

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER 7

Again we find ourselves confronted with a very important study of the Word of God, the Doctrine of the Church. Since there are many different teachings on the subject of the church, I am aware that some will not agree with what I write; some may angrily attack me for writing on this important doctrine. Because a subject is somewhat controversial does not mean we are to refuse to study it. The Bible holds the answers. It is our job to find them, believe them, then teach and preach them.

Let me begin by saying the majority of the times where the word church is mentioned in the Scriptures, it speaks of a local congregation at a specific geographical location. There are times in the Bible when the word church is used to speak of all born again believers, such as in I Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 5:25-27, and Colossians 1:18, only to mention a few. I prefer to use such terms as the Body of Christ or the family of God, when referring to all born again believers and use the term church only when speaking of a local congregation. Again, I admit though, there are a few times in the Scriptures when the term church is used when speaking of all saved people.

The reason for my preference as mentioned above is because there are so many today who have little or nothing to do with the local church and yet they claim to be saved. They say they are members of the invisible church, or the Lord's church. If you check their record, you will discover that most of them pay invisible tithes, they are invisible in their soulwinning, and they are invisible with their missionary support. The Apostle Paul set up visible, local churches. **IT IS MY FIRM CONVICTION THAT EVERY PERSON THAT IS A BORN-AGAIN CHILD OF GOD WHO IS PHYSICALLY ABLE SHOULD BE AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF A LOCAL CHURCH.**

The word church means "a called out assembly". The words called out literally mean when Christ saved us, He called us out from the world, and unto Himself to be His own peculiar people and gave us a job to do. The word "assembly" means gathering together. A good description of a Scriptural church is this. "A Church is a body of baptized believers who are bonded together by a common faith; uniting themselves together in the Spirit of Christ to carry on worship services that honor Christ. Their purpose and ministry is to carry out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus and to minister the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper which Christ gave to the Church." Any group of people that does not fulfill the above description is not Scripturally qualified to call themselves a church. In our study of the church we will look at several things which I trust the Lord will use to help us to be right in our thinking and relationship with Christ and His Church.

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH

In order to have a good understanding of anything we need to understand who started it, when it was started, and why it was started. The church had its origin in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ is the *Founder of the Church*, Matthew 16:18. It is rightfully called the New Testament Church. In one sense, Israel might be looked upon as a church since they were a called out assembly that God brought out of Egypt. However, they are not part of the New Testament Church, the body of Christ.

There is much discussion and disagreement as to where and when the church actually began. Some say the church began with John the Baptist, some say it began in Matthew 16:18, others say it began in the upper room in John 20:19-23, while yet others say it began at Pentecost. I do not feel that this should be a matter of strong contention, but I do offer the following thoughts for your studying.

We know that God purchased the church with the blood of His own son Jesus Christ; so the church therefore would have had to begin after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. A good type of this is found in the first Adam. God put Adam to sleep, took a rib out of his side, and with that rib formed him a bride. Likewise, God put the Lord Jesus to sleep on the cross, opened His side, took out the blood, and with that blood He is preparing a bride for Christ.

It could easily be said that there are two phases of the beginning of the Church. In the creation of Adam, God gathered together material from the dust of the ground and formed his body. Then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and Adam became a living soul. Likewise, while Christ was here in His earthly ministry He gathered together a group of men and formed an organization consisting of the twelve apostles, the seventy, and others whom He called His disciples. Some of these men were with Christ wherever He went, but there is not much said about them having any organized services other than going into the Jewish Temple on the Sabbath Day. Among those who believe that the church started after the resurrection of Christ there are two different arguments. Some believe the church started in the upper room in John 20:19-23, while others believe that the church started at Pentecost. To be honest, I can see both of these arguments so I am going to give them both and let you to pray, study, and come to your own conclusion.

Arguments for the church beginning in the upper room, John 20:19-23

After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus met with the disciples in the upper room (John 20:19-23). Here he breathed upon them and told them to receive the Holy Ghost. Here the organization becomes an organism. The resurrected Lord gave them the power to remit or retain sins just as he promised in Matthew 16:18-19.

A careful study of the Word of God will reveal that there are three times recorded in the Scripture where God breathed. The First one is found in Genesis 2:7 where the Bible says God *“breathed into his (Adam’s) nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”* So we see Adam was only a dead body from the ground until God breathed the breath of life into him. The breath of God immediately made Adam become a living soul.

