

## Introduction

This study is a survey of the New Testament's teachings about the topic of the church—a topic theologians call \_\_\_\_\_.

The study is organized largely by the different human authors of the New Testament. For example, some of what the apostle Paul says about the church in one of his books may overlap what he says in a different book, while James may give us an altogether new perspective. By taking this methodological approach to our study, we will be able to trace the development of the church and formulate a holistic understanding that will benefit us individually, as a congregation, and as members of the worldwide people of God.

The basis of this study is George Eldon Ladd's<sup>1</sup> *A Theology of the New Testament*.<sup>2</sup>

**When you think about the church, what is it that comes to mind?**

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<sup>1</sup> George Eldon Ladd was a Baptist pastor before becoming an evangelical New Testament scholar and Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary. *A Theology of the New Testament* is considered his magisterial work, serving thousands of seminary students since its original publication in 1974. He has been called the most important New Testament scholar of the post-war evangelical resurgence in North America. He popularized a view of God's Kingdom as having two dimensions: "already/not yet." The Kingdom of God is both a present spiritual reality and a future earthly reality.

Ladd not only taught the New Testament, he believed it. He wrote, "Apart from the gospel of the kingdom, death is the mighty conqueror before whom we are all helpless. We can only beat our fists in utter futility against this unyielding and unresponding tomb. But the good news is this: death has been defeated; our conqueror has been conquered. In the face of the power of the kingdom of God in Christ, death was helpless. It could not hold him, death has been defeated; life and immortality have been brought to life. An empty tomb in Jerusalem is proof of it. This is the gospel of the kingdom" (*The Gospel of the Kingdom*).

<sup>2</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. ed. 1993).



## **A sampling of questions that this study will explore:**

- What *is* the church?
- What makes the church \_\_\_\_\_ among all of the organizations in the world?
- Is the church indeed an organization, or should we think of it as something else?
- Is there \_\_\_\_\_ church or \_\_\_\_\_?
- How should a church be \_\_\_\_\_?
- What does a church \_\_\_\_\_?
- What \_\_\_\_\_ are given to the church and what do they mean?
- Is church \_\_\_\_\_ for Christians?
- What, if anything, does the church have to do with \_\_\_\_\_?
- What is the relationship between the church and the \_\_\_\_\_ of God?

## **What other questions about the church do you have?**

## Part 1 - The Church in the Synoptic Gospels

Theologians often call the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke the “synoptic” gospels because they share some similar characteristics, including many of the same events in Jesus’ life.

In Part 1 of this study, we will explore the topic of the church from the perspective of what we find in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The word “church” rarely appears in the synoptics, but what we find frequently is “the Kingdom of God.”<sup>3</sup> The inauguration of the Kingdom of God to earth was Jesus’ \_\_\_\_\_.

*Now after John had been delivered up into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”* Mark 1:14-15

Key question: Since Jesus came to Israel to inaugurate God’s Kingdom, how is it that the church was founded? What does the church have to do with God’s Kingdom, which was the focus of His ministry?

### Jesus and \_\_\_\_\_

What is the relationship of Jesus to Israel, and how does this impact our understanding of the relationship between Israel and the church?

To answer this question, there are several facts that we must understand:

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<sup>3</sup> Or “the Kingdom of Heaven” in Matthew’s Gospel. It is apparent from Matthew’s parallel passages in Mark and Luke that the terms “Kingdom of Heaven” and “Kingdom of God” are synonymous. The author Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, was careful to substitute “heaven” for the name “God” so as not to offend his readers. Dispensational theologians, who teach that God acted differently with His chosen people in different periods of human history, mistakenly believe that the Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven are two separate realities. They say that whereas the Kingdom of God is His spiritual rule, the Kingdom of Heaven will be a future literal rule taking place at the return of Christ when the Old Testament promises of the restoration of David’s Kingdom will be literally fulfilled. The basic belief of dispensationalism is that there are two peoples of God—Israel and the church—who are completely separate with two destinies under two divine programs. However, as we will see, the clear teaching of the New Testament is that, while the people known as Israel received the law and the promises, the church (made up of both Jews and Gentiles) is the true Israel (Rom. 2:28-29) and that Abraham is the father of those with faith in Christ (Gal. 3:6-7).

**1. Jesus did not seek to start a new \_\_\_\_\_ either within or outside of Israel.**

Jesus was in every way a Jew who came to the Jewish people. He accepted the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures, and He worshiped in the temple and synagogues.

*"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

Matthew 15:24

Although Jesus occasionally journeyed outside of the Jewish homeland and accepted Gentiles, He recognized that Israel had been given the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of God. In inaugurating God's Kingdom, Jesus was proclaiming that God was now acting in Him to fulfill those promises and bring Israel to its true destiny as God's people.

**2. As a whole, Israel \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus and His message about God's Kingdom.**

*"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you did not want it. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'"*

Matthew 23:37-39

*"If you knew in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."*

Luke 19:42-44

Why did the Jewish authorities reject Jesus? Because, as we saw from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry in Mark 1:14-15, receiving the Kingdom of God requires \_\_\_\_\_.

**3. Although Israel as a whole rejected Jesus' offer of God's Kingdom, there were some who responded in \_\_\_\_\_.**

This can be observed in the kind of \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus offered. Whereas the rabbis of that day bound their disciples to the Torah, Jesus bound His disciples to \_\_\_\_\_ alone.

To follow Jesus as His disciple requires \_\_\_\_\_ to His authority without reservation. The reason for this is because the Kingdom of God is present in Jesus' person and message. In Jesus, people are confronted by God Himself; and whether a person receives or rejects Jesus is nothing short of receiving or rejecting God.

***Conclusion: Since Israel was given God's covenant and promises, and since Jesus offered Israel the fulfillment of her destiny, then this destiny was actually \_\_\_\_\_ in those who received His message.***

The recipients of the salvation brought by Israel's Messiah became the \_\_\_\_\_ Israel and representative of the nation as a whole.

*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.*

Romans 2:28-29

Jesus' disciples are the recipients of the messianic salvation, the people of the Kingdom, the true \_\_\_\_\_.

## **The Believing \_\_\_\_\_**

In the Old Testament, there is a recurring theme of a faithful remnant. Whereas Israel as a whole became rebellious and disobedient, there remained within the faithless nation a remnant of believers who continued to be the true people of God.

When Jesus called His disciples, it was not accidental or incidental that He called \_\_\_\_\_ of them. They represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

*"Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

Matthew 19:28

Twelve is a symbolic number that simultaneously looks \_\_\_\_\_ to the old Israel and \_\_\_\_\_ to the Israel of the last days. By choosing the Twelve, Jesus was giving a sign that He was selecting a new Israel to replace unbelieving Israel.



## **Matthew 16:18-19**

*"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."* Matthew 16:18-19

### ***Is Jesus' Church a \_\_\_\_\_ Organization?***

Key questions: When Jesus spoke of His church, was Jesus creating a distinct institution completely removed from Israel? Did Jesus have in mind that Israel should no longer exist and be replaced by a totally separate group, or should His church be understood within the context of the Old Testament concept of Israel as the people of God?

The answer can be found in the fact that instead of instituting a new way, place, or organization of worship, His message remained within the context of \_\_\_\_\_ faith and practice. He did not consider His disciples would constitute or initiate a new religion, but rather that they constituted *true* Israel. His followers shared this understanding, as the Book of Acts finds them worshiping God as Jews who had received the Jewish Messiah. The early church worshiped in the temple and in the synagogues, and they considered the Hebrew Scriptures to be authoritative.

Additionally, the term *ekklesia*, translated "church" in Matthew 16:18, literally means "\_\_\_\_\_." This concept is found throughout the Old Testament as a reference to God's people. Jesus was not saying that He would create a new institution completely separate from Israel and intended to replace Israel. He was saying that *His* Israel—*His* assembly of God's people—would be built upon "the rock."

### ***What is the "\_\_\_\_\_ " upon which Jesus will build His church?***

Theologians have understood the "rock" of Matthew 16:18 in one of three ways:

- Interpretation #1: The rock is the \_\_\_\_\_ Peter made two verses earlier: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was John Calvin's view.
- Interpretation #2: The rock is \_\_\_\_\_. This was Martin Luther's view.
- Interpretation #3: The rock is \_\_\_\_\_.

Luther and Calvin, as well as many Protestant interpreters today, reacted strongly against the idea that Jesus may have been calling Peter the rock upon which His assembly/church would be built because of the Roman Catholic belief that Peter was the first of a series of \_\_\_\_\_ to lead the church as the Bishop of Rome. The Roman Catholic view, however, has no merit, as there is no biblical evidence of Peter ever serving as a bishop in Rome, nor is there any contextual clue in this passage that Peter could pass on his leadership role as an apostle to a successor. In fact, the apostles, strictly defined, were limited to those who had been with Jesus and an eyewitness of His resurrection (cf. Acts 1:21-26). There are no successors to the apostles today.

In spite of the Roman Catholic view about apostolic succession, George Ladd writes that a strong argument can be made “that the rock is in fact Peter, not in an official capacity or by virtue of personal qualification, but as \_\_\_\_\_ of the twelve confessing Jesus as Messiah. The rock is Peter the confessor. Jesus anticipates a new stage in the experience of his disciples in which Peter will exercise a significant leadership.”<sup>4</sup> Not only does this make the most sense grammatically, but it was fulfilled in early church history, as Peter:

- Was one of Jesus’ inner circle of \_\_\_\_\_ (Mark 9:2; 13:3).
- Preached the first sermon at \_\_\_\_\_ announcing the fulfillment of God’s promises (Acts 2).
- Saw a lame beggar healed (Acts 3) and was subsequently \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 4) for preaching about Christ.
- Proclaimed God’s \_\_\_\_\_ against Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).
- Was distinguished among the apostles by \_\_\_\_\_ as “Peter and the apostles” (Acts 5:29).
- Witnessed the Spirit given to Cornelius, the first \_\_\_\_\_ convert to Christ (Acts 10).
- Spoke to the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem at the Jerusalem \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 15).

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<sup>4</sup> Ladd, 108.



## **The \_\_\_\_\_ and the Church**

Some theologians believe that the church *is* the Kingdom of God. However, this idea is built upon an incorrect definition of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is the \_\_\_\_\_ or reign of God. It can also be spoken of as the \_\_\_\_\_ where God's rule is experienced.

The Kingdom should not be identified with its subjects. We are the people of God's rule who \_\_\_\_\_ it, \_\_\_\_\_ under it, and are \_\_\_\_\_ by it. The church is the community of God's Kingdom, but we are never the Kingdom itself. Nowhere does the New Testament equate believers with the Kingdom.

The relationship of the church to the Kingdom of God can be described in the following ways:

### ***The Kingdom \_\_\_\_\_ the Church***

The mission of Jesus—to inaugurate the Kingdom of God—calls humans to respond. Those who repent and believe are brought into a new \_\_\_\_\_.

"The presence of the Kingdom meant the fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic hope promised to Israel; but when the nation as a whole rejected the offer, those who accepted it were constituted the new people of God, the children of the Kingdom, the true Israel, the incipient church."<sup>5</sup>

In the parable of the \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 13:47-50), the Kingdom catches in its movement not only good fish but also bad. The good and bad fish will be sorted out after the net is drawn to shore.

This is what is happening with God's Kingdom right now. The fellowship that the Kingdom creates presently includes those who will be proven not to be true children of the Kingdom. Practically speaking, there are some who find their way into the spiritual people of the church who join for less than Kingdom reasons.

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<sup>5</sup> Ladd, 111.





## **What are some illegitimate reasons people join the church?**

Entrance into the Kingdom necessarily means active \_\_\_\_\_ in the church. However, entrance into the church is not synonymous with entrance into the Kingdom. Just because a person is a church member does not mean that he is a member of God's Kingdom.

## ***The Church \_\_\_\_\_ to the Kingdom***

The church proclaims to the world—both Jews and Gentiles—God's redeeming acts in Christ—both past and future.

