

WHAT
THE
CHURCH
IS



Or



By Pastor W. Jack Casey

How to Study Your Bible

1. Begin in Prayer 1 Cor 2: 9-14
2. Read the Bible Neh. 8: 1-3
3. Study the Bible Neh. 8:8
4. Meditate upon it Deut. 6:6-9; Ps. 1
5. Pass the Bible on to others Heb. 5: 12

How to Study Each Chapter

1. The Theme
2. The most important verse
3. The most prominent word
4. The teaching about Christ
5. The command to obey
6. The promise to claim
7. The new truth learned Psalm 119:18

Also every verse or passage has at least 3 applications

1. Past: this is the historical application
2. Present: This is a devotional or spiritual application
3. Future: This is a doctrinal or prophetic application

“WHAT THE CHURCH IS”

PART ONE

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

I. INTRODUCTION

There are many local churches in the world; some 300,000 in America alone. But there is one true Church.

It is called by many names in the Bible, such as “the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, God’s building, God’s temple, the flocks of Christ a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a purchased possession, salt of the earth, light of the world.”

There are many other names for the church which men use, however, the Bible uses the word “church” in two senses or applications, which must be understood.

FIRST: The word “church” - is used to encompass all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is called by Paul “one body.”

Paul says in I Cor. 12:13, 14 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”

Eph.4:4-6 “There is one body, one Spirit.

SECOND: The word “church” is applied to a local church, such as the church at Corinth, the Church at Ephesus, etc. The names were used to identify groups in different places.

II. Scripture references that will be used for the basis of our study: Matt. 16:17-19; I Cor. 10:32; 12:12,13;15:52; Eph. 1:22,23, 3:1-12, 5:22-33; Col. 1:18-24; Heb. 12:23

III. THE HEART OF THE TRUTH

Christ, one body is made up of all true believers regardless of church name or affiliation. It is composed of every race, color, with one creed.

IV. THE CHURCH - THE BODY OF CHRIST

The meaning of the word "church"

The church is an organism. The church is an organism a living thing with vital signs of life. The church is not merely an organization; you've heard the expression "the organized church." This is a reference to some type of denominational structure. The true church is made up of people who have been born again by accepting Christ as personal Saviour. They become a part of the living body of Christ.

Here is how the word "Church" came about. For 300 years after Christ (27a.d.) to about 314 a. d. what Jesus created was first called "that way" and then "Christian" as a derogatory statement and it was referred to as "the called out ones." After the Roman general Constantine came to power, the building of the great cathedrals and temples began. "The called out ones" were then called the "kuriakos" or "the lordly house". The same word moved through the languages of each country, kuriakos, kirkus, kirk (Scottish) to finally the English word church. The word church then is a rendition not a translation.

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The Church is a called out assembly.

This New Testament word was not limited to the Christians. It was used to designate any group of people convened for the purpose of deliberating. When used of the Christian church, it referred to those called out or separated from the world by Christ and into his fellowship.

The children of Israel were a called out company from Egypt but they were not a part of the body of Christ. The word "church" is used to describe them as they were a called out assembly or congregation Acts 7:38 "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness."

THE CHURCH IS A DIVINE INSTITUTION

The church is the body of believers in the Lord Jesus. The church was a mystery hidden in the heart of God until He revealed the meaning.

Christ is the head of the church. God exalted Him to that position as seen in Eph 1:22-23 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.

The true church is all that is under him today. There are many organizations today called churches that are not listening to Jesus.

He is the head; the whole body is to be under a single mind that mind is Jesus. Just as our bodies obey our brains, so is the whole of the church under Jesus and we are to obey His direction.

Christ mentioned the church first in Matt. 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. When Jesus made the revelation of the church to Peter and the disciples, the church was still in the future. Jesus said "upon this rock (Christ) I will build my church". He did not say, I will continue to build but I will build it was still out in the future.