Again in Ezekiel 37:1-10, we have the story of a “*valley which was full of dead bones.*” At the command of the Lord Ezekiel prophesied to them and the bones came together. Then the sinew and flesh came upon them and they were covered with skin. Yet they remained dead until God breathed breath into them. Immediately with the breath of God, they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Notice verse 10, “*So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and THEY LIVED, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.*”

In both of these occasions, a body was formed, but was lifeless until God breathed upon them. Could we then say that in the earthly ministry of Christ He formed a body of believers and then in the upper room He breathed the breath of life, the Holy Ghost, into this body of believers and the Church became a living soul?

You will also notice there is a difference in the verb tense of Matthew 16:18-19 where the Lord Jesus promises to build His church and the verb tense in John 20:23. Notice in Matthew 16:18-19. “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I WILL build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I WILL GIVE unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou SHALT BIND on earth SHALL BE BOUND in Heaven: and whatsoever thou SHALT LOOSE on earth SHALL BE LOOSED in Heaven.*” Notice all the verbs underlined are future tense, meaning the action was yet future when our Lord spoke them. Now notice in John 20:23. “*Whose soever sins ye REMIT, THEY ARE REMITTED unto them; and whose soever sins ye RETAIN, THEY ARE RETAINED.*” After the Lord Jesus breathed upon the disciples, these verbs are in the present tense. This means that the disciples could begin doing these works immediately.

Arguments for the church beginning at Pentecost, Acts 2

Passages of Scripture such as John 16:7 teach that the Holy Spirit could not come until Jesus went away. Notice, “*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*” After the Lord’s resurrection and just before His ascension, He said to these same disciples in Acts 1:8, “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*” With verses like this we can understand why many believe that the church started at Pentecost.

Leviticus chapter 23 is God’s prophetic calendar. These seven feasts set forth God’s plan from His death at the crucifixion of Christ to the millennial reign. In the third feast, which is the Feast of the First-fruits (a type of the resurrection) Vs 9-14, the Scriptures speaks of individual sheaves which were to be brought and waved before the Lord. In the fourth feast, Vs 15-22, (the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost) instead of bringing individual sheaves, they were to bring two loaves. A loaf is made up of many sheaves that are ground to the point that they lose their individuality and identity and then are bonded together; changed from many sheaves into one loaf. This is what happens in the church. The individual members lose their individual identity and become part of the body of Christ.

At Pentecost the church was baptized with the Holy Ghost as Jesus promised in Acts 1:5. Then we read in Acts 2:4, **“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”** Pentecost was on Sunday, the first day of the week, and from that time forward they began assembling on the first day of the week for their worship services and this practice still continues today. From that day forward the Church is recognized as a living organism who’s Head is in Heaven while its body is still here on the earth. *Our big concern should not be so much WHEN the church was started, but WHY the church still exists today.*

The second thing that we will look at is the *Foundation of the Church*. Upon what or whom did the Lord promise to build His church? Many people have perverted the teachings of Christ in Matthew 16:18, and tried to make it say that the Church was built upon Simon Peter. The Catholic Church even teaches that Peter was the first Pope. This is not so. If Peter was a Pope he was a married pope because he had a wife and mother-in-law, Matthew 8:14-15.

In Matthew 16:13-18, we see our Lord standing in Caesarea Philippi. This city was named in honor of Caesar and Herod Philip who had built the city into what it was in Jesus’ day. Some even say there were two marble monuments erected in the city in their honor. These monuments spoke of what the people thought of these two men. With this in mind Jesus asked His disciples, **“Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?”** They responded, **“Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”** Then He asked, **“But whom say YE that I am?”** To this Simon Peter proclaimed, **“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Jesus then responded to Peter’s proclamation by saying, **“...Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”** Our Lord goes on to say, **“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”** Peter was only a small stone, but the Lord Jesus Christ is the large rock upon which the Church is built.

First Corinthians 3:11 tells us that Christ is the foundation and Ephesians 2:20 tells us that Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone. Simon Peter later reaffirms that Christ is the Rock and believers are just stones in his building, I Peter 2:3-8.

THE FORMAT OF THE CHURCH

Now that we have studied the Founding of the Church and have established the Founder and the Foundation of the Church, we will now look at the Format of the Church. In I Thessalonians 1:3, we read, **“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...”** In this verse, there is a three-fold format that churches need today. First, Paul mentions their *Work of Faith*, second, their *Labor of Love*, and third, their *Patience of Hope*. These three things make up the format for the churches today.