## **What are God's redeeming acts in Christ *in the past* that we should proclaim to the world?**

### ***In the future?***

We see the proclamation of God's Kingdom by Jesus' disciples in Luke 10.

*"And whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"*

Luke 10:8-9

When Jesus sent out seventy missionaries to proclaim the Kingdom of God, it may be viewed against the backdrop of Genesis 10, in which seventy nations of the world were identified. The sending out of the seventy was an implicit claim that the Kingdom was not only for Israel, but for \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_.

The proclamation of the Kingdom of God is also evidenced in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the apostles in the Book of Acts. The last two verses in Acts describes Paul's work this way:

*And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, unhindered.*

Acts 28:30-31

Not only is God's Kingdom proclaimed through preaching, but also through the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the church. If Jesus' disciples have received the benefits of God's rule, and those benefits anticipate even greater ones in God's Kingdom in the future, then one of

the main tasks of the church is “to display in this present evil age the life and fellowship of the \_\_\_\_\_.”

Two examples of how the church can display the perfect life of the future age are by embodying \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus spoke extensively about forgiveness, going so far as to say that those with unforgiving hearts would be excluded from receiving God’s forgiveness, which is a benefit of those living in the age to come. Likewise, humility is not a characteristic belonging to this world, but to the world to come. When unbelievers see the church acting in a way that is unnatural for this world, it is a witness to the reality of God’s Kingdom.

### ***The Church Is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Kingdom***

The \_\_\_\_\_ of God’s Kingdom were performed not only through Jesus, but also His disciples. As they preached the Kingdom, they also healed the sick and cast out demons (Matthew 10:8; Luke 10:17). The same power of the Spirit that worked through Jesus worked through them.

One of the characteristics of the Spirit’s work through them is that they never performed miracles in a competitive or \_\_\_\_\_ spirit. For example, when the seventy reported back to Jesus, they gave their report with humility and devotion, as those who are simply instruments of God.

*Now the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”*  
Luke 10:17

Jesus said that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against His church (Matthew 16:18). This has often been understood as the church on the \_\_\_\_\_, invading and conquering the city of Hades, whose gates have closed behind all of the dead. According to this interpretation, Hades will no longer be able to hold its victims, but instead the church will be able to rescue people and bring them into the sphere of eternal life. While this interpretation may be accurate, there is another that should be given consideration.

The verb “prevail” seems to indicate that Hades—the realm of death—is the \_\_\_\_\_, attacking the church. If this is the case, then the interpretation would be that when the church—still on the offensive—fulfills its mission in bringing the salvation of the Kingdom

of God to people, the gates of death will be unable to prevail in its effort to swallow them up. Death attacks all people, but is powerless against Jesus' assembly. The power of the Kingdom of God, working through the church, has overcome the power of death in the lives of those who receive the Kingdom.

***The Church Is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Kingdom***

In the same passage where the church is described as overcoming the gates of Hades, the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Kingdom are given to the church.

*"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."*  
Matthew 16:19

The idiom of binding and loosing often referred in that day to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ certain actions. This has led some theologians to the interpretation that Jesus gave Peter the authority to set aside Jewish ritual practices in order to maintain fellowship with Gentile believers (cf. Acts 15). However, there is another interpretation that is closer to the passage's true meaning.

In Jesus' ministry, He condemned the scribes and Pharisees for taking away from people the key to \_\_\_\_\_ about entering the Kingdom of God:

*"Woe to you, scholars of the Law! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."*  
Luke 11:52

The key to knowledge is not simply intellectual perception, but rather a spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ based on God's revelation of Himself. The authority entrusted to Peter (Matthew 16:18) was based on God's revelation: *"Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 16:17). Peter verbally shared this spiritual possession with the other disciples in his statement where he revealed the true identity of Jesus: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16).

This understanding tells us that the keys of the Kingdom are “the spiritual insight which will enable Peter to lead others in through the door of revelation through which he has passed Himself.”<sup>6</sup>

The authority to bind and loose involves the \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ of people from the Kingdom of God. “Christ will build his *ekklesia* upon Peter and upon those who share the divine revelation of Jesus’ messiahship. To them also is committed by virtue of this same revelation the means of permitting people to enter the realm of the blessings of the Kingdom or of excluding them from such participation (cf. Acts 10).”<sup>7</sup>

The disciples’ had already experienced the authority to bind and loose in this manner when they proclaimed the Kingdom of God to the cities of Israel (cf. Matthew 10). God’s peace rested upon those who received their message, but God’s judgment would come upon those who rejected it.

God’s church is the instrument of the Kingdom in effecting the forgiveness of sins. It is the custodian of the Kingdom. Our ministry has the result of opening the door of the Kingdom to people or of shutting it to those who reject the gospel.

“The final destiny of individuals will be determined by the way they react to these representatives of Jesus. To \_\_\_\_\_ them is to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord who sent them.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> R. Newton Flew, *Jesus and His Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1943), 95.

<sup>7</sup> Ladd, 116.

<sup>8</sup> Ladd, 117.

## Part 2 - The Church in John's Gospel

The word "church" does not appear in the Gospel of John. There is no account in John's writing where Jesus says to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). However, the Gospel of John repeatedly depicts Jesus as looking forward to the formation of a new people of God who are His \_\_\_\_\_.

### A New \_\_\_\_\_ of the People of God

#### *The terminology used in John's Gospel*

In each of the four times John uses the term \_\_\_\_\_, he means that they are considered the people of God:

- John the Baptist says that he baptized people so that Jesus might be \_\_\_\_\_ to Israel (John 1:31).
- Nathanael calls Jesus the \_\_\_\_\_ of Israel (John 1:49).
- Nicodemus was the \_\_\_\_\_ of Israel (John 3:10).
- When Jesus enters \_\_\_\_\_, He is hailed by the people as the King of Israel (John 12:13).

On the other hand, in the telling of Jesus' life, John needs to find a way to distinguish between those who are a part of the people of Israel who might believe in Jesus and those who stubbornly refuse to repent and believe in Him. The term that John often uses to indicate those in Israel who have rejected their Messiah is "the \_\_\_\_\_."

*Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."* John 6:41

*As a result of this Pilate kept seeking to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself to be a king opposes Caesar."* John 19:12

Unfortunately, some people throughout history have pointed to this use of the term "the Jews" as an excuse to be prejudiced or discriminate against people of Jewish ancestry. The

apostle John would never have approved of such a perversion of his writings. It would do us well to remember that:

- Most of the people in John's Gospel who *did* follow Jesus were Jews.
- The word "\_\_\_\_\_" which is a Jewish concept, occurs almost as frequently in John's Gospel (61 times) as it does in Matthew's Gospel (68 times).
- The good news of the gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, *to the Jew* \_\_\_\_\_ and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).
- "There is no \_\_\_\_\_ with God" (Romans 2:11), and "if you show \_\_\_\_\_, you are committing sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:9).

### ***The Emphasis of John's Gospel Regarding God's People***

When speaking of the idea of this new fellowship of God's people, the emphasis of John's Gospel is on their \_\_\_\_\_.

In \_\_\_\_\_, Jesus describes God's people in terms of being a flock with a shepherd. The following highlights of this passage are instructive to our self-understanding as the people of God:

- The Shepherd of the flock is none other than the \_\_\_\_\_ Himself. We find this idea throughout the Old Testament (Ps. 23:1; 28:9; 77:20; 78:52; 80:1; 94:7; 100:3; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 23:1; Ezek. 34:11).
- Jesus Himself is, at the same time, both the \_\_\_\_\_ (John 10:7) and the \_\_\_\_\_ Shepherd (John 10:14).
- If someone climbs into the sheepfold by some other way than the door, that person is a "\_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_" (John 10:1).
- Question: If the flock of John 10 is the people of God, and if Jesus is the only way to become part of God's flock, then who specifically, in the immediate context of that day, was Jesus referring to as thieves and robbers?

Answer: The thieves and robbers of that day were the religious leaders who claimed to have the authority to make individuals become part of the people of God \_\_\_\_\_ from Christ.

***Who are some people or groups today who claim that we can become God's people or that we can know God apart from Jesus Christ?***

### ***The Scope of God's People***

The people of God—born out of believing Israel—would soon be made up of both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

*"And I have other sheep, which are not from this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd."* John 10:16

If the current flock is believing Israel, and other "other sheep, which are not from this fold" are Gentiles who are brought into the flock, the result is that both believing Jews and believing Gentiles are \_\_\_\_\_ flock.

Why is there unity between Jews and Gentiles in God's flock? Because the flock has one \_\_\_\_\_.

We find the theme of Gentiles being included as disciples of Jesus in \_\_\_\_\_. After Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly, there were some Greeks who approached Philip with a request:

*These then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."* John 12:21

Jesus replied by saying that the Son of Man must be glorified, followed by this statement:

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."* John 12:24-26



Why did Jesus answer the request of the Greeks to see Him with a statement about His upcoming crucifixion and the cost of discipleship? Because “the only Jesus who can be the object of Gentile devotion is the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ one.”<sup>9</sup>

However, the spiritual leaders of that day did not, as a whole, believe in Jesus. By rejecting Jesus, they rejected their part in the new fellowship of God’s people. “Jesus now has no further place in \_\_\_\_\_, which has rejected for itself its place in the purpose of God.”<sup>10</sup>

Jesus also speaks of this new fellowship of God’s people in His discourse of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ (John 15:1-6).

The Old Testament speaks of Israel as the vineyard of Yahweh (Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1-2; 19:10-15; Ps. 80:9-16). But now that Israel as a whole has become \_\_\_\_\_, Jesus is the new and true vine. The true vine and the branches which exist in union with Him constitute the new people of God. The branches of the vine have their true existence only as they \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ.

The fruit of the vine and branches is \_\_\_\_\_, which is the supreme evidence of the Christian life according to John.

\_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ in John’s Gospel

### ***Theological Background to Interpretations***

The Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church call baptism and the Lord’s Supper “\_\_\_\_\_.”<sup>11</sup> These churches teach that by doing these actions, a person may receive a measure of God’s grace. In other words, they say that the righteousness of Christ has accumulated an infinite amount of grace, and in order to get some of that grace applied to you, these are the actions that you must do.

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<sup>9</sup> Ladd, 318.

<sup>10</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: an introduction with commentary and notes on the Greek text*. (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1955), 50.

<sup>11</sup> Both the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church recognize seven sacraments, which are, generally speaking: baptism, confirmation, the Lord’s Supper (Eucharist), confession, matrimony, holy orders (the priesthood), and anointing the sick (unction or sometimes “last rites”).



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***What does God's Word say about receiving His grace? How is this different than a sacramental view of grace?***

The Protestant movement—such as the Lutheran, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches—began as a protest against many of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Some of the terminology used by the Roman Catholic Church carried over into the new movements. As a result, many Protestant churches call baptism and the Lord's Supper "sacraments," although they might attach a different meaning to the word.

However, Baptists and some other evangelical theologians often refer to baptism and the Lord's Supper as "\_\_\_\_\_." This term implies that these are mandates given to the church by Jesus Christ to continually practice.<sup>12</sup> What distinguishes baptism and the Lord's Supper from other commands is that they both represent or picture the \_\_\_\_\_ Christ has given us.

The theological background of a student of Scripture often affects his \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible. Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic scholars, as well as many Protestant theologians, are often inclined to interpret the Gospel of John in a sacramental way. They take references to water, blood, and bread in John's Gospel as indications of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

For example, they often teach that baptism is referred to in the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1ff), in the washing of the eyes of the man born blind (John 9:7), in Jesus' washing the disciples' feet (John 13:1ff), and in the blood and water that flowed from

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<sup>12</sup> Scott Aniol ("Biblical Ordinances and Visible Signs: How Baptists Weakened Biblical Authority by Limiting Ordinances to Two," *Gloria Deo Journal of Theology* Vol. 1 (2022): 39-60, <https://g3min.org/library-resources/gloria-deo-journal-of-theology-1>) argues that Baptists have historically and properly recognized six ordinances given by Christ to the church: baptism, the Lord's Supper, preaching, Scripture reading, prayer, and singing. Because baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances that display God's grace/the saving truth of the gospel, they were set apart by early Baptists as "sacraments" (although without the meaning of dispensing grace). Today, however, in order to avoid confusion, he suggests that baptism and the Lord's Supper be called "visible signs."

