testament is the Bride of Christ (the New Testament Church, the invisible Church), *“not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”*. Based on the contrast between the two “Brides”, it is clear that Israel cannot be the Bride of Christ.

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:2)

The Bride of Christ, the Church, will reside in the New Jerusalem, while the wife of God, Israel, will reside in the new earth (Revelation chapter 21).

After the Rapture, the events that will take place for the Church will be: The Judgment Seat of Christ, the Marriage of the Lamb and the Marriage Supper.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is **NOT** a judgment for sin, but for our Christian service (stewardship). The outcome of this judgment will determine if our Christian service was that of gold, silver, precious stones or wood, hay or stubble. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

Right after the Judgment Seat of Christ we have the Marriage of the Lamb and the Marriage Supper.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” (Revelation 19:7-9)

The Marriage of the Lamb takes place on the eve of the Lord’s return to the earth in power and glory. Once again who is the wife that is referred to in these verses? The precious Word of Almighty God clearly teaches that the wife is not Israel nor a remnant of Israel, but is a Gentile Bride, made up of all blood washed, born-again believers from Acts 2 to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, from all races, *“that whosoever”* will, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:9, *“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb...”* shows the separation between the Church (Acts 2 to 1 Thessalonians 4:17) and the Old Testament Saints and those who are redeemed after the Rapture during the Great Tribulation.

Who are the guests that are invited to the *“marriage supper of the Lamb”*? Notice it is not the Marriage of the Lamb, but the Marriage Supper. There are two parts to a wedding: the marriage ceremony and the marriage reception (or feast) that immediately follows. The guests are the friends of the bridegroom. John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, *“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”*, stated in John 3:29, *“He that hath the bride is*

the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” John the Baptist was martyred before the Church was started, but no doubt he will be a blessed guest at the marriage supper.

Now that the mysteries pertaining to the Church have been revealed, we can see there are many types in the Old Testament which made it very clear that God was planning to build His Church which He purchased with His Own blood. The very first type of the Church we see in Scripture is Eve. Not only was she the bride of Adam but she was also part of his body. *“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”* (Genesis 2:21-24)

Before I close I would like to address why the Church did not start in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; or in Luke 22:17-20.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:26-28)

Mark 14:22-24 gives this account almost word for word with Matthew's account. Luke adds *“This do in remembrance of*

me”. Here the Lord Jesus Christ was keeping the Passover with His apostles, showing them once again that He was the true Passover Lamb, as mentioned by John the Baptist. The Lord is now explaining the New Testament, and at the same time instructing them on a new memorial which is to be observed by the Church of God, until our Lord returns. However, this is not the beginning of the Church, this was still future. The “*new testament*” that Christ was talking about could not take effect until after His death, burial and resurrection, based on the following Scripture.

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Hebrews 9:14-22)

The Holy Spirit gives us a beautiful illustration of how God the Father is seeking a bride for His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the detailed account of Abraham seeking a wife

for his son Isaac. Please take the time to prayerfully read Genesis 24. Abraham is a type of God, Isaac is a type of Christ and Abraham's servant, Eliezer, is a type of the Holy Spirit. It is important to mention as you carefully read this portion of Scripture that Abraham did not seek a bride for Isaac until **after** he offered up his son Isaac.

I hope that this booklet was of some help. There is so much more the Word of God teaches us about the New Testament Church. Please keep in mind that this booklet is only meant to be an aid. Our only authority and truth is the Word of God (John 17:17). That is why we must compare all things to God's Word, the Holy Bible (KJB) which is the inspired, infallible Word of God.

“...let God be true, but every man a liar;...”