These are the same three things that Paul mentions in I Corinthians 13:13, **“And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.”** Notice the words NOW and ABIDETH. Paul has just finished teaching that the gift of prophecy would fail, which meant it would fade away. The gift of tongues would cease. This means the gift of

tongues would die a natural death with the coming of the perfect Word of God. But he says that Faith, Hope, and Charity ABIDETH. This means they are to continue or remain. The Word NOW speaks of the Dispensation of the Church, or the Church age. So we see that the basic Format of the Church today is not the working of the nine gifts of the Spirit, which were given to the early churches. These gifts were given because the early church did not have the written Word of God so they operated by signs and wonders.

Thank God, we now have the complete revelation of God's Word. We are to read the Bible, believe it by *Faith*, act upon it with *Love*, and rest upon it with *Hope*. Some might ask, "Is that all a Church needs to carry on the work of the Lord?" The answer is, yes. You see, with *Faith* the church reaches *upward* and lays hold on God and His promises; with *Love* the church reaches *outward* and lays hold on the people around the world, and with *Hope* the church then reaches *forward*, and lays hold on the future. I Corinthians 13:10 says, "***But when that which is perfect*** (the written Word) ***is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.***"

THE FORMATION OF A CHURCH

How is a church formed? Let me say first that real churches must be born before they are formed. You form an organization, but for a church to be a living organism it must have a birth, and then God forms it in His own way. A good picture of this is also found in the first chapter of I Thessalonians. First, *God Chooses a Man*. Paul was called of God and sent out by the Church at Antioch, Acts 13:1-4. God in His grace brought him to Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-3, where he preached three Sabbaths before he was run out of town. Even though Paul had to leave, God used his preaching to get a church started there. This is still God's way. God is still calling men to go and preach the Word of God and start churches.

The second thing we find is that *God Confirms his Ministry*. We do not have to take a man's word for it. If he is a God-called man, God will confirm his ministry just as He did Paul's. Notice three things which the Lord did to confirm the ministry of Paul in I Thessalonians 1:5. "***For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in POWER, and in THE HOLY GHOST, and in MUCH ASSURANCE...***" God bears witness to the preaching of the man He chooses by giving him His power, by the witness of the Holy Ghost, and by giving assurance to the people as he preaches.

The third thing that we notice about the Forming of the Church at Thessalonica is *God Collects the Membership*. He saves them, and then He subjects them to the man of God and to each other so that they become followers of God's man, Vs 6. The Lord does not set up a board or a committee to run His church. He will call a Pastor to be the Shepherd. God collects the people to be the sheep and together they form the flock of God. Somebody may say, "***But which church do I become a member of?***" The answer is simple. The one God makes you a part of. No where in the Bible are believers told to join the church of their choice. You are to pray, seeking God's guidance, and He will put you into the right church. When He does you will fit in and feel comfortable in that Church. God will make you a part of the life of that Church and He will make that church a part of your life. You will experience true happiness and joy in serving the Lord in that Church. You will feel at home there because God makes it YOUR CHURCH.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH

This brings us to the Fellowship of the Church. How can so many different people, with so many different backgrounds, and so many different problems come together to form a church and still have the fellowship God wants a Church to have? Let me try to explain. The first basis for our fellowship is we have all have the same kind of *birth*. Christianity begins with our being born into the family of God. It does not matter who a person is, what kind of background he or she may have had, or what their social or political standings are, the honest truth is, all men are sinners and are in need of a Saviour. Somehow, somewhere God in His mercy let us hear the gospel, we were drawn to Christ, and God saved us by His amazing Grace. We now can have fellowship because we all have experienced the same birth. We are all sinners who have been SAVED BY THE MARVELOUS GRACE OF GOD.

The Second thing that builds the fellowship of the Church is that we have all had the same kind of *Baptism*. Acts 2:41, says ***“Then they that gladly received His Word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”*** Here we learn that it is baptism that adds one to the local assembly. Again, in Acts 2:47, ***“...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*** When a person is saved God will add him to a church. He does not leave anyone to make it alone. Baptism identifies a person with the Lord Jesus and the local church. Romans 6:4 says, ***“Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*** Again, we see that we can have fellowship because our Baptism pictures the old man as dead and buried with Christ and a new man raised up to walk in newness of life in the Lord Christ Jesus. This places all of the believers on the same level and creates a great fellowship within the church.