Jesus' side (John 19:34). But this type of interpretation stretches Scripture beyond what it plainly says in order to confirm a church's or theologian's preexisting belief.

The two stories in John's Gospel that require a deeper study to see if they refer to baptism and the Lord's Supper are found in Jesus' statements about being born "of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5) and eating Jesus' flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:54).

***Born of Water and the \_\_\_\_\_ (John 3:5)***

*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* John 3:5

One interpretation of this statement goes along this line: that by telling Nicodemus that he needed to be "born of water," Jesus was commanding him to receive the baptism of repentance practiced by John the Baptist, at which time the Spirit of God would regenerate Nicodemus. According to this interpretation, "water and the Spirit" would be a rough parallel to the idea of "repentance and faith." Jesus would be telling the proud religious leaders to humble themselves and repent, if indeed they wanted to be born from above. After all, later in this same chapter of John's Gospel Jesus and the disciples baptized people in an apparent continuation of John the Baptist's ministry of preparing people for the inauguration of the Kingdom of God.

With this interpretation as a possibility, it is easy to see how the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church developed a doctrine whereby Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus about the necessity of receiving *Christian* baptism in order to receive God's grace.

However, another interpretation of John 3:5 is more likely. In this statement by Jesus, "water" and "Spirit" are linked with a single preposition: the word "of." The verse reads "*of water and the Spirit*," not "*of water and of the Spirit*." If there were two separate prepositions, water and Spirit might be contrasted with one another, whereby there might be two separate and unlinked births that a person must experience. But since there is only one preposition for both concepts, there is one \_\_\_\_\_—"of water and the Spirit"—that enables a person to receive life from above.

Additionally, Jesus told Nicodemus that everything He was speaking of, including the water, belongs to the “\_\_\_\_\_ things” (John 3:12). This means that being “born of water” cannot be a reference to the water of baptism, which is a earthly experience and action.

There are those who might claim, “Perhaps the water of baptism is the *place* where the Spirit of God comes upon a person.” But Jesus indicates just the opposite—that the Spirit cannot be pinned down to a precise \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_:

*“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”* John 3:8

It is worth noting that John uses water as a symbol of how the Spirit of God gives \_\_\_\_\_.

*“But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst—ever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”* John 4:14

*“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”* John 7:38

Ladd concludes:

In the Old Testament water is a symbol of God’s activity in quickening people to life (Isa. 55:1–3; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Zech. 14:8; Ezek. 47:9) and is often linked with the eschatological re-creation and renewal to be effected by the gift of the Spirit (Isa. 32:15–17; 44:3–5; Ezek. 36:25–27; 39:29; Joel 2:28). The reference to water, then, far from being a literal reference to the sacrament of baptism, is a symbol of the spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ effected by the Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

***Eating His \_\_\_\_\_ and Drinking His \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:54)***

*“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”* John 6:54

The majority of scholars today believe this is a reference to the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. If this is the case, it is easy to conclude that only those who participate in partaking of the Lord’s Supper are saved. From there it is a short leap to believing that partaking of the Lord’s Supper is a means of dispensing grace.

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<sup>13</sup> Ladd, 321.

However, Jesus clearly was not speaking of a literal eating and drinking, but to consuming Him \_\_\_\_\_.

In this same context, Jesus called Himself “the \_\_\_\_\_ of life” (John 6:48). He spoke of Himself coming down from heaven (John 6:41), and how His coming parallels the fathers who ate manna in the wilderness, which also came from heaven (John 6:31, 49). The difference between us consuming Him and Israel’s fathers consuming manna is that the fathers thereafter died, but whoever consumes Him will never die (John 6:58). Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus must be understood as a \_\_\_\_\_ way of describing what we must do with the bread that has come down from heaven.

Ladd writes:

We conclude that John is not a sacramentalist, not only because of his silence about baptism and the Eucharist but also because of his correction of literalistic sacramentalism and because of his emphasis that the sacramental elements are essentially symbols. By his insistence on focusing attention on the life-giving activity of the Spirit, he is seeking to counter magical-sacramental views that were exerting a \_\_\_\_\_ influence on many Christians.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ladd, 321.

## Part 3 - The Early Church

### \_\_\_\_\_ : The Beginning of the Church

Because the disciples of Jesus saw themselves as the true Israel, they continued to worship as Jews in the temple and in synagogues. The only thing that distinguished them from others in Israel was their \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus. And their fellowship within Israel was open for others to join.

After Jesus had risen from the grave, the \_\_\_\_\_ disciples waited on God for instruction. Jesus appeared to them occasionally and instructed them in His central message from the very outset of His ministry: the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

*to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over forty days and speaking about the things concerning the kingdom of God.*

Acts 1:3

On the day of Pentecost,<sup>15</sup> the \_\_\_\_\_ visited the disciples, and His coming was accompanied by visible and audible manifestations, confirming that “the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4) had been fulfilled.

In the Old Testament, both Joel 2:28-32 and Ezekiel 36:22ff. foretold of events that would occur in the last days:

- God would pour out His Spirit not only upon select kings, priests, and prophets, but also upon \_\_\_\_\_ His people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ would be revived.
- Israel would be \_\_\_\_\_ and gathered into God’s Kingdom.
- God would \_\_\_\_\_ people from their sins.
- God would give people a new \_\_\_\_\_ by placing His Spirit within them.

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<sup>15</sup> “Leviticus 23:15–21 instructs the Israelites to hold an annual one-day harvest festival seven weeks, or 50 days, after Passover (see also Exod 34:22). This festival included extensive sacrifice (Lev 23:15–21; Deut 16:9–10; 2 Chr 8:13). At Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks, Israelite farmers would start their journeys toward Jerusalem to present their firstfruit offerings” (“Pentecost,” *Factbook: Logos Bible Software*).

The same Holy Spirit that Jesus received at His \_\_\_\_\_ (cf. Luke 3:21-22) was received by the disciples at Pentecost. Jesus announced His ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth by claiming: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me” (Luke 4:18). Jesus did His miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 12:18). John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would be the One who would baptize us with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8).

When Peter proclaimed that Joel’s prophecy had been fulfilled that day, he was speaking to people who did not personally experience the fulfillment. The nation of Israel as a whole missed the fulfillment of the prophecy, but it was instead fulfilled only to those people who \_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus is the Messiah.

Peter clarified Joel’s prophecy to the Jewish crowd by substituting the word “afterwards” (Joel 2:28) with “in the last days” (Acts 2:17). The term “\_\_\_\_\_” was an expression that indicated the Kingdom of God—the era of the Messiah—was present. Only in the last days will:

- God \_\_\_\_\_ all of the earth (Isa. 2:2).
- The nations \_\_\_\_\_ the God of Israel (Isa. 2:3).
- \_\_\_\_\_ prevail among all people (Isa. 2:4).
- Israel be saved under the rule of \_\_\_\_\_ their king (Hos. 3:5).

By using the term “the last days” in reference to the outpouring of God’s Spirit that the crowds have witnessed, Peter is making a bold declaration: the last days are no longer future. The last days have \_\_\_\_\_. The era of the Messiah has come. The salvation of the end of time is available today.

Peter maintains a separation between “the last days” and “\_\_\_\_\_,” which remains a future event at the end of the age. Nevertheless, God has taken the salvation that belongs to the end of time and advanced it into history now.

### ***The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit***

The baptism of the Spirit occurred on the Day of Pentecost. But what does it mean to be baptized with the Spirit? Is the baptism of the Spirit the same as being \_\_\_\_\_ with

the Spirit? Is Spirit-baptism something that happens repeatedly in the life of a Christian? What is the connection between being saved and being baptized with the Spirit?

The meaning of the baptism of the Spirit can be discovered by studying how the term is used in the New Testament. Some preliminary facts:

- The 120 disciples were both baptized *and* filled with the Spirit at \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 1:5; 2:2).
- The baptism with the Spirit is only said to occur \_\_\_\_\_ to believers, whereas the \_\_\_\_\_ with the Spirit recurred frequently in Acts (2:4; 4:8; 9:17; 13:9).
- The baptism of the Spirit that occurred with the 120 disciples at Pentecost is \_\_\_\_\_ to anyone would would repent and be baptized in water (Acts 2:38).
- After Pentecost, the baptism of the Spirit is mentioned in Acts only in reference to \_\_\_\_\_ of people who receive Christ:
  - a. People-group #1: The \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 8). Philip took the gospel to the Samaritans, who had a mixed Jewish-Gentile ethnicity and a history of strife with Israel. When they believed, they were baptized in water "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 8:12, 16). They received the Spirit later, when the apostles \_\_\_\_\_ arrived from Jerusalem and laid their hands on them (Acts 8:17).
  - b. People-group #2: The \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 10). Again, there seems to be some significance to the presence of Peter when the Spirit is first given to the Gentiles. The apostle Peter took the gospel to Cornelius, who, along with his household, was the first Gentile to receive Christ. The gift of the Spirit, which was given to him even as Peter was preaching (Acts 10:44f.), is identified as the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 11:16). This tells us that the baptism of the Spirit is the same as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit.
  - c. People-group #3: \_\_\_\_\_ disciples (Acts 19). The apostle Paul found a small group of disciples in Ephesus who had never heard of the gift of the Spirit (Acts 19:2). They had limited information about Jesus, having heard of John the Baptist's testimony of Jesus being the Messiah. They obediently obeyed John's message by being baptized unto repentance in anticipation of the coming Kingdom of God. Yet they had not heard of Jesus' death and resurrection, nor had they heard of the coming of the Holy Spirit,

which was a sign that God's Kingdom had come. When "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:6) into water, Paul laid his hands on them, and they too were baptized with the Spirit, speaking with tongues and prophesying.<sup>16</sup>

### **How should we understand the baptism of the Spirit? And how does it affect us?**

The baptism of the Spirit was not just a one-time experience limited to the 120 believers in the temple on the day of Pentecost. The baptism is promised to all who repent and believe in Christ (Acts 2:38). But each of the three post-Pentecost accounts of the baptism of the Spirit are unique in some way. What are the reasons for the differences? And which one of the three post-Pentecost accounts should be considered normative for us today:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 8), \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 10), or John the Baptist's \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 19)?

The experience of John the Baptist's disciples was obviously a unique and unrepeatable one, for there are no more living eyewitnesses of John the Baptist who might not have heard about Jesus' death and resurrection. Therefore, the Acts 19 account should not be considered normative for how all believers at all times are baptized with the Spirit.

If Acts 8 (Samaritans) is the normative pattern, then a strong case can be made that the baptism of the Spirit is a \_\_\_\_\_ experience after a person receives Christ.<sup>17</sup> However, there are a number of reason to consider the Samaritans' experience in Acts 8 an \_\_\_\_\_ and not normative for all believers at all times:

1. Both Paul (Acts 9:18) and Cornelius (Acts 10:44) received the Spirit of God at the time they \_\_\_\_\_, not at a time subsequent to their belief.
2. The disciples of John in Ephesus (Acts 19:6) received the Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ when they were baptized in the name of Jesus after learning about Jesus' death and resurrection and the gift of the Spirit.
3. However, when the Samaritans believed, this was the first time that \_\_\_\_\_ were saved. There are two related reasons why the Spirit of God did not come upon

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<sup>16</sup> For further study of the issue of speaking in tongues, see Malcolm Yarnell's article "Speaking of 'Tongues,' What Does the Bible Teach?" downloadable at <https://silo.tips/download/speaking-of-tongues-what-does-the-bible-teach-dr-malcolm-b-yarnell-iii>

<sup>17</sup> This is the typical interpretation of Pentecostals and charismatics.



the Samaritans immediately, but only after Peter and John arrived and laid their hands on the Samaritans:

- a. The baptism of the Spirit was delayed for the benefit of the \_\_\_\_\_ believers. Due to the dislike between Jews and Samaritans at that time (cf. John 4:9), God knew that the Samaritans needed special evidence to assure them that they were now fully included into the Kingdom of God. What better evidence than the leaders of the Jerusalem church giving witness to their salvation?
- b. The baptism of the Spirit was delayed for the benefit of the \_\_\_\_\_ church in Jerusalem. What better evidence could Jewish believers receive that the Kingdom of God included people who were not Jews than to hear the eyewitness testimony of their most trusted leaders—Peter and John?