The church took its outward form at Pentecost. The mystery was no longer a mystery Eph. 3:9-10 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, Our mission is to continue revealing Jesus to a lost world.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

The foundation of Jesus Christ is one of the more deeply discussed passages is Matt. 16:13-18. Just what did Jesus mean? Jesus was telling Peter that He was much too small of a stone to make a foundation out of. But Jesus himself was a

huge stone, the size of a mountain that would fill the earth. Cut out without hands. Dan. 2:34 and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

We shall let the Bible speak for itself in 1 Cor. 3:9-11 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the foundation; everything about the church is based on Jesus. Salvation, obedience, and life itself is on Him the solid rock, Jesus Christ is that Rock

In Matt. 16:18 the meaning should be made clear. The name Peter, used here by Jesus, is "petros" and means a little rock or a pebble. The word "rock" here is "Petra" and means a large rock or a boulder. So Jesus is saying "you are a little stone, but upon this big rock I will build my church.

Scripture speaks loud and clear at this point; 1 Cor. 10:4 "and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ. Christ was the rock in the Old Testament, and he is the rock upon which the church is built. He is seen in Ex. 17:6 and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink; the rock here is a type of Christ in character and the provisions that he would bring. Jesus said in John 14:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.

THE TESTIMONY OF PETER

Peter, the little stone, testified that the church is built on Jesus Christ. Let's read his words in 1 Peter 2:3, 4 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, these words tell us there is only one living stone that will make a solid foundation. Jesus gave a

parable on it in Matt 21:42, 44 Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Here, Israel is seen rejecting that stone.

Peter calls Jesus a "Living stone." If we fall on this stone for mercy we will break or we can reject this stone and be crushed by it.

Peter never claimed that he was the rock on which the church is built, but was the first to admit that he was a little stone in the great structure of the church. In 1 Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, we see here that Peter calls himself a small stone in the first row and each of us, once we accept Jesus as Saviour, we become small stones in the next layer.

The word "stone" here means many stones. Christ is the one foundation rock and we are many living stones on that one foundation.

THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

The church is a body; an organic unity 1 Cor. 12:12 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, 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body, 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. Each body has 209 bones, 7 appendages, 7 openings, 100's of muscles, 2 kidneys, 2 lungs, 1 heart, 1 stomach, 1 liver, large and small intestines, and 1 brain controlling all.

If I hurt a hand or foot, the body hurts. So to does the church if one member is hurting or missing the whole body suffers. It is an organism composed of many members. All members do not have the same function. Notice the last 4 words in verse 12 "so also in Christ."

Look here at what Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:13 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- Here we see that everyone who accepts Jesus as Saviour is placed in the body by the Holy Spirit just as every part of our body needs each other to function properly, so does the church at large.

Believers are made members of His body by one Spirit. This is the act of regeneration which God the Holy Spirit does in the heart. We are placed into the body of Christ by an act of the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration means to be restored or born again. Here in Tit 3:5 by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost and Matt. 19:28 That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, regeneration then is the act of son making.

Adoption means to be placed in a family as an adult with all rights and privileges. The word occurs 5 times and refers to son placing. In Romans 8:23 Paul gives us the word in the future context when we will see its full effects And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Adoption emphasizes the sovereign and gracious act of God in our salvation.

Now Paul adds in 1 Cor. 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. Since we are his body, he himself places each of us in his body and then gives each of us a gift to utilize in the carrying out of the gospel. God sets members in the body of Christ. We do not place ourselves. As part of the body, each believer needs every other part of the body to function. If one part is sick, or withered, the entire body suffers.

In 1Cor. 12:15-27 we see how Paul stressed the need for each part of the body to function properly. We have been set in the body of Christ by God. We have no right to change that position.

IN GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE HE SAW THE CHURCH COMPLETE.

We must give here a brief definition of foreknowledge; it is God's ability to see the end of things from the beginning. The word is made up of the two words "fore" or before and "knowledge" when put together it is to know before hand. God the Father saw the body as a complete body. He saw every member of that body from eternity past. Paul in Eph. 1:3-6 gives a truly a great statement. If the church at large could grasp this, the job of discipleship would truly get done!

God determined the body that is the church long before there were denominations and human differences. The true church is not a material building; it is a group of "living stones", saved people built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

The true church has one head; Jesus Christ. Christ is the head of the church and the only head. Anything with two heads is a monstrosity and cannot but cause confusion.