The third thing that builds the fellowship of the church is we all have the *same beliefs*. The Word of God governs us all. Every member of the church is to be a Bible believer. The Word of God is our church manual. It is our final authority. We are to live by the Bible. Any church whose members will believe and obey the Word of God will enjoy a great fellowship. Churches are not to be social clubs where people come together to enjoy the things of society. They are not to be like other organizations that draw up their own guidelines. God gave us His Book, the Bible, to give us directions and instructions. Every member of the church is to simply believe and obey the Word of God. When we subject our lives to the authority of the Word of God, the church will have a sweet and wonderful fellowship.

The fourth thing that builds fellowship in a local church is we are all of the *same blood*. We are of the same family. We have the same Father and are redeemed by the blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Having the same blood makes us brothers and sisters in Christ.

THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

There are many things that could be said about the Function of the Church. Many think the function of the church is to cure all social ills. Others think it is a welfare agency, taking care of the poor and needy people. We will look at three things the Bible teaches about the

Function of the Church. First, the Church has an *Upward Ministry of Exalting the Saviour*. Every Church must be occupied with worshipping and praising our Lord. Worship is of the spirit and comes from the inner man. Praise is something that we do with our body. We lift our voices in praise, we clap our hands in praise, we praise the Lord with singing, with shouting, with music, etc. Sad to say, but many churches today never have real worship and praising the Lord in their services. All they do is meet together and carry out their formal program. May God help us each time the church comes together to be sure we do not forget that the number one function of the Church is to be upward. We must be sure that we always ***“offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,”*** I Peter 2:4.

The second function of the church is an *Inward Ministry of Edifying the Saints*. Each time the saints gather at the place of worship there needs to be attention given to the needs of the saints. They have been out there in the cold, wicked world all week. Each has their own personal problems and family problems to deal with. They come to church to get help. Many preachers need to read again the admonition given to them in I Peter 5:2, where we are instructed to ***“Feed the flock of God.”*** Many people come to the place of worship and leave hungry and beaten down. Often you hear some preacher talking about how he skinned the saints by his hard preaching. Just remember that you don’t get to skin a sheep but one time and it will die. You do shear sheep occasionally when they need it, but they must be fed on a regular basis. Be sure that your church doesn’t forget the important Inward Ministry of Edifying the Saints of God.

The third function of the church is an *Outward Ministry of Evangelizing the Sinners*. In Mark 16:15, Our Lord gave the simplest form of the Great Commission; ***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”*** From this verse we learn that God wants every creature to have a preacher. We also learn from this verse that we cannot preach the Gospel in the wrong place (all the world) or to the wrong person (every creature).

The number one priority of the church in its relation to the world is to reach them with the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any church that ignores the responsibility of reaching the lost with the gospel will not enjoy the blessings of the Lord for long. If your church is not being a witness, both at home and abroad, it is not qualified to be called a New Testament Church. Many churches do not have any visitation or soulwinning programs and they never see anyone saved and baptized. It makes one wonder why they exist.

THE FINANCING OF THE CHURCH

Financing the Church is an important doctrine that needs to be taught today. There are many churches that are not doing the job God wants them to do because they do not have the money to do so. Other churches bring reproach upon the name of the church and the Lord by trying to finance their church with doughnut sales, bake sales, yard sales, and many other worldly ways of raising money. We would be foolish to think that Christ would set up the church and not set up a method of financing it. God sets forth His way of financing His church very plainly in His word. Three different types of giving are taught in the word of God, the tithe, freewill offering, and a missions offering. We will look at each of them and their purpose as taught in the Scriptures.

The first type of giving taught in the Word of God is **Tithing**. The tithe is the first ten percent of our income. It does not belong to us, it belongs to God. The Word of God tells us very plainly in Leviticus 27:30, "***The tithe...is the LORD'S.***" Since the tithe is the Lord's, He alone can tell us what to do with it and He has told us in His Word. In Deuteronomy 26, God gives us the law of the first fruits, which is the tithe. Notice six things taught in verses 2, 10, and 11 about tithing.