We can conclude that the experience of Cornelius in Acts 10 is the normal way that believers at all times are baptized with the Spirit. The baptism/gift of the Spirit occurs not at a subsequent time after salvation, but at the \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation. This conclusion is supported also by the only statement in the New Testament that helps explain the significance of the baptism of the Spirit:

*For also by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.* 1 Corinthians 12:13

Ben Witherington comments, “The past tense shows that he is referring to what happens once to an individual, and ‘\_\_\_\_\_’ shows that it has happened to every Christian.”<sup>18</sup> If the baptism of the Spirit was a subsequent experience to salvation, Paul would have used the word “many” instead of “all,” especially since the church to which he was writing had a significant number of disobedient believers who were not living spiritual lives.

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<sup>18</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 258.

Given the information presented to us in the New Testament, we can formulate a definition of the baptism of the Spirit: **“The baptism of the Spirit is the act of the Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ together into a spiritual unity people of diverse racial extractions and diverse social backgrounds so that they form the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ—the *ekklēsia*.”**<sup>19</sup>

We should also understand that the baptism of the Spirit is not the same as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit, although sometimes the filling of the Spirit occurs at the baptism of the Spirit.

- The baptism of the Spirit is a once-and-for-all event that occurs when a person believes in Christ. It is \_\_\_\_\_ to be a believer in Christ and *not* be in the *ekklēsia* that the Spirit has formed, since all believers are baptized with all other believers into the body of Christ.
- The filling of the Spirit is an experience that can be \_\_\_\_\_. It is connected to Christian \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 4:8; 13:9) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Eph. 5:18ff.).

*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*  
Ephesians 5:18-21

Additionally, we are \_\_\_\_\_ to be filled with the Spirit, but there is no such command to be baptized with the Spirit since our spiritual baptism occurs at the moment of saving faith in Christ. If the baptism of the Spirit was an experience subsequent to salvation, we would expect such a command to appear somewhere in the New Testament.

## The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Early Church

The gift of the Spirit to the believers at Pentecost did not cause believers to \_\_\_\_\_ from their Jewish faith. Instead, they formed a new \_\_\_\_\_<sup>20</sup> which recognized Jesus

<sup>19</sup> Ladd, 384.

<sup>20</sup> The word “synagogue” is from the Greek, meaning “house of assembly.” Synagogues are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but were likely a development that occurred during the Babylonian captivity as a way to assist Jews who sought to be faithful to the Torah. Most often, buildings were built or homes were refurbished to facilitate the activities of the synagogues: reading of the Torah, reading of the prophets, instruction, sermons, and (possibly) communal prayer (see Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*. 2nd ed. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005, 145-169). Synagogues could be formed in any community, including Jerusalem.

as the Messiah. “They continued the Jewish worship of God in the temple (Acts 2:46); and doubtless ‘the prayers’ included the regularly stated Jewish prayers.”<sup>21</sup>

There were, however, some new Christian distinctives to the early church that were not found in other forms of Judaism:

- The \_\_\_\_\_ teaching (sometimes referred to by its word in Greek: *didachē*<sup>22</sup>). This was the core of that which later took form in the New Testament.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ proclaimed by the earliest Christians (sometimes referred to by its word in Greek *kerygma*<sup>23</sup>).
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus, both in the temple and in \_\_\_\_\_<sup>24</sup> (Acts 2:46; 5:42).
- \_\_\_\_\_ together (Acts 2:46).<sup>25</sup>

John the Baptist had baptized people who were repenting as they anticipated the coming of the Kingdom of God (Luke 3:2-18). During Jesus’ earthly ministry, His disciples continued John’s practice of baptizing people for the same purpose (John 3:22; 4:1-2).

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<sup>21</sup> Ladd, 386.

<sup>22</sup> The *didachē* describes instructions needed for Christian growth and maturity. This teaching would soon expand and be written down in what we call the New Testament.

<sup>23</sup> The *kerygma* is the basic evangelistic message proclaimed by the earliest Christians, which consisted of these elements: (1) a proclamation of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus; (2) an evaluation of Him as both Lord and Messiah/Christ, and (3) a call to repent and receive the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>24</sup> “Private homes provided the meeting places for the distinctive Christian acts of worship. At Pentecost a large number of Jews embraced the Christian faith (Acts 2:41; see also 4:4; 5:14), and there is no evidence that so large a group could assemble in a single place. The pattern is rather that of many smaller ‘house-churches’—separate congregations, analogous to Jewish synagogues. This is also the pattern of the Pauline churches, for we frequently read of the church in somebody’s house (See Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phlm. 2. See also Floyd V. Filson in ‘The Significance of the Early House Churches,’ *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58 (1939), 105–12.) We do not know how large the upper room was where the 120 gathered before Pentecost (Acts 1:13), and although it is clear that the church had a central meeting place (Acts 12:12), it is difficult to imagine a place large enough to contain the entire body of believers” (Ladd, 386).

<sup>25</sup> Acts 2:46 says that they were “breaking bread” and “taking their meals together,” which suggest a twofold meal: an “agape” feast (i.e., a common fellowship meal) that included the partaking of the Lord’s Supper (see also 1 Cor. 11:20, 34). Having meals together was a significant part of Jesus’ ministry (Matt. 9:10-11; 11:19; Luke 15:1-2; Acts 1:4), and the early church continued this practice.



Later, after Jesus was resurrected and ascended to heaven as Lord, baptism became the outward \_\_\_\_\_ of admission to the fellowship of believers in Christ, as believers were specifically baptized “in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38).

There was no significant interval of \_\_\_\_\_ that elapsed between \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ and being baptized. That water baptism occurred immediately upon belief in Christ is evident from the baptisms of Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41); the Samaritans (Acts 8:12); the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-37); Saul (Acts 9:18), Cornelius (Acts 10:47-48); Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33), Crispus (Acts 18:8), and John the Baptist’s disciples (Acts 19:5).

### **What are the implications of the immediacy of baptism in the New Testament?**

- 1. Do you believe that baptism should only occur at a gathering of the local church? Why or why not? What are the implications of your view?**
- 2. Do you believe that baptism should be withheld until a person is living up to the moral standards of a local church? Why or why not? What are the implications of your view?**
- 3. If baptism is the outward sign of admission to the fellowship of believers in Christ, do you believe that baptism is the automatic admission to the fellowship of a local church? Or is it a prerequisite to local church membership, and that local church membership begins later? What are the implications of your view?**

The mode of baptism, which derives its name from the Greek word meaning “to dip or immerse,” was always by \_\_\_\_\_.

*And after being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water....* Matthew 3:16

*And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized.* John 3:23

*...they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.* Acts 8:38

The earliest evidence of any other mode considered to be the equivalent of baptism occurred in AD \_\_\_\_\_, when a man named Novatian, who lay in illness and was unable to

get out of bed, wanted to be baptized. A local bishop permitted him to have water poured over his body in place of baptism.<sup>26</sup> However, neither affusion nor sprinkling were practiced as baptisms in the New Testament, as neither mode \_\_\_\_\_ to our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.

## Christian \_\_\_\_\_

The earliest Christians valued being together because they understood that they were bound to \_\_\_\_\_. Their fellowship was a foretaste of the fellowship reserved for God's people in the Kingdom of the last days. In other words, when we gather together, it should spiritually resemble how it will be in the resurrection.

On the issue of Christians claiming that being active in a church is unnecessary, Ladd writes that, to the early church, "It was inconceivable that a believer should be such in \_\_\_\_\_. To be a believer meant to share with other believers the life of the coming age, to be a believer in fellowship, to be in the *ekklēsia*."<sup>27</sup>

In the early church, the primary way that the fellowship of believers was distinct was through the sharing of \_\_\_\_\_. There were apparently many poor people, especially widows, who needed physical and financial support. The church willingly shared their possessions because they had a sense of sharing the \_\_\_\_\_ of the age of the Messiah.

*And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one was saying that any of his possessions was his own, but, for them, everything was common.*

Acts 4:32

While many believers sold their land and property for this cause, it was a \_\_\_\_\_ matter. In Acts 5, Peter reminded Ananias that he was under no obligation to sell his property, and even after it was sold, he was under no obligation to donate the proceeds. Ananias' sin was one of \_\_\_\_\_: he claimed to give everything when, in fact, he deliberately and consciously kept back a part of the proceeds.

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<sup>26</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, VI, xliii. 14, 17).

<sup>27</sup> Ladd, 388.

## The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Assembly

The early church's leadership evolved relatively quickly as the church grew and expanded beyond Jerusalem and eventually into Gentile communities. Initially, the Jerusalem church's leaders were the twelve \_\_\_\_\_, among whom three—Peter, James, and John—became prominent leaders.<sup>28</sup>

Within two years,<sup>29</sup> a problem arose within the church: Greek-speaking Jews who had returned to live in Jerusalem from the Diaspora<sup>30</sup> began to complain because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1). This oversight opened up the apostles—who had been directly superintending this ministry—to accusations of \_\_\_\_\_. To address this, they summoned the congregation together and instructed them to choose from among themselves:

*"seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this need. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word."*

Acts 6:3-4

The ministry begun that day later became more formally recognized as the office of \_\_\_\_\_, which is a ministry of service to God's people.

Approximately twelve years later, we read that the church in Jerusalem had a \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ as leaders (Acts 11:30). The formation of a group of elders to lead the early church is not explicitly described in the Book of Acts. It is nevertheless obvious how and why the office of elder came to exist:

Both Jewish communities and synagogues were ruled by a group of elders;<sup>31</sup> and since the primitive church externally was little different from a Jewish synagogue; we may assume that when the apostles began to engage in preaching outside of Jerusalem, elders were chosen to take their place and to rule over the Jerusalem

<sup>28</sup> Note that in Acts 1:13, Peter, James, and John are listed first among the apostles.

<sup>29</sup> See Harold Hoehner's *Chronology of the Apostolic Age* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1965).

<sup>30</sup> The Diaspora was the dispersion of Jews which began in the Assyrian (c. 721 B.C.) and Babylonian (c. 597 B.C.) deportations. Over the centuries, Jews continue to disperse (or be dispersed) throughout the Greek and Roman empires. Many of them continued, however, to try to remain connected to their roots by paying Temple taxes and keeping their faith. They often built synagogues in their new cities, which typically became the first place where followers of Jesus would engage in Christian preaching.

<sup>31</sup> E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890), Vol. 2: 200-209.

church. If so, we must think of a college of elders, not of a single elder over each congregation. At the time of the Jerusalem council, the elders shared with the apostles the role of leadership (15:2, 22; 16:4). When Paul established churches in Asia, he appointed elders in the churches he had founded (14:23).<sup>32</sup>

Elders and deacons are \_\_\_\_\_ the same office. Biblically speaking, deacons are not elders, nor do they rule over the elders. Deacons and elders each serve a very different role in the church, as we will later see in our study of Paul.

The interchangeability of the terms “elder,” “pastor,” and “overseer”<sup>33</sup> in Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-2 shows us that these three terms are different ways of referring to the \_\_\_\_\_ office.