Read Col. 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist, 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is before all things, and all fullness is in Christ both past and present.

He holds the whole of creation together. He holds all of his church, His body, on earth together. He is the head, directing the body on the world, giving out the gospel. He does this by His authority as God the Son.

Jesus is both the foundation and the head of the church. The position can never be claimed by man or angel. As the foundation, He assures us; it is sound and sure and will never give way.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE OF THE BUILDING

The church is the "household of God" made up of saints. Eph. 2:19 but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God - Gentile and Jew alike are all saved by Jesus. We are all saints, members of one large house, no

matter what tag we wear down here. Phil. 3:20 For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven. A "stranger" was a foreigner in a state and a "foreigner" was a guest in a private home.

The Church has a sure foundation the prophets and apostles gave to us the Word of God which speaks of him. Jesus is the "chief cornerstone" according to Eph. 2:20. Jesus is the bedrock, each succeeding generation adding a new course.

The Church is a temple. Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: This temple is still under construction today. This is an analogy or comparison of the church to the Old Testament temple. The beauty of the church is hidden behind scaffolds of sin and the old nature.

The church is "a holy temple in the Lord". In the first temple, all the materials were made beforehand and brought to be placed in the temple. So the church was elected or chosen before the foundation of the world. Each stone was in the mind of God to be placed in a specific place in the household of God.

The church at large has but one job – to go and make disciples in the world. Each person has a special part to play in the discipleship process. According to what Paul says here in 1 Cor. 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Each of us individually is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And corporately everyone who belongs to Christ makes up the temple of the Lord.

THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

The Bride is purchased by Christ.

The beautiful intimacy of Christ and His church is revealed by Paul. First in Eph. 5:25 even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it this is his past work. Jesus loved us to the point of dying for us.

The marriage brings forth fruit unto God. Paul in Romans 7:4 that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. We died to our old husband and to our adamic nature

and are now in a living relationship spotless before Christ the last Adam.

The Bride is cleansed by the washing of the Word. Jesus died for His bride. He keeps the bride (church) clean by the Word of God. This is His present work Eph. 5: 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word Now you are clean through the Word. This is what Jesus is doing today for all those who truly belong to Him. Jesus is separating and making his bride more like Himself John 15: 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Spots - defilement from outside Wrinkles - defilement from inside. James 1:27 "keep yourselves unspotted from the world"

The Destiny of the Church

Jesus, our redeemer, has a destiny for His bride. Christ loves and nourishes the church, that He might present the church to Himself. Read Paul's words here in Eph. 5:27 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. This is the future of the true church out of every local assembly.

Believers are members of His body, His flesh, His bones Eph. 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. No man in his right mind would hurt his own body or that of his bride. The church is a part of the last invitation of God. Rev. 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. We are to be out calling to the lost, come to Jesus

SUMMARY OF THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL

The Church the body of Christ, made up of many members, may differ in many outward respects. All members however bear the same identifying marks of a believer.

The style of building or form of service makes no difference in their saving faith in Jesus Christ. They must believe in THE FINISHED WORK OF CALVARY, HIS DIETY, VIRGIN

BIRTH, ATONING DEATH, HIS BODILY RESURECTION, AND SOON COMING AGAIN. These are the pillars of the gospel and cannot be only partially accepted, it must be all of them or none of them.

Name tags mean nothing and they have nothing to do with being a part of Christ today. They are found in every area of the earth, with countless church names. Yet they all draw their rules from the Word of God.

THE CHURCH IS - PART II THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

Introduction

Every one who receives Christ is a member of the body of Christ. But just as surely as you become a member of the true church; you will yearn for and seek the fellowship of other members of the body of Christ.

Here is where the local church comes in and should become a part of your life.

Every Christian should identify himself and join the fellowship of a local bible believing church.

You should be taught the purpose of the church, how to witness and how to worship our Lord!

If you are saved, you should let your testimony be a part of a larger fellowship –

“THE LOCAL CHURCH”

The sizes of the congregation or its prestige have nothing to do with one’s personal growth. Matt. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. This verse says that where two or three are gathered together in Jesus name there He is in the midst.

II SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Acts chapters 2, 10, 15; 1Cor.10:32; 2 Cor. 8:1-15, 9:1-8; Eph.2:15; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:1-12; 1 Pet. 5:1-4

The Heart of the Matter

The bible has the generic “church” such as (Heb. 12:23) “to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in Heaven”

This is the great congregation of the redeemed.

But the church that is referred to repeatedly in the bible is the local church, or churches, such as the churches of Judea; of Galatia; of Macedonia. Paul established churches everywhere he went. John spoke of the seven churches of Asia.

The local assembly is the physical body by which the body of Christ is manifested.

The Church-- The Local Congregation

“all that Jesus began both to do and teach”

The Acts of the Lord Jesus Christ the 5th book of the New Testament is entitled “THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES”. Some older bibles entitle the book “THE ACTS”. This name includes “the Acts of the Apostles & the acts of the Holy Spirit more

specifically: "The Acts of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit". Jesus is directing His work on earth from Heaven.

Luke began by writing in Acts 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. The former treatise refers back to the Gospel of Luke (1:1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us). "Instructed" means someone who is being taught the basics Christianity.

Luke presented the works of the Lord Jesus while He was in the flesh, in his account of the gospel. Now in Acts we the continuation of what the Lord is doing now from Heaven. In Acts 2; after Peter had preached we find 3,000 souls were added, to what? To the local church. The Lord did the adding and He is still adding to the church according to Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Souls can be added to a local church 7 days a week, not just on Sunday. They were always out showing the love of Christ.

The book of Acts has no formal ending. There is no ending because the work goes on, in and through the church. Luke finished what the Holy Spirit allowed him to write. "All that Jesus began, both to do and teach" will continue until the "fullness of the gentiles be come in" Ro.11:25.

John 14:12 gives us an amazing statement of Jesus Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. Notice that the second word "works" is in italics (this means it was added later)

The Apostles, touched more lives than Jesus and even today we are reaching more than ever before. Preaching salvation and seeing souls saved is a greater miracle than healing the sick.

Jesus raised physical bodies, but when we preach Christ body and soul will live eternally! This is a greater work.

The Outline of The Lord has given to The Church

In the book of Acts, one can see the Lord's outline (Acts 1:8 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). What He does is always orderly and properly done.

Luke follows this outline in writing the "Acts". The gospel preached in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place)

They became complacent, so the Lord sent Saul to persecute the church. This sent them to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:14 were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John). From there His people went out "to the uttermost parts (8:26 Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert, 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band) Ethiopia, Rome, Macedonia, etc.

The Promise Of The Holy Spirit

The Promise of God the Father, out of more than 3,000 promises in the Bible, there is only one called "the promise of the Father". In Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father; here Jesus speaks of "the promise" (Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you:) They were to be patient and wait for the Holy Spirit to provide them with power before beginning their ministry.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, The Holy Spirit was given to the Church to remind us of all Jesus said. He is the ultimate disciple maker. However He can only teach us what we want to know. In John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that

he may abide with you for ever. Here Jesus promises another comforter; another one of the same kind.

The Holy Spirit Came In Power

The same group that Jesus told to wait was also told "ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses (a witness is someone who sincerely tells what he has seen and heard.). This word witness is used 29 times in Acts. Where was this witnessing to take place in the following unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria.

The Holy Spirit came in the name of Jesus (Jn. 14:26; Acts 2:1, 4). This was the power Jesus had promised. The Church was visibly established on the Day of Pentecost (120 of Acts 1:15). Peter preached on that day and 3,000 souls were saved notice the word "added"

The Mandate of the Lord to the Church

The commission of Jesus to the Church is found here in Matt. 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. We are to go into all the world make disciples, students, or followers, the Bible says "teach all nations" the word teach here means to disciple or train "baptizing them in the name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This is to be done because "I have commanded you".

We are to teach them the whole counsel or word not just bits & pieces, rightly dividing the word.

Jesus ascended with This Great Promise Matt. 28:20 "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age

In Luke 24:46 we have this message And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day

Luke 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. This is where the message is to go

Luke 24:49-51 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. Here is the Power to carry it out

In Acts, He promised the power, and then "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him" (Shekinah glory cloud).