1. In verse 2, God instructs us that we are to "***put it (the tithe) in a basket.***" This means we are to *separate His portion from our portion*.
2. In verse 2, He also instructs us to "***go.***" This means we are to *bring the tithe*. God not only wants the tithe, He wants you to be there with the tithes.
3. Again in verse 2, He instructs us where to take the tithe; "***go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name there.***" The only place on planet earth that the Lord has chosen to place His name in this dispensation is the local church.
4. In verse 10, He instructs us to, "***Set it before the Lord.***" This means to dedicate the tithe to the Lord, and in so doing the tithe loses our identity and becomes the church's money. It is the Lord's tithe and we are now dedicating it to Him.
5. In verse 10b, we are instructed to "***worship before the Lord thy God,***" as we tithe.
6. And in verse 11a, we are instructed to "***rejoice***" as the tithes are given.

To summarize these truths we must come to the following conclusion. The tithe is the first ten percent of our income. It does not belong to us, it belongs to the Lord. We are to separate the Lord's tithe from our portion and bring it to the church. At the church we are to dedicate the tithe to the Lord, and we are to do so in a spirit of worship and rejoicing. Tithing is God's method of financing the normal operations of His local work. We do not find any place in the Word of God where the Lord's tithes were ever sent anywhere. Tithing was God's method of financing the normal operation of His work in the Old Testament, and it is still His way in the New Testament Church. There is not one verse in the New Testament that does away with God's principle of tithing. It is still in effect today.

It is amazing to discover that God set up tithing to finance the local operation of His work even back in Abraham's day and it still works today without one rate increase. Any Church today that can get its members to tithe into the treasury of the local church will have the money to do whatever God wants that church to do. Each individual is responsible for bringing his or her own tithe to the Lord. We will either be honest and faithful in doing what the Lord said for us to do in the matter of tithing or we will reap what we sow.

Some might say that tithing was under the law and it was, but it was also before the law. The Bible mentions tithing several hundred years before the law was given. We read in Genesis 14:20, Abram (later named Abraham) "***gave him tithes of all.***" And in Genesis 28:22, Jacob said, "***I will surely give the tenth unto thee.***" Abraham tithed and Jacob said that he would. We have no record in the Bible where Jacob ever did tithe; only that he promised God he would. If you want to see the difference in God's blessings upon a tither and His curse and judgment upon a non-tither simply look at the difference in His blessings on Abraham's family and His judgment upon Jacob's family.

The second type of giving taught in the Scriptures is a **Freewill** or **Voluntary Offering**. This offering was above the Lord's tithe and it was given for special occasions, in fact, we often

refer to it as *a special offering*. Perhaps one of the best examples of this offering is found in Exodus 35 and 36 when they were getting ready to build the tabernacle in the wilderness. Remember this is not part of the tithe, but an offering given to the Lord with a willing heart.

The third type of giving taught in the Word of God is a **Mission Offering**. The mission offering is also above the Lord's tithe and is to be used for the work of missions. Remember the tithes were used for local church operation and the free-will offerings were used for special occasions, but what is a mission offering? The best simple definition of a missions offering that I know of is: *A mission offering is money collected by the church to be sent out from the church to the saints serving the Lord in other places.*

In I Corinthians 16:1-4 we have Scriptural teaching concerning the mission offering. ***“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.”***

This was money collected for saints. Tithes are not collected for saints, but from saints. This money was collected from the Saints at the Church in Corinth for the saints serving God over in Jerusalem. This makes this a mission offering. In fact, the Word of God says in verse one, ***“as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.”*** The word *order* means an established pattern. The Holy Ghost, through the Apostle Paul established a pattern of giving to missions and instructs the church at Corinth and every church today, to establish that pattern of giving to missions.

God did not give the responsibility of supporting missions to some selected committee of denominational leaders. There are several problems with denominational mission programs. One is, they remove the burden of missions from the heart of the church to the headquarters of the denomination. Second, all the denominational leaders can do is request and suggest that the church members give to missions. God commands church members to give. Third, the overhead expenses of denominational missions is so great that only a small percent of the money given to missions ever make it to the missionaries. Here are God's instructions concerning the missions offering. Notice four things:

1. It is to be systematic giving, ***“Upon the first day of the week.”***
2. It is to be total involvement of church membership;
“Let every one of you lay by him in store”
3. The amount to be given is to be ***“According as God has prospered him.”***
4. It is to be given through the local church and to be distributed by the authority of the local church, Vs 3-4. The Word of God knows nothing about mission giving that bypasses the local church.