It should be noted that the apostles gave the \_\_\_\_\_ the decision of appointing the Seven (Acts 6:2). Also, at the Jerusalem Council, after the apostles and elders “*came together to look into this matter*,” the whole church affirmed (Acts 15:22) the decision of the apostles and elders (Acts 15:23).

Regarding the apostles, Ladd writes:

The apostles were a circle of men raised up by God to provide the \_\_\_\_\_ for the church (Eph. 2:20; see also Rev. 21:14) and to be the vehicles of the divine \_\_\_\_\_ (Eph. 3:5) of the meaning of the person and redemptive work of Christ. Therefore they spoke with an authority that derived from God himself, with which no modern leaders in the church can speak. The apostles were custodians of the teaching of the early church (Acts 2:42), and the New Testament writings may be understood as the end product of the apostolic witness to the meaning of the redemptive event in Christ. Once the church was successfully founded, and the apostolic word of interpretation of the meaning of Christ deposited in written form, no further need existed for the continuation of the apostolic office.<sup>34</sup>

Regarding prophets, Ladd writes:

Coupled with apostles were prophets (Eph. 2:20; 3:5), who were men endowed by the Holy Spirit sometimes to prophesy \_\_\_\_\_ events (Acts 11:28; 21:10) but

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<sup>32</sup> Ladd, 389.

<sup>33</sup> The KJV translates the Greek word *episkopos* as “bishop,” which implies oversight. There is no difference between an elder, pastor, or overseer/bishop. The development of bishops that ruled over other clergy in a geographic area was a development in history that first occurred in the 2nd century AD and became standardized in the 4th century AD. The biblical role of the office has no such geographic or ecclesiological hierarchy.

<sup>34</sup> Ladd, 390.

more often to speak words of \_\_\_\_\_ for the edification of the church (1 Cor. 14:6, 29–30). The gifts of both apostleship and prophecy were given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 14:4, 28; Eph. 4:11), and were not offices to which people could be elected by the church. The authority of both was spiritual and not appointive or official or legal. The apostles exercised an authority in ruling the churches that apparently was not exercised by the prophets. The authority of the latter was largely in the area of teaching.<sup>35</sup>

In the Book of Acts, Luke uses the word *ekklēsia* in the following ways:

- It can refer to \_\_\_\_\_ congregations (Acts 11:26; 13:1; 14:23), which apparently met in single \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 8:3).
- The plural designates \_\_\_\_\_ the churches (Acts 15:41; 16:5).
- The singular is sometimes used to designate all the believers in a given \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 5:11; 8:1).
- The singular is also used to designate the church \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 9:31).
- The term “the church \_\_\_\_\_” (Acts 20:28) is the only time the term appears with an attribute, and it refers to the Ephesian church as a representative of the total church.

Ladd concludes:

These uses of *ekklēsia* suggest that the church is not merely the total number of all local churches or the totality of all believers; rather, the local congregation \_\_\_\_\_ in local expression. The church in Ephesus is the church of God, not merely a part of the church of God. This is a reflection of the fact that all churches felt they belonged to one another because they jointly belonged to Christ. There could be but one church; and this one church of God expressed itself locally in the fellowship of believers.<sup>36</sup>

## The Church and \_\_\_\_\_

The Book of Acts describes how a small \_\_\_\_\_ fellowship became a large, multi-city group of fellowships that were characteristically \_\_\_\_\_ in nature.

The initial signs of a break of God’s fellowship from Judaism occurred with the martyrdom of \_\_\_\_\_ in Acts 7. He was one of the Seven chosen to serve Greek-speaking Jewish

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<sup>35</sup> Ladd, 390.

<sup>36</sup> Ladd, 391.



widows, and given that his name (as well as the names of the others within the Seven) is of Greek origin, it is likely that he himself may have been raised outside of the Jewish homeland. He was accused of speaking against the temple and the Law of Moses (Acts 6:13). This accusation arose because he likely said that Jews who became Christians no longer needed to observe temple worship or keep the Old Testament Law. In his defense, Stephen did not claim that he was misunderstood. Instead, his sermon consisted of God's dealings with Israel outside of the \_\_\_\_\_ and without a \_\_\_\_\_. He concluded his sermon by saying that God is not limited to the temple (Acts 7:47), and that the Jews cannot be assured of having the correct religion simply because they possessed the temple (Acts 7:51-53). Stephen was likely the first person to proclaim that temple worship and observance of the Law were no longer \_\_\_\_\_ for Jewish Christians.

The break between the Christian faith and Judaism took another step when \_\_\_\_\_, in response to God giving him the vision of the sheet descended from heaven (Acts 10:9-16), defended his \_\_\_\_\_ fellowship with Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 11:2ff).

The break intensified even further after the first missionary journey of \_\_\_\_\_, when he established churches in the Gentile world that were completely free from Jewish observances. When Jewish believers from Jerusalem traveled to Antioch—the new center of the Gentile Christian movement—to insist that all people must embrace the Law of Moses to be saved, the issue was eventually settled by holding a council in Jerusalem (Acts 15). The conservatives, who insisted on the saving efficacy of the Law, were led by converts from the Pharisees (Acts 15:5). The apostle Paul represented the radical liberals, who believed that the Law was not binding on Gentile Christians. The Jerusalem church elder \_\_\_\_\_ cited both Peter's experience and the prophecy of Amos 9:11-12 as evidence that Gentiles could come to saving faith \_\_\_\_\_ the Law. They were asked, however, in the interests of love for their Jewish brothers, to abstain from practices that Jews found particularly offensive:

- Eating food that had an association with \_\_\_\_\_
- Eating meat of strangled animals from which the \_\_\_\_\_ had not been properly drained
- Mixing blood with their \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Only five miles from Antioch was the town of Daphne, which contained a temple dedicated to Apollo and Diana where prostitution was practiced as an element of religious worship. Gentile

The final breach between the Christian faith and Judaism is found in Acts 16-28, in which the church became a completely separate entity from the \_\_\_\_\_. Everywhere Paul took the gospel, he first preached in Jewish synagogues. At almost every location, he was opposed by Jewish leaders and the majority of the synagogue, and yet he found a warm reception from Gentiles who worshiped there. After three missionary journeys, in which Paul not only found favor from Gentile worshipers, but also protection by Gentile rulers, Paul paid a final visit to Jerusalem (to which Luke devotes over five chapters in Acts).

Ladd summarizes the importance of Paul's visit to Jerusalem in the Book of Acts:

No new churches were established, no theological or ecclesiastical problems solved. No positive gains come from this visit. The purpose in this long recital is to illustrate in detail how Judaism \_\_\_\_\_ the gospel. On Paul's three missions in Asia and Europe, the Jews had rejected his message but the Gentiles had received it. This experience in local cities is now repeated in Paul's experience in the capital cities of Judaism and of the Gentile world. Jerusalem would have killed Paul had not the representatives of Rome protected him. Both the populace at large and the Sanhedrin in particular rejected Paul and his message. The Holy City and official Jewry had no room for the Christian faith. The Jews thus \_\_\_\_\_ themselves as the true people of God.

This Jewish rejection is both confirmed and contrasted by Paul's reception in Rome. He first called together the Jewish leaders and presented the claims of the Kingdom of God, only to be rejected. Then he turned to the Gentiles; and Acts closes with the sober announcement of God's judgment on Israel and the assertion: "Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the \_\_\_\_\_, and that they will hear it" (28:28). Thus the church, which began as a Jewish sect in Jerusalem, became a Gentile fellowship in Rome, completely freed from Jewish associations.<sup>38</sup>

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converts coming from a sexually immoral background like this needed to receive a special emphasis on God-centered morality.

<sup>38</sup> Ladd, 393. Ladd recognizes that although this disqualification of Israel is settled, there remains in God's purpose and plan a future "regrafting" of Israel into His people once again.



## Part 4 - Paul and the Church

### Paul on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Church

The church initially had no discernable structure, other than being led by the \_\_\_\_\_. Paul claimed to be an apostle himself, as he encountered Christ on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9). The authority of the apostles was spiritual, not legal, in nature, due to the fact that God designed the church to engage in the spiritual sphere. For example, the \_\_\_\_\_ that Paul declared against false teachers was a spiritual judgment that occurred in the spiritual realm.

*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to the gospel we have proclaimed to you, let him be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is proclaiming to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be accursed!*  
Galatians 1:8-9

Should \_\_\_\_\_ be the basis of unity in the church? No. Ladd writes:

...the idea that the unity of the church found expression in some kind of external organization or ecclesiastical structure finds no support in the New Testament. Furthermore, the idea of denominations would be abhorrent to Paul. The nearest thing to denominations was the sects in Corinth that Paul heartily condemned (1 Cor. 1:12ff.).<sup>39</sup>

***What is your opinion of denominations? Do you agree with this assessment of Paul's thought? Why or why not?***

### \_\_\_\_\_: ***Leaders of the Church***

It quickly became apparent to the apostles that other leaders were necessary to help the church as it grew and expanded into other communities. Within two years of Pentecost, the ministry of the Jerusalem church necessitated that a group of **table-servers** be set apart by the congregation (cf. Acts 6). Within \_\_\_\_\_ years of Pentecost, as the ministry of the

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<sup>39</sup> Ladd, 577.

apostles expanded into other geographical areas and as the Jerusalem church continued to grow, **elders**<sup>40</sup> were set apart to teach and lead the church (cf. Acts 11:30).

The early church not only called these church leaders “elders,” but also “\_\_\_\_\_”<sup>41</sup> and “\_\_\_\_\_”<sup>42</sup> as can be clearly seen by the interchangeability of the terms in two separate passages:

*Now from Miletus he [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called to him the **elders** of the church....  
“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*  
Acts 20:17, 28

*Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** the flock of God among you, **overseeing** not under compulsion, but willingly, according to God; and not for dishonest gain, but with eagerness.*  
1 Peter 5:1-2

### **FAQ on Church Elders**

Can any man serve as a church elder? No. A man who desires to be an elder must be called by God to the task and must meet the biblical qualifications of an elder.

What are the biblical qualifications of elders? In both 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, the apostle Paul lists virtually identical qualifications, each starting with the overarching qualification that an elder must be \_\_\_\_\_.

Are there any skills required of all elders? Only one: \_\_\_\_\_.

*An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**...*  
1 Timothy 3:2

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<sup>40</sup> The idea of a church having leaders called “elders” is a concept borrowed from the Old Testament, where Jewish communities had a group of elders as city leaders.

<sup>41</sup> The term “overseers” emphasizes the ruling aspect of this group of church leaders. The KJV translates this as “bishops,” which some denominations use as those individuals who rule over multiple congregations. The idea of bishops being understood in this way is unbiblical.

<sup>42</sup> The term “pastors” emphasizes the shepherding ministry of this same group of church leaders. The church is God’s flock, and elders/overseers/pastors are undershepherds who serve under the Great Shepherd.

*For the overseer must be beyond reproach as God's steward...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be **able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to reprove those who contradict.*** Titus 1:7, 9

Do all elders have to be skilled preachers? Not necessarily. Every elder must, if called upon, be able to instruct the entire congregation in God's Word. Faithfulness in biblical instruction, not dynamic speaking ability, is required. Some elders will naturally be more skilled at other aspects of pastoral ministry.

Are elders the same as deacons? No. Although many of the biblical qualifications for deacons are similar to that of elders, there is no requirement in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 for deacons to be able to teach God's Word. Deacons are servants who minister to the needs of the congregation, especially orphans, widows, and others in need of compassionate care. Elders, however, are those who humbly \_\_\_\_\_ the church under the rule of Christ, which is a task that necessarily requires teaching.

Who selects a church's elders? Unlike deacons, who are selected by the congregation (cf. Acts 6:3-5), the \_\_\_\_\_ makes a man an elder (Acts 20:28). It is the congregation's responsibility to \_\_\_\_\_ the will of the Lord in the calling of God's men to serve the church. The congregation should study Scripture, pray, and test the qualifications of the men under consideration.