Was This For The Local Church? Yes. When Jesus left there was no New Testament, no writings, only the "assembly" waiting for the promise. Jesus gave to this "church" the ordinances, discipline and commission.

The group He empowered was a Church, an assembly, a visible local group. One could see them, hear them, and join them. The history of the development of the local church began with that assembly.

The rest of this book and the other books are written for the local church

John saw Jesus walking in the midst of the churches in Rev. 2&3

The Local Church Is a Fellowship

The center of the fellowship is Jesus Christ. The churches were exciting fellowships with Christ as their living center. As a fellowship, the Church is formed from within.

It is the "fellowship (partnership) of Jesus Christ. Paul in 1Cor. 1:9 tells us that we are in a fellowship not just with ourselves, but with Christ "by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". We are His, He is ours. It is love that accommodates our weakness, and gives us strength 1 Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

This is the concluding verse to this thought!

The Local Church Is a Fellowship of Believers. Fellowship with the brethren was a test of discipleship. John in 1 Jn. 3:14 tells us that, we can know for sure were saved because we have this love for each other that is unnatural We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren also 1Jn 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

It is a precious fellowship Eph. 4:3 says “keep the unity of the Spirit”. We are to be at peace with and esteem the leaders the Lord has placed in the Church 1 Thess. 5:12-13 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. We are to walk in the light of Jesus 1 Jn. 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF A CHURCH SUSTAINS BELIEVERS

Christians should comfort one another as we are told in 1Th. 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Christians should love one another 1 Peter 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:
The Church should teach the Word of God Col. 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. The Word cleans, it is to dwell or be at home - familiar to us. Our singing should be influenced by the Word of God

A local Church should have Bible study, thorough study so the people will be grounded in their faith. The fellowship of a Church is vital for spiritual growth.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF A CHURCH SHOULD WIN PEOPLE TO CHRIST.

The local Church is the visible manifestation of the unseen Christ. It is never a building or an organization that witnesses. It is always a person who shares his faith 1 Peter 3:15 and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear

We should learn to at least be able to share how we came to Christ. The local Church should be involved in missionary work at home and around the world. Romans 10:14-15 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

"If every local Church would support missionaries properly we could double the number of missionaries out in the fields." The local Church should encourage our young people who are called to serve, and support them with all that is possible especially prayer.

THE LOCAL CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Local Church is referred to 100 Times in the New Testament. Jesus referred to the local Church in Matt 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, this is reference to the future. The Church at Jerusalem was a soul winning church Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. In Acts 2:47 it says "The Lord added to the Church daily". This was because the people were so close to Jesus.

In Acts 5:14, and 42 it says "multitudes were added to the church at Jerusalem. Even in times of church discipline, people were being saved.

Acts 6:7 says "the number multiplied in Jerusalem greatly" because they kept spreading the Word.

Acts 8:1, 3 "there was great persecution against the Church at Jerusalem" As they grew, they became complacent to stay where they were, so God sent persecution to get them moving.

Paul's conversion makes for a "Chosen Vessel to the Gentiles". The following are some of his references to the local church.

- . Acts 9:31 the churches (plural) no longer fear him
- . Acts 11:19-26 the Church in Antioch (Syria)
- . Acts 14:23 Paul ordains local pastors. After starting a Church Paul would train men to take over the congregation
- . Acts 14:27 the first missions conference is held
- . Acts 15:41 Paul confirms (strengthens) churches in Syria and Cilicia
- . Acts 16:11-40 the Church at Philippi. Paul is sent here by Holy Spirit even as he wanted to go elsewhere.
- . Acts 17:1-4 the Church at Thessalonica is founded, along with the Berean church. (vs10) This is a real Bible church as Paul says they searched the Scriptures daily.
- . Acts 18:2 Church at Corinth is founded by some Roman Jews
- . Acts 19:8, 10 the Church at Ephesus is founded
- . Acts 20:7, 17 the Church at Troas is founded they held very long services.
- . Acts 28:17-31 the Church in Rome this church founded by a man chained between 2 soldiers at all times.