God devoted chapters 8-9 of the book of II Corinthians to this type of giving. Some call it grace-giving and others call it faith-promise giving. I prefer the term faith-promise giving. In

II Corinthians 8:10, they were forward in their giving, which simply means they made a commitment by faith. In II Corinthians 9:6, the Word of God gives us the *parable* of faith-promise giving. ***“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”*** The Word of God compares our giving to sowing and our receiving to reaping. In God’s law of the harvest, you reap what you sow, you reap after you sow, you reap more than you sow, and you reap according to how much you sow.

In II Corinthians 9:7-8 we have the *principles* of faith-promise giving. ***“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”*** A careful study of the verses reveals five principles of faith-promise mission giving.

1. It is to be *personal* giving, ***“Every man”***
2. It is to be *planned* giving, ***“according as he purposeth in his heart”***
3. It is to be *persistent* giving, ***“so let him give”***
4. It is to be *positive* giving,
“not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”
5. It is to be *proving* giving, ***“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”*** As we give by faith we simply open the door of opportunity for God to show that He will take care of our needs as we take care of His missionaries. **His spoon is bigger than our shovel.**

Many churches and individuals have learned the blessing of giving to missions by faith and are living testimonies of God’s blessing upon their lives because of their giving. The secret of Faith-promise giving is that God will give through you what He will not give to you. He will give to you to give to missions what He will not give to you to keep for yourself. And the Scripture does teach, ***“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin”*** (Romans 14:23).

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

Our study of the church would not be complete unless we look at the Future of the Church. Some would say that the church is going down, or going out of business, but I’ve got news for them. The Church is not going down, it is going up. The real future of the true church is not in this world. Someone said, ***“Serving the Lord does not pay much, but His retirement plan is out of this world.”***

We will briefly look at four thoughts concerning the future of the Church. The next great event on God’s prophetic program for the Church is we will be *Snatched up to meet Him when He Returns*, I Thessalonians 4:13-17. Some day soon the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. All the dead in Christ will rise first and then all the living saints will be changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air just as it says in these verses. This is known as the Rapture of the Church.

The second great event in the Future of the Church is we will *Stand before Him when He Rewards*, II Corinthians 5:10. Many times here it looks like all of our labor for the Lord is in vain. At the Judgment Seat of Christ every Christian will be rewarded for the things they have done since they were saved, II Corinthians 5:10, Revelation 22:12, Matthew 16:27, First Corinthians 3:12-15 and First Corinthians 15:58.

The third great event in the Future of the Church is we will *Sit beside Him when He Reigns*, Revelation 20:4-6. This will be after the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the marriage of the Lamb, and the marriage supper has taken place. The Lord will come back to the earth and fight the Battle of Armageddon, Revelation 19:17-21. Satan will then be bound and cast into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years, Revelation 20:1-3; and at the same time Christ shall sit upon the throne of David and rule and reign over all the earth for 1,000 glorious years, Revelation 20:4-6. All of the saints will come back with Him and those who have been faithful and suffered for His name's sake will also reign with Him, II Timothy 2:11-12 and Luke 19:11-27.

The fourth and final great event that we will look at in this study is, we will *Share with Him where He Resides*. In John 14:2-3 Jesus tells us, ***“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*** In John 17:24 Jesus prays, ***“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.”***

I Thessalonians 4:17 tells us, ***“and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*** I do not know all that the future holds for the Lord and His people, but thank God I do know that where He is, there will His church be also. When He raptures, when He rewards, when He reigns, where He resides, and whatever else He may do, WE WILL BE THERE. The future of the Church is as bright as the future of Christ. Hallelujah!!!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Did you read every passage of Scripture mentioned in this chapter? If you did not, do so right now.
2. What does the term church speak of the majority of times it is used in the Scriptures?
3. What kind of churches did Paul set up?
4. What does the word church mean?
5. Explain the meaning of the words “called out” and “assembly”.

6. What is a good description of a Scriptural church?

7. Name the two phases of the beginning of the church?

8. Who is the church built upon?

9. What is the three-fold format of the church?

a.

b.

c.

10. Explain the outreach of the three-fold format.

a.

b.

c.

11. Name three steps God takes in forming a church.

a.

b.

c.

12. Name four reasons that members of a church can have fellowship, though they come from various backgrounds.

a.

c.

b.

d.

13. Name the three functions of the church.

a.

b.

c.

14. Name the three types of giving taught in the Bible.

a.

b.

c.

15. Where were the tithes to be given and what were they to be used for?

16. Name the four great prophetic events that are yet in the future for the church.

a.

b.

c.

d.

Be sure to study these questions until you know them well before you go to the next chapter.