The congregation should believe that a pastor is \_\_\_\_\_ by God—not *hired* by the congregation—to his position.<sup>43</sup> A man who is not called but only hired is not a true pastor, but only a \_\_\_\_\_, who may tend to place his own needs above that of the congregation and often fails to obey the will of the Great Shepherd for that congregation.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Historically, Baptists have always understood this, as is evidenced by the oft-used language when a pastor is presented to a congregation: the pastor is coming "in view of a call." Unfortunately, in practice, many churches tend to treat the pastor as nothing more than an employee.

<sup>44</sup> A person who always attempts to do the will of his constituents is nothing more than a politician, but true undershepherds must always obey the Great Shepherd, who knows what His flock needs more than the flock does. An obedient flock will desire to follow the biblical leadership of the true undershepherds the Great Shepherd has provided. Failure to do so is a failure to follow the Lordship of Christ (cf. Heb. 13:17; Rev. 2:5).

Likewise, if and only if necessary, a congregation should remove an undershepherd upon the grounds that he is \_\_\_\_\_ to serve in that role.<sup>45</sup> If, on the other hand, a congregation believes that a pastor may be fired due to its own preferences or the prideful attitude of certain church members, it runs the danger of rejecting an undershepherd that the Great Shepherd appointed for its benefit.

How many elders should each church have? Each church should have a \_\_\_\_\_ of elders, as indicated by Luke's description of how Paul and Barnabas provided church leaders for the churches they started:

*And when they had appointed **elders** for them in **every church**, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.* Acts 14:23

What benefits are there to having a plurality of elders? There are numerous practical benefits enjoyed by a church with a council of elders:

- \_\_\_\_\_ is multiplied. All people, including church elders, have limited wisdom and blind spots. A plurality of elders minimizes these weaknesses.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of ministry are shared. Every true church elder bears the burdens of the members of the flock of God. When a church member loses a loved one, has a troubled marriage, or suffers serious health issues, it affects the pastors. A plurality of elders keeps these burdens from being placed solely upon one man.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of the elders is complemented. Where one elder may not be gifted or skilled in a certain way, other elders may be. Some elders may be better theologians, while others may be better counselors, administrators, or evangelists.
- \_\_\_\_\_ become secondary. When one man is in charge of a church, people tend to look only to him for help and inspiration. His personality may begin to dominate, and in some unhealthy situations, a cult of personality may emerge. A

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<sup>45</sup> Disqualification from being a church elder may include moral failures of such a nature that trust has been irrevocably destroyed. It may also include permanent incapacitation due to health issues. However, in both instances, the congregation should act with grace and mercy toward the pastor and his family. It should also be noted that not all moral failings are disqualifying, nor are all incapacitations. Regarding the moral failures of an elder, Paul wrote to his representative Timothy: "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, reprove in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful" (1 Tim. 5:19-20). In this instruction, the elder is given an opportunity to repent, and restoration to his ministry might remain a possibility.

plurality of elders can help prevent this from happening, and many different people may be able to be served more effectively.

- Biblical \_\_\_\_\_ is increased. Every church elder is a sinner and must guard his life. When a church has a sole pastor leading it, that man has no fellow contemporaries within the congregation who understand his challenges. Spiritual isolation can lead to many problems. A plurality of elders enables the men serving in that role to maintain accountability with one another.

Biblical faithfulness through a plurality of elders is increased in the church a second way: the simple fact that the church is being faithful to the clear example of Scripture invites the blessings of God. When the gospel was taken to Berea, the people there set a great example for all those who wish to obey God:

*Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*

Acts 17:11

Should all elders be paid? Not necessarily. A small or medium-sized church may not have the means to pay a full-time salary with benefits to all of the pastors the Great Shepherd provides it, but that should not prevent it from having a plurality of qualified elders. The apostle Paul himself served at times as a tent-maker (cf. Acts 18:3) so as to “*cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ*” (1 Cor. 9:12). At the same time, the church should be guided by Paul’s instruction:

*The elders who lead well are to be considered worthy of **double honor**, especially those who labor at preaching the word and teaching.*

1 Timothy 5:17

Should a church have female elders? No. Paul explicitly refutes this idea in his first letter to Timothy, who served as his representative equipping the pastors in Ephesus.

<sup>2:9</sup> Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, with modesty and self-restraint, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly clothing, <sup>10</sup> but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women professing godliness. <sup>11</sup> A woman must learn in quietness, in all submission. <sup>12</sup> But **I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man**, but to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup> For it was Adam who was first formed, and then Eve. <sup>14</sup> And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into trespass. <sup>15</sup> But she will be saved through the bearing of children, if they

*continue in faith and love and sanctification with self-restraint.<sup>46</sup> <sup>3:1</sup> It is a trustworthy saying: if any **man** aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a good work. <sup>2</sup> An overseer, then, must be above reproach, **the husband of one wife** (lit. “one-woman man”)....*

1 Timothy 2:9-3:2a

B.H. Carroll, the first president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote in his exposition of this passage:

The custom in some congregations of having a woman as pastor is in flat contradiction to this apostolic teaching and is open rebellion against Christ our king, and high treason against his sovereignty, and against nature as well as grace. It unsexes both the woman who usurps this authority and the men who submit to it. Under no circumstances conceivable is it justifiable.

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### **: *Servants of the Church***

Within two years of Pentecost, a group of table-servers were needed to ensure Greek-speaking widows were receiving their daily distribution of food (cf. Acts 6). This ministry became one that expanded in scope and in usage in nearly all churches.

The ministry of deacon not only allowed the apostles (and soon thereafter the elders) to focus on the ministry that Christ gave them—“*we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word*” (Acts 6:4)—but it also met the immediate and sometimes life-saving needs of the congregation.

Throughout church history, deacons were known for their ministry to the poor, to widows, to orphans, and to the sick. Deacons who served God’s people well were greatly loved and appreciated for their work.

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<sup>46</sup> Re: 1 Tim. 2:15, which is a very difficult verse to interpret: “Paul teaches here that although a woman precipitated the Fall and women bear that responsibility, yet they may be preserved from that stigma through childbearing. The rescue, the delivery, the freeing of women from the stigma of having led the race into sin happens when they bring up a righteous seed.... Paul’s point is that while a woman may have led the race into sin, women have the privilege of leading the race out of sin to godliness. That does not mean that God wants all women to bear children; some He doesn’t even want married (1 Cor. 7:25–40). Paul speaks in general terms.... For women to reverse the blight that has befallen them in the Fall and fulfill their calling they need to raise a godly seed. To do that, they must continue in faith and love, where their salvation really rests. And they must continue in sanctity (holiness) with self-restraint (the same word [used] in verse 9). It is the very appearance, demeanor, and behavior demanded of believing women in the church that becomes their deliverance from any inferior status, as they live godly and raise godly children” (MacArthur, John F., Jr. *1 Timothy* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1995], 89–90.)



## Paul on \_\_\_\_\_

A thorough study of Paul's teaching about spiritual gifts (Gr. *charismata*, which means "\_\_\_\_\_") establishes some clear implications that should shape our understanding:<sup>47</sup>

- Spiritual gifts should not be understood as *abilities* that are to be used in ministry. Instead, spiritual gifts are the \_\_\_\_\_ themselves (some of which also happen to be abilities).
- Spiritual giftedness includes a mix of \_\_\_\_\_ endowments and \_\_\_\_\_ talents, as indicated in Paul's different lists of gifts.<sup>48</sup>
- The lists of spiritual gifts in Paul's letters are \_\_\_\_\_ of the ministries the Spirit of God may direct us to do. They are not a \_\_\_\_\_ group of all possible Spirit-given abilities.
- Every believer has at least \_\_\_\_\_ gift/ministry (cf. 1 Pet. 4:10), but some believers will have more.
- There are no \_\_\_\_\_ for not serving in a ministry, since "*to each one of us grace was given*" (Eph. 4:7; also 1 Cor. 12:7, 13).
- \_\_\_\_\_ member of the Body of Christ is to do the work of the ministry, not just pastors and those in leadership positions. Nobody alone can or should try to do everything. Paul's use of the word "differing" in Rom. 12:6-8, as well as the rhetorical questions at the end of 1 Corinthians 12 (e.g., "Are all apostles?"), help us understand the scope of the Spirit's giftedness.
- Spiritual gifts are not necessarily permanent or long-term. Some ministry assignments are \_\_\_\_\_ or even spontaneous.
- Some spiritual ministry assignments are to positions of \_\_\_\_\_.
- The recipients of the Spirit's gifts include both the individual Christian and the \_\_\_\_\_ itself. In Ephesians 4:11-12, the "*apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors-teachers*" are themselves Christ's gift to the church.

<sup>47</sup> An excellent resource for a biblical study of spiritual gifts is the book *What are Spiritual Gifts? Rethinking the Conventional View* by Kenneth Berding.

<sup>48</sup> Paul's lists of spiritual gifts can be found in four sets of verses: Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10; 1 Cor. 12:28-30, and Eph. 4:11-12. Some gifts are mentioned in multiple lists, and the lists do not always list the gifts in the same order. The gifts listed in Ephesians are actually people that Christ has given to the church, indicating that a person's giftedness and role in ministry are inseparably linked.

- Instead of spiritual gifts being supernatural endowments that must be “discovered” by means of spiritual gifts inventories, if we understand that spiritual gifts are ministries, we would be encouraged to seek out what God wants us to \_\_\_\_\_ in ministry. The lack of any such “spiritual gift inventory” in Scripture, as well as the lack of a command to discover one’s spiritual gift, is significant.
- Understanding spiritual gifts to be ministries helps keep us \_\_\_\_\_ on God instead of ourselves.
- Spiritual giftedness should result in an attitude of \_\_\_\_\_, not pride in having a certain ability. Our attitude should be reflected in this: *“We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done”* (Luke 17:10).
- If we misunderstand spiritual gifts to only be spiritual empowerments, then the ministries that result are always done by serving out of one’s strengths. However, understanding gifts as ministries allows the possibility of God glorifying Himself by showing His strength in our \_\_\_\_\_.
- Spiritual gifts are to be used not for one’s own benefit, but to \_\_\_\_\_ the body of Christ.<sup>49</sup> “[Paul] conceives of every Christian as an active member of the body of Christ,”<sup>50</sup> exercising his or her own giftedness for the benefit of other believers.
- Because spiritual gifts are ministries, they can \_\_\_\_\_ as a believer grows in his faith or is faced with new ministry opportunities.<sup>51</sup>

## Paul on the *Ekklēsia*

For Paul, the term *ekklēsia* (“assembly”) is used in the same way other writers use the term:

- A \_\_\_\_\_ of Christians for worship (1 Cor. 11:18; 14:19, 28, 35). Often, it referring to the believers who gathered in a particular home as a house-church (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 2).

<sup>49</sup> To understand 1 Cor. 14:3a—*“One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself”*—as if Paul is *encouraging* speaking in an ecstatic prayer language so that a Christian can edify himself completely misses: (1) the immediate context of Paul’s effort to diminish glossolalia; (2) the larger context of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12-14; and (3) indeed the entire context of his first letter to the Corinthian church, in which he is rebuking them for their selfishness and divisiveness.

<sup>50</sup> Ladd, 580.

<sup>51</sup> If spiritual gifts were once-for-all-time, unchangeable (even by God) supernatural endowments given at the time of a person’s salvation, Paul’s instruction to “earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:1) would make no sense.