Paul writing to and about local churches.

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| . Romans 1:7-8 | 1Cor. 7:17 | 2 Cor. 8:1 |
| . 1 Cor. 1:2 | 1Cor 16:19 | 2 Cor. 12:28 |
| . 1Cor. 4:17 | . 2 Cor 1:1 | . Gal. 1:2, 22 |
| . Phil. 1:1 | . 1Thess. 1:1 | . Philemon 2 |
| . Col. 1:2 | . 2 Thess. 1:1 | |
| . Col. 4:15-16 | . 1Tim 3:15 | |
- C. Other References to the local Church
- . James 5:14
 - . Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18
 - . 3 John 6, 10
 - . Rev.:1, 7, 14

. Rev. 1:4, 11, 20 . Rev. 22:16

V. Summary

What would it be like to live in a world with no local churches? Local churches are not perfect, however they are God's tools to reach the world.

THE CHURCH IS PART III THE WRONG LOCAL CHURCH LUKE 18:8

Introduction

Each congregation of believers is to be heaven's representatives on earth. We are to do this by reflecting the holy character of Jesus Christ. Paul in 2 Cor. 5:20 says "We are ambassadors for Christ"

Satan has other plans. From the beginning he has desired to hinder the witness of the body of Christ. Matt15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; also Matt.16:12 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; 1 Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Heb. 13:9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; Eph. 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive

He contaminates believers with unholy doctrine 2 Tim 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, Phil. 3:17-19; Jude 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness; Rev. 2:13 I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.

He contaminates believers with unholy people 2 Cor. 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

I. DEFINITION OF APOSTASY

In order to understand the Biblical doctrine of separation, it is necessary to see it against the backdrop of Scriptural teachings on apostasy. Apostasy is the removal from or forsaking of a person or a system of thought read Acts 21:18-21. The departure is willful Apostates actions are displayed in 1 Tim 4:1-3 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

The New Testament uses the verb form meaning "personal withdrawal" or "withdrawal from the faith" Luke 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe,

and in time of temptation fall away; 1 Tim 4:1; Heb. 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

According to Unger's dictionary, apostasy is 'the act of a professed Christian who knowingly and deliberately rejects truth regarding the deity of Christ 1 John 4:1-3 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world and redemption through his atoning sacrifice.

Heresy is not apostasy Titus 3:9-11 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself. In this passage it refers to a selfish choice which results in petty divisions within the church. It regards carnal trouble - making worldly people rather than theological error.

Apostasy must be distinguished from ignorance Acts 19:1-9. Paul's solution was to separate the disciples in verse 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

The Characteristics of Apostates

They repudiate the original system of revealed truth "faith in Christ" 2 Tim. 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. They believe it will not work.

Who motivates the apostates in 1 Tim 4:1? Paul gives us the answer in this verse they are seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. They are motivated by demons and seducing spirits

How are apostates described in verse 2 of 1 Tim. 4? They speak lies as hypocrites (they declare with conviction that they do not lie) their conscience is seared in other words they believe what they are saying to be true.

The Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 2:10 gives us five descriptions of apostates.

1. they "walk after the flesh" -fulfilling there lust
2. they "despise government"- God's order for the church
3. they are "presumptuous" - bold, arrogant.
4. they are "self-willed" - seeking there own good
5. they "speak against dignities"- against God's holy creatures

Peter in 2 Peter 2:12-14 adds to their description But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

What do they promise? 2 Peter 2:19 gives the answer "While they promise them liberty". They promise liberty, they really bring slavery to new sin.

Who do they oppose? Jude 8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. They are false prophets (dreamers) who claim supernatural revelations or dreams (Duet. 13:1-5). They reject (despise) dominion (God's rule book). They act like brute beast in their lives.

Jude 12 gives us a summary of apostate behavior "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots".

Apostates have a form of religion without power. Paul in 2Tim. 3:5 gives this warning "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." Pickering writes "Satan's doctrines are spread by Satan's "ministers" (2Cor. 11:13-15). Unsaved people who have no spiritual discernment, hail these men as great religious leaders while the preachers of truth, God's ministers, are despised and viewed as being uncooperative, divisive, and unloving. Satan's preachers accommodate themselves to the tastes of unregenerate hearers and are thus much more popular."