- The \_\_\_\_\_ of believers living in one place—in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1), Laodicea (Col. 4:16), or the cities of Judea (Gal. 1:22) and Galatia (Gal. 1:2).
- Most significantly, it is used of the \_\_\_\_\_ church (Col. 1:18, 24; Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32). “This usage probably appears also in 1 Corinthians 12:28; 15:9; Galatians 1:13; and Philippians 3:6, but this is contested.”<sup>52</sup>

Like Luke’s use of the word, Paul’s use of *ekklēsia* tells us how he conceived of the church. Each local congregation of true believers in Christ *is* the church, as is the totality of all believers. We should not think of the church numerically, as if the Church is the sum total of however many churches there are. Instead we should conceive of the church \_\_\_\_\_. “Each community [of faith], however small, represents the total community, the Church.”<sup>53</sup> Ladd writes:

The correct rendering of such verses as 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 2 Corinthians 1:1 is not “the Corinthian congregation standing side by side with other congregations,” but “the congregation, church, assembly, as it is in Corinth.” The local church is not part of the church but is the church in its local expression. This means that the whole power of Christ is available to every local congregation, that each congregation functions in its community as the universal church functions in the world as a whole, and that the local congregation is no isolated group but stands in a state of solidarity with the church as a whole.<sup>54</sup>

## Paul on the People of God

In Scripture, the term “\_\_\_\_\_” often refers to those who have a special relationship to God. The prophet Hosea was instructed to name one of his sons “*Not My people*” because apostate Israel was no longer God’s people, and He was no longer Israel’s God (Hos. 1:9). However, when the day of God’s salvation arrived, they would once again be called “sons of the living God” (Hos. 1:10). This idea is repeated in the next chapter:

“And I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they will say, ‘You are my God!’”Hosea 2:23

Ladd writes, “In Hosea these prophecies clearly refer to Israel, but Paul applies them to the church, which consists of both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 9:24).... Another people is brought

<sup>52</sup> Ladd, 581.

<sup>53</sup> K.L. Schmidt, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 3:506.

<sup>54</sup> Ladd, 582.

into being along with Israel on a different basis. That Israel in some real sense remains the people of God is seen in Paul's affirmation that the Jewish people are still a 'holy' people (Rom. 11:16)."<sup>55</sup>

## **Paul on the Church and \_\_\_\_\_**

Paul makes a clear distinction between ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28f; 9:6; 11:5). Gentiles have been added—"grafted in" (Rom. 11:17)—to the believing remnant of Israel.

Although God still has plans for empirical Israel (cf. Rom 11:25-32), Paul teaches that believing Jews and Gentiles have become the \_\_\_\_\_ of the olive tree. Believers in Christ—and *only* believers in Christ—are the true Israel.

## **Paul and the \_\_\_\_\_ of God**

Paul uses the metaphor of the temple to show that it is the church that is the true Israel. The prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures anticipated the creation of a new temple when God's Kingdom comes (cf. Ezek. 37, 40, Hag. 2:9). Jesus Himself spoke of creating a new temple, albeit one "*not made with hands*" (Mark 14:58).

It was Stephen the martyr who apparently became the first to realize that worshiping in the physical temple in Jerusalem was irrelevant for Christians. Luke records:

And they put forward false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases speaking words against this holy place and the Law." Acts 6:13

Stephen said in his reply, "The Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands." Acts 7:48

Ladd writes, "Paul sees the Christian community taking the place of the temple as the eschatological temple of God, as the place where God dwells and is worshiped."<sup>56</sup> There are three ways in which the church is the temple of God:

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<sup>55</sup> Ladd, 583.

<sup>56</sup> Ladd, 585.

1. Each individual believer has become a temple of God because the Spirit of God \_\_\_\_\_ him or her (1 Cor. 6:19). Every believer in Christ is holy—set apart. We each belong to God. This means that we are not our own, and we cannot do what we want to do with our lives. Sexual immorality is not to be practiced by believers because each of our bodies is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
2. Each local congregation is the temple of God because the Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ our fellowship. Because we collectively as a local church are the dwelling place of God, there exists no room for divisions or schisms. Paul issues a stark warning to anyone who might tear down the fellowship of God's dwelling place (the local church):

If any man destroys the sanctuary of God, God will destroy him, for the sanctuary of God is holy, and that is what you are. 1 Corinthians 3:17

3. The church \_\_\_\_\_ is also the temple of God (cf. Eph. 2:19-22). The dwelling place of God is not found in Judaism, but in the church. Gentiles are no longer excluded from God's people, but are, along with believing Jews, a temple built upon the foundation of Christ, the apostles, and the prophets.

## A People of the \_\_\_\_\_

Since the coming of the Kingdom of God is an eschatological reality, and since the new temple of God prophesied about in the Old Testament has become the church, then the church itself is a people of the end times. The church is destined to inherit the Kingdom of God in its \_\_\_\_\_ (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:18; 1 Thess. 2:12) because the church has already \_\_\_\_\_ the Kingdom (Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13).

"The life and fellowship of Christians in history is to be a \_\_\_\_\_ of life in the Kingdom of God and is to reflect in the world something of what the eschatological reality will be."<sup>57</sup>

## Paul on the \_\_\_\_\_ in the Church

The church is \_\_\_\_\_ by the Holy Spirit, who has acted in the Age to Come to create it.

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<sup>57</sup> Ladd, 586.

For also by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13

Ladd writes about the work of the Spirit in the church:

In New Testament thought there can be no such thing as an isolated believer—a Christian who stands remote from other Christians. When we believe in Christ, we are made members of Christ's body; we are joined to Christ himself and therefore to all others who in union with Christ constitute his body. In the biblical sense of the word, it is true that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ("outside the church there is no salvation").

The eschatological character of this new people carries with it the fact that it cuts across our normal human sociological structures. Race does not matter; social status does not matter; by Spirit baptism all kinds of people are equally members of the body of Christ because we have all experienced the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

## Paul on \_\_\_\_\_

Fellowship (Gr. *koinōnia*) was one of the earliest distinctives of the church. Fellowship is not just people having some things in common, even religious things. Fellowship is a \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit that occurs in the Age to Come. When Paul speaks of the "*fellowship of the Spirit*" (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1), he likely means "the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit." The common bond that Christians share is a common relationship to Christ through the Holy Spirit.

## Paul on the \_\_\_\_\_

"The church is a fellowship of the elect (Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:4), regardless of social status, education, wealth, or race (1 Cor. 1:27). The church can be designated simply as the elect of God (Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Tit. 1:1)."<sup>59</sup>

Election in Scripture does not primarily refer to an individual coming to salvation, but it has more to do with the "\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_" of God choosing a people for His own.

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<sup>58</sup> Ladd, 588.

<sup>59</sup> Ladd, 589.

“The background of the term is Israel as the elect people of God, and it designates the church as the successors of Israel. It is primarily a corporate concept.”<sup>60</sup>

## Paul on the \_\_\_\_\_

One of Paul’s most common terms for Christians is “saints,” which has a root idea of \_\_\_\_\_. The word is almost always in the plural form, which refers to the church collectively, as opposed to individually.

Perhaps surprisingly, the word “saints” (and the related word “sanctified”) is used in the context of salvation history rather than having an ethical connotation. The church at Corinth, despite the presence of false teachers, divisions, and immorality, was referred to as *“those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints”* (1 Cor. 1:2). Their sanctification was not due to their righteous behavior, but due to Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11). Paul encouraged the Corinthians and other churches to live holy lives \_\_\_\_\_ they were saints.

## Paul on \_\_\_\_\_

The term “believers” has a connotation of the \_\_\_\_\_ side of our relationship with God, as a believer is one who has responded to the gospel by trusting in Christ and confessing Him as Lord (cf. Rom. 10:9). In Romans 4, Paul argues that the salvation that Christ has procured for humanity is effective only to those who believe as Abraham did. Abraham’s circumcision was not the cause of his acceptance by God, but rather the sign of the righteousness that he had by faith.

## Paul on the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ

The idea of the church as the “Body of Christ” is something that is almost unique to Paul. He never speaks of the church as solely “a body,” but it is always a body \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ—*“one body in Christ”* (Rom. 12:5) or *“Christ’s body”* (1 Cor. 12:27). “The church is not a body or society of believers but the body of Christ.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ladd, 589.

<sup>61</sup> Ladd, 590. When Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:12—*“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body”*—the expectation is

“This close relationship falls short of being one of complete identity.... It is too much to say that Paul thought of the church as an extension of the incarnation—that just as God was incarnate in Christ, Christ is incarnate in the church. Paul preserves a clear distinction between Christ and his church.”<sup>62</sup>

When we understand that we are the Body of Christ, it establishes a foundation for us to have a proper \_\_\_\_\_ with one another. Just as a human body has great variety among its members, and yet each has a specific function and works in perfect harmony with the other members, so too should all the members of the Body of Christ.

Not only is the church called the Body of Christ, but Paul builds upon this concept when he speaks of Christ as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Body, which emphasizes the distinction between Christ and His church. The word “head” has the primary meaning of \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Paul on the \_\_\_\_\_**

Paul uses the symbolism of a loaf of bread broken in pieces and distributed to the church to illustrate the \_\_\_\_\_ individual members have:

“Since there is one bread [or loaf], we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread [or ‘same loaf’].”  
1 Corinthians 10:17

Regarding whether the meaning of the Lord’s Supper is more than merely a symbol, Ladd writes:

The cup and the bread are indeed a memorial of the death of Christ, and are used in memory of Jesus’ death (1 Cor. 11:25). But eating and drinking involve more than a memory of a past event; they also represent participation in the body and blood of Christ, and therefore participation in his body.... The Eucharist \_\_\_\_\_ fellowship with Christ in the same sense that the altar in the Old Testament economy mediated fellowship with God, and sacrifices to idols mediated fellowship with demons (1 Cor. 10:18–21).<sup>63</sup>

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that he would conclude the thought by saying, “So it is with the church.” But instead, Paul concludes the verse by saying, “*So also is Christ.*” The church is so unified with Christ that what can be said of it can be said of Him. Perhaps this impression was made on Paul when he first met Christ, who told him, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?... I am Jesus whom you are persecuting*” (Acts 9:4-5).

<sup>62</sup> Ladd, 591.

<sup>63</sup> Ladd, 593.





## Paul on \_\_\_\_\_

### ***The Meaning of Baptism***

Baptism symbolizes our \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ (cf. Rom. 6:1-4; Col. 2:12). Ladd writes:

Baptism is the rite of admission into the church, but it represents the \_\_\_\_\_ of the believer with Christ. People are baptized “into Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 6:3). Baptism “into Christ” means to put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).... It is not a repetition of the death and resurrection of Christ, nor does it symbolize his death and resurrection. It symbolizes the believer’s union with Christ in which one dies to his or her old life and is raised up to walk in newness of life. It is a symbol of spiritual death and resurrection. Paul does not speak of baptism as a cleansing, unless 1 Corinthians 6:11, Ephesians 5:26, and Titus 3:5 are oblique references to the baptismal waters.<sup>64</sup>

If baptism symbolizes our union with Christ, then the person who refuses to be baptized is saying, “I do not want to join my life to Christ,” and the church who minimizes the importance of baptism is saying, “Being in Christ is unimportant.”

### ***Baptism and Saving Faith***

The connection between saving faith and baptism has been the topic of much debate throughout Christian history. When the early church shared the gospel, baptism was often mentioned as part of the response of faith. It was not the water that saves, but the faith that saves caused the respondent to be baptized.

Notice how, when the gospel was preached to Paul by Ananias, part of the instruction he received was to \_\_\_\_\_ by being baptized.

Ananias to Saul: “*Rise up and **be baptized**, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.*” Acts 22:16

This followed the pattern of other gospel presentations by the early church to those who responded in faith:

Peter to the crowd on the day of Pentecost: “*Repent and **each of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” Acts 2:38

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<sup>64</sup> Ladd, 593.

Peter to Cornelius: *"Can anyone refuse water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" And **he ordered them to be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ.* Acts 10:47-48

On other occasions, where the gospel was presented, yet the specific words preached were not recorded in Acts, those who believed understood that baptism was part of their response to the gospel.<sup>65</sup> The only way the respondents could have understood the importance of baptism as a response of faith was if the person presenting the gospel immediately taught them.

Baptism was not separated from a person responding in faith to Jesus; rather, it \_\_\_\_\_ the response of faith. In other words, being baptized was how a person indicated their faith.

***Should we, like the early church, include the instruction to be baptized when a person responds in faith to the gospel? If so, how should we distinguish baptism as an action indicating faith from a false understanding of baptism as a means of earning salvation/God's favor?***

### ***The Baptism of Those Without Faith***

A person's baptism and faith are so connected that we can affirm that baptism \_\_\_\_\_ from faith is meaningless. Another person's faith cannot be effectively substituted for a person being baptized. Therefore, the baptism of infants and others who do not have an active faith in Christ is without merit.

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<sup>65</sup> This occurred with the Samaritans (Acts 8:12-13), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-38), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), Crispus (Acts 18:8), and John the Baptist's disciples (Acts 19:4-5).

## Part 5 - The Church in Hebrews

The Book of Hebrews does not speak as extensively about the church as Paul's letters or the works of other New Testament authors. Instead of focusing on the life within the Christian community, Hebrews has other themes, such as the access believers have to God through Christ. As Ladd writes, "This is one of the main themes of Hebrews: through Christ's atoning work alone may be found entrance into God's presence. If this is rejected, there remains no other way."<sup>66</sup>

### The High Priest and Worship

Hebrews speaks extensively about the implications of Jesus as our \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus is described as the heavenly priest who serves as the \_\_\_\_\_ between us and God.

*Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* Hebrews 7:25

*For Christ did not enter holy places made with hands, mere copies of the true ones, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.* Hebrews 9:24

Because Jesus is our High Priest, we are able to come into the very presence of God as individual believers and as the gathered church. Therefore, when we come together each Lord's day, we should understand that we, as the church, are entering into the presence of the God and Creator of all things to \_\_\_\_\_ Him.

### The New Covenant and the Church

Another theme in Hebrews is the better \_\_\_\_\_ that God has made.

*He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the trespasses that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.* Hebrews 9:15

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<sup>66</sup> Ladd, 623. Another distinguishing feature of Hebrews is its Christology (the study of Jesus Christ). From the very outset of the book, Christ is said to be pre-existent; the One through whom God created the world; the Sustainer of the universe; and the One who reflects God's glory and bears the image of His nature.



While the old covenant was ineffective in creating a people faithful to God, the new covenant puts God's laws into our \_\_\_\_\_ and writes them on our \_\_\_\_\_. The new covenant fulfills God's goal: *"I will be their God, and they shall be My people"* (Heb. 8:10).

The new people of God, consisting of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ, have an abiding, permanent knowledge of Him. While the old covenant constantly reminded the people of their \_\_\_\_\_ against God through its repeated sacrifices, the new covenant of Christ's blood means that God \_\_\_\_\_ the sins of His people (cf. Heb. 8:12) and \_\_\_\_\_ our conscience from sin.

*Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

Hebrews 10:22

## The Christian Life

In Hebrews, the Christian life is marked by one characteristic: \_\_\_\_\_.

Faith in Hebrews has a distinctly different emphasis from that in John and Paul. The latter conceive of faith as a personal trust and commitment to Jesus that brings union with Christ and therefore salvation. In Hebrews faith is the faculty to \_\_\_\_\_ the reality of the unseen world of God and to make it the primary object of one's life, in contrast to the transitory and often evil character of present human existence.<sup>67</sup>

Jesus Himself was able to see past the suffering of the cross to *"the joy set before Him"* (Heb. 12:2). Likewise, each of the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11 saw beyond their immediate situation to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God—even if they may not have fully understood them.<sup>68</sup>

The last chapter of Hebrews exhorts believers in relation with one another to:

1. Show \_\_\_\_\_ to traveling Christian brothers and sisters (cf. Heb. 13:2).
2. Remember those who are \_\_\_\_\_ for their faith (cf. Heb. 13:3).
3. Honor the \_\_\_\_\_ bed (cf. Heb. 13:4).
4. \_\_\_\_\_ the faith of church "leaders,"<sup>69</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ them and \_\_\_\_\_ to them (cf. Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).

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<sup>67</sup> Ladd, 630.

<sup>68</sup> The point of Hebrews 11 is not the mighty works of God, although some are highlighted. It is the faith of God's people, as some of the people named saw no deliverances but only sufferings (cf. Heb. 11:35, 39).

<sup>69</sup> An obvious reference to pastors/elders/overseers, given the roles ascribed to them.

## Part 6 - The Church in James

The Book of James is traditionally believed to be one of the earliest written books of the New Testament. It has a Jewish feel, and its author was likely the half-brother of Jesus, who was a prominent elder of the church at Jerusalem until his martyrdom around AD 62.<sup>70</sup>

The teaching of James on the church, albeit brief, gives us some important insights to how one of the \_\_\_\_\_ church leaders in Christian history viewed the people of God.

First, James uses the term Greek words *sunagōgē* and *ekklēsia* to refer to the \_\_\_\_\_ of believers.

*For if a man comes into your **assembly** (Gr. *sunagōgē*) with a gold ring and dressed in bright clothes....* James 2:2

*Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the **church** (Gr. *ekklēsia*) and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.* James 5:14

If the Book of James was written prior to AD 49,<sup>71</sup> then we have another example of how the earliest Christians considered themselves to be the believing remnant of true Israel.

Second, in James 5:14 the leaders of the church are called “\_\_\_\_\_.” Again, this is a concept found in the Old Testament and in Judaism, which would fit the life situation of the church in Jerusalem. The church’s elders have the responsibility of visiting and anointing with oil the sick who call upon them (cf. James 5:13ff.).<sup>72</sup>

James also warned his readers against seeking the (apparently) highly-coveted position of “\_\_\_\_\_,” which is a reference to the church’s elders:

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<sup>70</sup> The other “James” of note in the New Testament was the brother of John, who together Jesus gave the name “Sons of Thunder” (cf. Mark 3:17). We know that he was not the author of this letter since he was martyred around AD 44 (cf. Acts 12:2).

<sup>71</sup> The date of the Jerusalem Council. Despite its relevance to a major theme in the Book of James—namely, how a person is made right with God—the Jerusalem Council is not mentioned or even alluded to in the book.

<sup>72</sup> It should be noted that the context of the prayers of the elders for the sick also includes the confession of sins by the one who is ill (cf. James 5:15-20). James does not equate sickness with sin, but still instructs the elders to address the possibility that the two are connected.



*Do not, many of you, become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment.* James 3:1

Teaching is central to the role of the church's undershepherds, as they are the ones who \_\_\_\_\_ the church the Word of God and who \_\_\_\_\_ it against the dangerous and deadly influence of false teachers.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> These two connected responsibilities of elders—to feed and to guard—is the reason why Paul writes to his representative Timothy, *"I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man"* (1 Tim. 2:12a).

## Part 7 - The Church in First Peter

### The Nature of the Church

Although Peter does not use the word *ekklēsia*, he speaks often of the people of God. Peter regards the church as the true \_\_\_\_\_. The old Israel rejected God, which occurred under His providence.

*They stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this stumbling they were also appointed.* 1 Peter 2:8

Israel's place as the people of God has now been taken by the church, which is constituted both of believing Jews and believing Gentiles. This is indicated by Peter's application of multiple descriptions of Israel in the Old Testament to the church:

*But you are a chosen family,<sup>74</sup> a royal priesthood,<sup>75</sup> a holy nation,<sup>76</sup> a people for God's own possession,<sup>77</sup> so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people,<sup>78</sup> but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* 1 Peter 2:9-10

Peter says that the church constitutes the true \_\_\_\_\_ of God and are God's \_\_\_\_\_.

*You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* 1 Peter 2:5

### The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Church

Although Peter does not speak extensively about the inner workings of the church, his understanding of how the church should be organized is the same as the other authors of New Testament books: it is the \_\_\_\_\_ who are to oversee and lead the church. He gives them this simple, yet solemn instruction:

*Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the*

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<sup>74</sup> Isa. 43:20f; Deut. 10:15.

<sup>75</sup> Isa. 61:6; 66:21.

<sup>76</sup> Ex. 19:6; Deut. 7:6.

<sup>77</sup> Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:20; 14:2.

<sup>78</sup> Hos. 1:10; 2:23.

*flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion, but willingly, according to God; and not for dishonest gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

1 Peter 5:1-4



## Part 8 - The Church in 2 Peter, John's Epistles, and Jude

### Second Peter and Jude

Neither 2 Peter nor its similarly-themed Book of Jude speaks directly to issues distinctive to the church, with one exception: \_\_\_\_\_. Both books warn God's people of the devastating effects these wolves can have if left unchecked. False teachers are demonically empowered to try to scatter and destroy God's flock.

*For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

Jude 4

It is implied that the undershepherds are the ones who must diligently protect God's flock from false teachers.

### First, Second, and Third John

John's three epistles likewise do not speak directly to church-related issues, although the Book of 1 John speaks extensively about a characteristic necessary for harmony and Christian fellowship: \_\_\_\_\_. The Greek word *agapaō* occurs at least \_\_\_\_\_ times.

*In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

1 John 4:10-11

In 2 John, a warning is given "*to the elect lady and her children*" (v. 1)—which is a phrase indicating a particular local church—to refuse \_\_\_\_\_ toward an alleged itinerant Christian teacher who does not proclaim sound doctrine.

Third John was written to advise a man named Gaius about how to deal with Diotrephes, a man of self-importance who caused \_\_\_\_\_ in the church.

## Part 9 - The Church in the Apocalypse

"The book of Revelation purports to be a revelation of the events that will attend the end of the age and the establishing of the Kingdom of God. The primary theology of the book, therefore, is its eschatology."<sup>79</sup>

John received four \_\_\_\_\_, each one indicated by the phrase "in the Spirit" (Rev. 1:10; 4:1; 17:3; 21:10):

- The first vision (Rev. 1:9-3:22) focuses on Jesus Christ in His exaltation as He sends \_\_\_\_\_ to seven churches.
- The second vision (Rev. 4:1-16:21) is a heavenly description of the throne room with a seven-sealed \_\_\_\_\_ that rests in the hand of God, which can only be opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is the slain Lamb of God. The seven seals are broken, seven trumpets are blown, and seven bowls are emptied, each concurrent with something significant happening on earth. A major theme of this vision is the conflict between God and Satan.
- The third vision (Rev. 17:1-21:8) is of the great harlot, \_\_\_\_\_, which is the city that has dominion over the kings of the earth. Babylon is judged and destroyed, and God's victory over the powers of evil is celebrated.
- The final vision (Rev. 21:9-22:5) pictures the new \_\_\_\_\_, which is the Bride of the Lamb of God. The book closes with an epilogue (22:6-21) and an appeal for people to receive God's gift of life (22:17).

In the Apocalypse, the most relevant texts that impact ecclesiology (the study of the church) are those that are found in the first vision. Ladd comments:

Christ is seen standing in the midst of seven lampstands (1:12f.), symbolizing his superintendence of the life of his church on earth. The letters to the seven churches (chs. 2-3) are seven actual letters to seven churches in Asia Minor. The fact that other churches existed in Asia at this time suggests that seven of them are chosen to be representative of the entire church. Here in these letters is Christ's message to his church in all times.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ladd, 670.

<sup>80</sup> Ladd, 670.



Although John's first vision does not give us instructive details about the organization or distinctive features of churches in the first century, it does provide us with timeless exhortations that churches of any age should take to heart:

1. When a Church Leaves Its \_\_\_\_\_ Love - The Letter to the Church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7)
2. When a Church Endures \_\_\_\_\_ - The Letter to the Church at Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11)
3. When a Church Becomes \_\_\_\_\_ - The Letter to the Church at Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-17)
4. When a Church \_\_\_\_\_ Sin - The Letter to the Church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29)
5. When a Church Is \_\_\_\_\_ - The Letter to the Church at Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6)
6. When a Church Is \_\_\_\_\_ - The Letter to the Church at Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13)
7. When a Church Is \_\_\_\_\_ - The Letter to the Church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22)