The Progression of Apostasy

Can the course of apostasy be checked once it has become firmly entrenched? Let's look at how the Lord dealt with this first in Num. 11:1 And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp here He burnt them with fire; next 12:9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed here we see He left the people; Josh. 7:1 and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel here Achan's sin caused judgment to fall on Israel; Eph. 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience here Paul warns us to not be deceived by empty words, if we are then we can expect God's judgment on our lives.

Apostasy is very serious; God's anger burns against those who depart from the faith (Ro. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness these are harsh, hard words but no less a truthful warning to those who practice deceiving God's people also here in Ps. 7:11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. David here says that God is going to judge both categories and there is only the two so you are in one or the other.

Apostasy is definable and discoverable. We need not appear baffled by what constitutes apostasy. Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world; 1Tim 6:20-21 keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Heb. 13:9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines

Apostasy is pervasive and progressive; the leaven of the Pharisees produced religious externalism Matt.16:6 Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees &12; 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation, 16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity

The leaven of the Sadducees exhibited skepticism toward supernatural Matt. 22:23 which say that there is no resurrection, 29 Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

The leaven of the Herodians manifested a spirit of worldly compromise (Matt. 22:18-21)

Leavening portrays false doctrine in that it works its way quickly through the mass "till the whole is leavened" Matt. 13:33 The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened leaven always speaks of evil or sin, so Jesus is saying apostasy will work like yeast moving through all of the Church until it is corrupt

2 Tim 2:16, 17 depict false doctrine as gangrene and it and it must be shunned.

Apostasy is irremediable and awaits judgment (2Pet. 2:17, 21 and Jude 11-15). These verses provide no hope that apostasy will be checked and that truth will triumph. History yields no example of a group or denomination that has been rescued and restored to a biblical witness after having been captured

by apostates. As this age moves on to its conclusion, apostasy will deepen "perilous times shall come" 2Tim. 3:1. As Paul says in 2 Tim 3:13 "Evil men and seducers will grow worse and worse.

Apostasy will come to full fruition during the time of the tribulation in the MOTHER OF HARLOTS, Babylon the Great (Rev. 17). This false religious system is characterized by

1. Unfaithfulness to divine truth (Is. 1:21; Jer 2:20)
2. False profession of identification with a system of truth
3. Ecumenicist (worldwide cooperation of religious groups) Rev. 17:1,15
4. Progeny (Heb. 5:11-6:6)

What should a child of God do? The following is a brief summary of the commands given to deal with apostasy.

1. Rom.16:17 mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. We are to define those who are false
2. 2Cor. 6:14-18 We are not too associate or be linked with those who we know to be false.
3. Gal. 1:8, 9 We are to pronounce judgment on anyone who will preach contrary to the true gospel.
4. 2John 7-11 Those who preach another gospel are not to be received or provided for.
5. Rev. 18:4, 5 We are not to participate with apostates.

IV. When Does A Church Body Become Apostate?

A body has not become apostate at the time:

1. They remove the gospel from their official creed or confession. It has occurred long before this
2. The believers within the group still have freedom to preach the Gospel.

Apostates are liars 2 Pet. 2:3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you
Apostates twist meanings of words. They may sound as if they are preaching the truth.

A Body is Apostate at the Time

1. Men and women in its leadership deny the basic tenants of the Christian faith.

2. Official periodicals and media presentations promote views contrary to the orthodox Christian faith.
3. Official schools of the body employ faculty members and or utilize visiting speakers who teach views that are at variance with essential doctrines of the Bible.
4. No effort is made by the leadership of the group or the majority of its constituency to expunge the offending parties

Conclusion: God's answer to Apostasy

1. Turn away 2 Tim. 3:5 from such turn away
2. Shun 2Tim. 2:16 But shun profane and vain babblings
3. Come out of her Rev. 18:4, 5 Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities
4. False Jer. 50:4-9; 51:16 When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures
5. Return to your first love: Christ Matt. 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness