

**IF THEREFORE
THE WHOLE CHURCH**



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Front Cover

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The word *church* is used 115 times in the new Testament, but reference is made to it by Jesus and the other apostles using other terminology than *church* hundreds of times. They frequently use various figures of speech to give us a more comprehensive view of the *church*, to enlarge our understanding of it, and deepen our appreciation for it.

One who has studied the New Testament is aware that inspired writers employed figures of speech with which to give beauty and vividness to certain truths. There were several reasons for that: the beauty of it, which has just been mentioned; to make truth more intense and forceful to bring men to a full awareness of it; to deepen our perception of divine information concerning the subject; and help us grasp the entirety of what God intends us to know on that theme.

To accomplish this, He, through the speech and writing of inspired men, uses pictures in an unusual and non-literal sense that we may grasp every facet of the truth concerning the topic or study under consideration. This form of speech was so common and so well understood that Jesus at times spoke only in parables (Mark 4:34). There were those things in their daily work and activities with which they were perfectly familiar from which Jesus and the apostles drew lessons germane and applicable to their lives. A symbol was used which represented a truth or principle in the kingdom of God; a picture was drawn from life which was analogous to a spiritual relationship in the Lord's church; a metaphor was fashioned that was a likeness of a fundamental doctrine which had to do with service to God.

It is my hope that when we have examined several Bible terms which are applied to the people of God in this age, we will have a more discriminating understanding of what the church is, a keener discernment of its worth and value to mankind, and a deeper grasp of its meaning to a world lost in sin and ignorance.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD "CHURCH"

It derives from a compound Greek word. Here are the two parts of it: —*out of*, plus —*I call*. So the church, in the New Testa-

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ment sense, is a *called out* people. It is well to ask, "In what sense are they called out?" Speaking of his disciples, Jesus said: "...these are in the world" (John 17:11). A little later in this prayer, He said: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (verse 15). He further says something that sounds like a contradiction: "They are not of the world ..." (verse 16). These followers of His lived in the world, and they must remain in the world if they expected to influence and save those around them who

lived in the world. While these apostles lived in the world they were separate from, and no part of, the sin that characterized it. So, in the very next verse, Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (verse 17). The word *sanctify* is closely related in meaning to the word *church*. The former word means "to separate, to segregate," while the latter word means "the called out ones."

There are two questions one may ask here: (1) How are people called out of the world, and (2) from what are they called out? That is, in what sense are they called out of the world? Let us take these in their order:

1. How are people called out of the world? Paul gives the answer: "... He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thessalonians 2:14). People today are not called in some special, direct, and miraculous way to become Christians. You hear all sorts of stories about how one is called to become a child of God. Someone says: "I had a vision and saw the Lord." Someone else explains: "I had a dream in the night, and the Lord called and saved me." Or, "It was an overwhelming feeling I had by the bedside of my sick and dying parent." The Bible makes the claim that when we become Christians, we were called by the gospel. This is the very reason Jesus told His disciples: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15).

In this same second chapter of II Thessalonians, Paul further imparts this information: it is necessary to believe the truth (verse 13), and it is essential that we receive the love of the truth in our hearts (verse 10). When people believe the truth, receive the truth, and love the truth, the spirit sanctifies them—sets them apart from the world; and that is what the church is!

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2. From what are they called out? We have dealt with this thought already to some extent, but consider this further instruction. John tried to persuade the Christians to whom he addressed his letter: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (I John 2:15–16). John is certainly not saying that we are not to love the beautiful things of the world, nor the people of the world. He is rather charging Christians not to love and participate in the evil that is in this old world. One of the reasons for it is: "... and you have overcome the wicked one" (verse 14).

There is a great deal of instruction given the Christian on how he ought to live apart from the world because he is a part of the church, the *called out ones*. "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1). So, it is in the sense that we have been called out of a world of sin and into this new and beautiful relationship with God and Christ and the Holy Spirit and fellow Christians, and this relationship is in the church.

There are several senses in which the term *church* is used in the New Testament.

1. **In the general sense.** People who have been *called out* of the evil in the world by the gospel of Christ (II Thessalonians 2:14) and have formed a new and spiritual relationship with God and with God's people constitute the church. When people believe the truth (verse 13), and receive the love of the truth in their hearts (verse 10), the Spirit of God will sanctify them and set them apart. That's what the church is. Jesus was speaking of the church in the general sense, i.e., of the church anywhere in the world, when He said: "On this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). It was in this same general sense of the church as a whole, Paul spoke: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

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Christians everywhere, regardless of their geographical location, are members of the church. It does not matter what their language or color is. It makes no difference about their social or economic stratum in life. If they are Christians, they are members of our Lord's church.

2. **In a local sense.** Frequently Christians are addressed as the church in a local situation. Here are some examples of that use of the word *church*: "To the church of the Thessalonians" (I Thessalonians 1:1); "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse" (Colossians 1:2); "To the church of God which is in Corinth" (I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 1:1). These are Christians composing the church; "the called out ones" who live in a certain geographical location. As far as I am able to tell from the New Testament, there is not a working organization of the church except in the local sense. There are no bishops or elders except in the local congregation. No one man, or even a group of men, has jurisdiction over several congregations. The Bible knows no such organization. There was always a plurality of men who served as God's elders in each local congregation. Any other arrangement invites trouble and ends in disaster. What one sees today in the religious world represents a departure from the order given by inspired men and arrived in its present circumstance because of an apostasy.

3. **In the assembled sense.** The church meets together as a corporate body for worship, for study, for fellowship, and they are thus "the called out ones" in that locality. Let me give you a good example of this. In Acts 1, the gospel was preached by Peter and the other apostles for the first time. Many people heard it and believed it. Something like 3,000 were baptized and the Lord added them that day to the church. In verse 42 we read, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." Another example is I Corinthians 11:18: "... when you come together as a church. ..." Paul had reference to their assembly, their coming together, to remember the Lord's death and resurrection by eating the Lord's Supper (verse 23). He used the same idea and almost the same expression in verse 33: "... when you come together to eat. ..." In verse 20: "Therefore when you come together in one place. ..." You will find another interesting example in I Corinthians 14:23: "Therefore

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if the whole church comes together in one place. ..." This is God's "called out ones" assembled primarily for worship. This is not to say that a Christian cannot worship privately. That he can should do every day and in many ways. But he has an obligation, which is really a privilege and a blessing, to meet with other Christians on the Lord's Day. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together ..." (Hebrews 10:25). Another translation renders this passage: "Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing ..." The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is distinctive. By that I mean that it possesses marks, qualities, and features that are differentiates it from all other religious bodies around us. In doctrine, organization, worship, preaching, and practice, it is different. Members of the church are called out of the world and separated from the evil that is in it. There is a very clear and distinguishing line of demarcation between them and the people of the world in their speech, the purity of their lives, the make up of their character, and their treatment of their fellow man. If this is not true, they are not measuring up to God's standard set for them. Just remember, as you read about the church in the scriptures, He is speaking of a people who have been called out of the world.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS THE CHURCH

The word *kingdom* is found 154 times in the New Testament. While it refers to earthly kingdoms in a few cases, for the most part it has to do with the kingdom of God. More than that, it has specific reference to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Expressions like this are commonly used by Jesus and the apostles: "Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14). The next verse says, "The kingdom of God is at hand."

In reading these 154 passages of scripture, one learns several lessons: (1) The word *kingdom* is a term the New Testament uses frequently and interchangeably with *church*. These words have the same relationship. *Kingdom* is just another *picture* to give us a larger view of what the church is. (2) *Kingdom* tells the kind of government God has instituted for His church. I know by frequent use of this idea of a *kingdom*, that the church is not a democracy. The conclusion of this is that it is not a government by the people. It is not *rule by the ruled*. It is not that system of government through elected representa-

tives. It is a kingdom; an absolute monarchy. This kingdom, the church, is the rule of God in the hearts and lives of His followers. (3) It is not an earthly kingdom. It is, of course, situated on the earth, but Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). It is not a material, physical, or political kingdom. To disabuse anyone's mind of that idea, Paul asserts: "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking ..." (Romans 14:17). It is often referred to as the *kingdom of heaven*; that is it comes from heaven. Its source and its origin is not the earth. It comes from God. You must be able to see that the church is a kingdom in government. It is a *state* headed by a king and there are no limitations to this

Monarch's power. "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth," Jesus declared in Matthew 28:18. That leaves no authority for any man on earth.

Inspiration declares Christ is "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:21–22). Men on earth, however wise they appear to be, have no right to meet in synods and councils and decide what people are going to believe and practice in religion. Let me repeat: the church is not a democracy; it is a kingdom. God will not countenance any such misuse of His authority and rule over His people.

When I consulted New Testament scholars as to the meaning of the word *kingdom* in this context, I found such definitions as "royal power, kingship, domain, rule; the reign of the Messiah" (Thayer). Mr. Thayer further says, "Jesus employed the phrase *kingdom of God* to indicate that perfect order of things he was about to establish, in which all of those of every nation who should believe in him were to be gathered together into one society dedicated and intimately united to God, and made partakers of eternal salvation."

There are four essential elements or properties of a kingdom. By that, I mean there are these principal characteristics which are necessary before a kingdom can exist:

1. **There must be a king.** Christ is that king, and He is now reigning. His rule is not some future, nebulous kingdom over

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which He will reign for a thousand years upon the earth. There are all sorts of hazy and far-fetched doctrines about Christ coming back to the earth to call all the Jews back to Palestine, convert them to Himself, set up the old kingdom of David and Solomon, drive out His enemies, and then rule with a rod of iron over the earth for a period of one thousand years. This theory says that Jesus is now a kind of *crown prince*, but then He will become King. Nothing could be more false than this teaching. The Bible unequivocally declares that Jesus is now the Messiah, the Anointed One, the King. Read these passages which point up this important truth of the Kingship of Jesus in this age: "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). The Christian age in which we live, and have lived since Pentecost, is the age of regeneration—that is, a time when men are born again. It comes from the Greek word *paliggenesia*, and it simply means *new birth or regeneration*. Jesus told Nicodemus, "...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Peter makes a statement about the new birth: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corrupt seed by incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (I Peter 1:22–23). Now, let us return to the passage in Matthew 19:28. In this passage, Jesus clearly states that during the

time, period, or age in which men are *born again*, the Son of Man will be seated upon the throne of His glory.

Examine with me some other passages which affirm with the deepest conviction inspired men that Jesus is now King: "Therefore, being a prophet [David], and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God ..." (Acts 2:30-33). This passage maintains three things: (1) God promised David that He would raise up one of his descendants to sit on his throne. (2) He had reference to the

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resurrection of Christ. (3) He fulfilled His promise by raising up Christ and seating him at God's right hand and there exalted Him.

"Which He will manifest in His own time. He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (I Timothy 6:15). Men may not believe or accept this fact, but Paul declares that Jesus is King of Kings. Peter and the other apostles preached this truth for the first time years before on Pentecost: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). He is the Anointed One, the King, the Messiah, and more, He is Lord. Let me admonish you not to be led astray by false teachers who would have you believe that Jesus will not become King until He returns at His second coming.

2. The second element necessary to comprise a kingdom is a territory. One must have a dominion, an estate, or land over which to rule. Inasmuch as the kingdom of God is not an earthly, physical kingdom, it would be better to say that His domain is a field or sphere of power, influence, and service. This passage tells us of the geography of that territory: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations ..." (Matthew 24:14). Before His ascension to heaven, Jesus said to the apostles, "And you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). These passages tell us how big His territory is: "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent" (Acts 13:26). Paul further elaborates the thought in these words: "For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 13:47). "... that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all people see ..." (Ephesians 3:8-9).

3. There must be citizens or else you cannot have a kingdom. Christians are citizens in that kingdom. They sustain a spiritual relationship to Christ as His servants or subjects. They are "no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints ..." (Ephesians 2:19). Christians are those who were

born into His kingdom, and are citizens, therefore, by virtue of spiritual birth. they are *free-born*, so to speak. Of course, their ultimate citizenship is in heaven, toward which they look for the Savior (Philippians 3:20). When we subject ourselves to the King and His rule, we thereby become His subjects. Once we were aliens living in a foreign land, but now we have "been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). Now we have all the rights, blessings, and privileges of citizens in the kingdom of Christ. There are also obligations that devolve upon citizens. May we never be unmindful of these.

4. You must have laws in order to have a kingdom. If there were no laws, there would be anarchy. People who have no laws to govern them, or who refuse to respect and submit to the laws of a country, are destined for destruction. Chaos and violence follow in the wake of lawlessness. The kingdom of Christ has rules by which its citizens are guided and governed in every facet of their lives. That system of law is called the *perfect law of liberty* (James 1:25). John calls these rules *the teaching of Christ*. "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ [or the teaching which is from Christ] does not have God ..." (II John 9). Early in His ministry, Jesus laid down this principle: "Therefore whoever hears these words of Mine, and does them ..." That is our guide. This is the will of God. By this we are to be governed and controlled as citizens in His kingdom. One other passage we should know, although there are many more: "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11).

Despite the simplicity and power of these truths which have been introduced, there are those religious teachers who still maintain that the kingdom is not yet in existence. They say that one day when Jesus returns, He will set up His kingdom. But how can they take such a position when the Bible in such a plain and straightforward way shows that Christ is now King, the church is over the whole world and is His territory, Christians are citizens in that kingdom, and the New Testament is that law by which our lives are directed. May I invite your attention to two more passages of scripture: "The you would have a walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory"

(I Thessalonians 3:12). How could God have called people into His kingdom if that kingdom did not exist? "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). How could one be translated into a kingdom that did not exist and may not exist for thousands of years in the future.

THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM

It has been carefully and conclusively shown in this study that Jesus is King and that He has all authority in heaven and on earth. He will continue His rule and

authority until His coming and the resurrection of men from the dead. "For He must reign [it behooves Him to be King], till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians 15:25–26). As King, His government and authority are divided into three branches as it is in any government.

1. Legislative authority. This means the right or the power to enact laws. Only Jesus has that authority. It is pure presumption of men to meet together in council and decide they will make laws to govern their people in their religious activities. There is no scriptural permission for them to write their decisions and laws into books, creeds, manuals, and catechisms, and bind them upon their followers. Only Jesus has the right to legislate. Jesus' language was, "But I say to you ...” (Matthew 5:22, 28; 8:12).

2. Executive authority. This is the right and power to put those laws enacted into practice. To enforce them is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. He delegated authority to the apostles but even that authority was assigned to them and entrusted in their hands as His representatives. They carried His will to the ends of the earth in that first century. Since that day, no man has any authority. It is our business simply to preach His word and persuade men to obey it and live by it. No pope, priest, pastor, or any other person has any authority. Whatever he has in the way of authority among his fellows is presumed. He may have seized it, usurped it, contrived it, or it could have been granted to him by his fellow men. In actual fact, he has no authority, and it is a wicked and devilish presumption that he has (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16; II Timothy 2:2; Colossians 1:18).

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3. Judicial authority. This is the right and power to interpret these laws. Only Jesus has this authority. No one can make the Bible clearer and more easily understood than the Author of the book. It is blasphemy to claim that man must explain and interpret what Jesus and the apostles taught. This is a reflection on the ability of God. Does man surpass God in the capability of expression? It is also a reflection on the goodness of God. Would God communicate with us and then withhold what He really means for us to believe, understand, and practice? Does He keep His will a secret from us?

CAN THE WORD OF GOD BE UNDERSTOOD?

I do not believe that the Bible is a book that is incomprehensible and meaningless unless it is "interpreted by the church," as claimed by Cardinal Gibbons in his *Faith of Our Fathers*. He contended that it is a dead book and worth nothing unless it be interpreted by the priesthood. If this be so, why do we have such teachings as this:

"That from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15). Why would He call Timothy and others to study, and to be diligent to present themselves as workmen of God if they could not understand the word of God in

the first place? Several words and a number of expressions are used throughout the New Testament to show that the Bible is the most explicable and most easily understood document that has ever been written on the subject of religion.

1. Paul uses the word *revealed* which means to *uncover*, or literally "to take the cover from." "But God has revealed them to us through His spirit ..." (I Corinthians 2:10). That is very strong language to show that we can *understand* God's word. It has been *revealed*. The cover has been taken off so men could see and understand.

2. Another word he uses is *manifest*. "But has in due time manifested His word ..." (Titus 1:3). This word, *phaneroo*, means "to bring to light, to set in a clear light, to display, to make known, to disclose, or present to view." This is what God

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has done with his word for us. But there are many false teachers today who would have you believe that the average person cannot know the word of God and that it is obscure to any but certain special, God-endowed men. That is nowhere near the truth.

3. There is another word used by Paul, *photesai*, which means "to bring to light." "And to make all see ..." (Ephesians 3:9). This word is the source of our English word "photograph." Photography has to do with light. You cannot make a photograph without light. In fact, a photograph is the result of light striking sensitive film and paper so that you can see the image of a person or thing whose picture you have taken. So it is with the word of God. He has taken, as it were, a photograph so that "all men may see."

4. While there are many other words which Jesus and the apostles used to show that people can grasp and understand the word of God, I use only one other. It is the word *know*. Jesus once said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Men tell us that it is not possible for us to "know the truth," except as it is interpreted and explained by "providentially prepared men." Jesus' word here is *ginosko*. It means "to perceive, to understand, to discern, to ascertain."

Without doubt, we can understand what the will of the Lord is. In Ephesians 5:17, we read, "...but understand what the will of the Lord is." Although this is a different word, *suniem*, it means pretty much the same as *ginosko*. The lexicons define *suniem* to mean "to understand, to comprehend thoroughly, to perceive clearly." So this passage says that we can understand clearly and thoroughly what the will of God is.

My recommendations to any student of the Bible is to read and study all that God has said in His word on any subject and you will have the truth on that subject. It may be necessary for you to remove preconceived ideas from your mind and prejudice and bias from your heart, but, if with an open and honest heart you will read carefully and prayerfully all that God says on any subject, you will learn what

God wants you to know about it. To be successful in this, it is necessary for you to submit totally and without reservations to the King of Kings,

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that you be born again of the water and the Spirit, and that you conduct yourself as a faithful citizen in His kingdom.

THE CHURCH IS A TABERNACLE

"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it" (Exodus 25:8-9). "... For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part of which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All" (Hebrews 9:1-3).

DEFINITIONS

In the Old Testament, the word which we translate *tabernacle* is *mishkan*, and it meant the *dwelling place, or habitation of God among His people*. Our text says, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." And, further: "I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 26:11-12). In the New Testament, *tabernacle* translates the Greek word *skene* which means exactly what the Hebrew word for it meant in the Old Testament: the dwelling place, habitation, abode, seat of God among His people. However, it carried the idea of impermanence rather than permanence found in the word *temple*.

THE TABERNACLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THE CHURCH

The church is called the true tabernacle. "... A Minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1-2). The church is the *true* tabernacle. The word for true is *alethinos*, and it means that is the real one, sterling, unfeigned, trustworthy (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*). That is to say that the church is the original and genuine plan that was in the mind of God. More than that, he says that "God pitched it, and not man." It be advantageous for all to learn and accept this truth: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1).

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The church is called the "... greater and more perfect tabernacle ..." (Hebrews 9:11). To this he also adds, "not made with hands." The church of our Lord Jesus

Christ is not a physical but a spiritual tabernacle. Preaching to the philosophers on Mars Hill in the city of Athens, Paul declared that God "does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24). Earlier than this, Jesus taught, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). We have given considerable attention to these lessons about the church, that the Lord's kingdom is not a geopolitical or socioeconomic dominion. We here punctuate that point again.

Jesus was not an aspirant to a worldly kingship even though the and, for a time, His disciples seemed determined that He should be a king on the earth. "Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king ..." (John 6:15). It was almost impossible to disabuse the minds of the disciples of that earthly concept of a kingdom over which Jesus would rule. "Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel' " (Acts 1:6)? This greater tabernacle, more perfect than the first, is a spiritual relationship.

The tabernacle of the Old Testament is said to have been a shadow and a sketch of heavenly things. "Who serve the copy and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things ..." (Hebrews 10:1). The first tabernacle was only a copy that foreshadowed—cast its shadow before—of the reality which is the church. It presaged something far better. Although the tabernacle was constructed of gold and silver and precious materials, the church stands in indescribable beauty in contrast because of its heavenly qualities and the eternal presence of God (Ephesians 3:21).

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

1. It is the dwelling place of God. "I will walk among them; I will dwell in them" (II Corinthians 6:16). God has His dwelling among men. What comfort and assurance that is. In addition to this, He promises: "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above ..." (Exodus 25:22). "... at the door of the

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tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you" (Exodus 29:42). He reinforces this promise to His people: "And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory" (Exodus 29:43). It is in this relationship of the true tabernacle, the church, where God meets with His people, communes with them, speaks to them, and where He manifests Himself. More than that, He says that it shall be *sanctified* by His glory. No more notable fact exists than that the Lord's people should be sanctified, set apart, a separate population, and a spiritual race. This should be a reality, not just a theory, for only among people with such character does He promise to dwell.

2. The Israelites complied with all of God's commands in building the tabernacle. He gave them a pattern. "And let them make Me a sanctuary ... According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all

furnishings, just so you shall make it" (Exodus 25:8-9). God does not leave man to his own designs. "The way of man is not in himself ..." (Jeremiah 10:23). "... as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain' " (Hebrews 8:5). Every detail of building and furniture, even every almond bud on a candlestick, God gave a pattern for; and a failure on the part of Moses and Israel to make everything as He had shown them would have incurred His wrath and caused Him to reject it and them. He directs in His word. It is not some legalistic form with which we comply, but the doing of it from our hearts in total surrender to Him and for the purpose of blessing and pleasing Him.

This was what was said of them: "According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them" (Exodus 30:42-43).

It is wisdom to do God's will, *what* God says, and in the *way* He wants it done. "All who are gifted artisans among you shall come and make all the Lord has commanded" (Exodus 35:10). "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of

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Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24). "All the women ... spun yarn with their hands ..." (Exodus 35:25). For God's man and for God's woman there is a place in His great scheme. To be thus used by Him we could change the world!

3. They offered willingly. The offering that the children of Israel made to the construction and work of the tabernacle was required. "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering ..." (Exodus 25:2). Make no mistake about it. They had an obligation. There was work to be done, and their help was needed. Yet, it was a freewill offering. They were not forced or coerced. To be acceptable our gifts must be given willingly from the heart (Exodus 25:2). This is the only kind of giving, or service, that is acceptable today. "As many who gives it willingly with his heart..."

Observe this same principle in the New Testament church: "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have" (II Corinthians 8:12). "So let each give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7).

The real secret to their generous and cheerful giving is found here: "... but they first gave themselves to the Lord ..." (II Corinthians 8:5). It was easy for David to give to give generously and cheerfully, for he said: "Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God ..." (I Chronicles 29:3). When people first give themselves to the Lord and set their affections toward His house, their giving will be in order—whether it is the giving of time, talent, energy, money, or all of

these. Let us first learn that everything we have belongs to Him whence all blessings flow.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIVING TO THE TABERNACLE

1. **All gave both men and women.** "They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart" (Exodus 35:22).

2. **They were devout in their giving.** No one objected. They believed it was the Lord's work. "... and they brought the Lord's offering for the work ..." (Exodus 35:21).

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3. **It was an ungrudging and spontaneous gift.** Their hearts stirred them up. "Then everyone came whose heart was stirred" (Exodus 35:21). "... and everyone whose spirit was willing" (verse 21). "... and valiant men went with him, whose hearts God had touched" (I Samuel 10:26). There was no murmuring or complaining about the giving the Lord requested of them, and there was no fabrication of excuses.

4. **Their giving was immediate.** "All the congregation of the children of Israel departed ...Then everyone came who heart was stirred ..." (Exodus 32:20-21). There was no discussion about, no delay, or deferring it to a more suitable time. There was no asking one another to take the responsibility: "What do you propose to give?" They did it then without delay. It was *then* that the gift was needed.

5. **The giving was unselfish and unconditional.** They denuded themselves of their possessions. This was self sacrifice and self denial. No one asked to see the plans; nor did they infer that they should wait until they saw how the work was going to progress.

6. **They gave their best.** "... every man who offered as offering of gold to the Lord" (Exodus 35:22). Gold represented the best thing they had in their possession. Men today spend their gold on themselves and give silver to the Lord—or maybe it is brass! Instead of giving Him the best, they often give Him the crumbs that fall from the tables. What built the tabernacle in Moses' day will build the church of Christ around the world in our generation.

THE CHURCH IS A TEMPLE

"Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood saying 'Rise and measure the temple of God ...' " (Revelation 11:1).

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

The first temple was permanent house of the Lord which David proposed to build. He purchased the site for the temple buildings and collected much of the materials which went into it. "And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the

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Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to my father David, saying 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name' " (I Kings 5:5). Read also II Samuel 7:1ff and I Chronicles 22:8-10. "Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: 'My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God. Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might ... Moreover, because I have set my affection the house of God ...' " (I Chronicles 29:1-3).

David amassed great quantities of gold and silver as well as other materials and made a personal contribution of 3,000 talents of gold and 7,000 talents of silver. The weight and value of a talent varied in different countries and at different times—just as the value of gold and silver vary today in our world. The Hebrew talent was the equivalent of about 96 pounds avoirdupois. That would be 16 ounces to a pound. If gold were selling on the world market for \$500 U.S. dollars per ounce, that would amount to \$2,358,000,000. That is two billion, three hundred and fifty eight million dollars, or about half that figure in British pounds. David gave much more than this and then was instrumental in inducing prominent and able men in Israel to give. Because the inside of the sanctuary was overlaid in gold, as were articles of furniture and service, the temple must have cost billions of dollars. It is difficult, if not impossible, to put any kind of price on such a structure. However, it can be said that one talent, in silver, represented a lifetime of labor on the part of the ordinary working man.

The temple was built by Solomon in Jerusalem. It was begun about 957 B.C. It was destroyed 371 years later by Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon in 580 B.C.

The second temple was authorized by Cyrus the Great after Zerubbabel returned to the homeland with about 50,000 Jews; It was constructed beginning in 520 B.C. and was completed four years later. So, you see, there was some 66 years that the Jews were without a central place to worship.

Herod the Great promised the Jews a new temple; and it was begun in the year 19 B.C. Although the main building was completed nineteen months later, all the courts and buildings of

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the entire temple were not finished until A.D. 64 only six years before it was destroyed by the Romans. This occurred under Titus and the Roman armies in A.D. 70.

I have given this brief history so that we may be sure that John, in the Revelation passage, was not talking about measuring any of these temples, for the last one, Herod's, had been destroyed some thirty years before. The language of John in Revelation 11:1 is figurative. It is symbolic imagery in what is called "apocalyptic literature," and doubtless applies to the church. In the New Covenant, the temple of God is the church, as we shall presently see in this study.

WHAT DOES TEMPLE MEAN?

There are three words used in the New Testament which are translated by one English word "temple." The first one is *hieron* and it "designated the whole compass of the sacred enclosure, embracing the entire aggregate of buildings, balconies, porticos, courts, belonging to the temple. It is employed in the New Testament explicitly of the whole temple" (Thayer). This term is used 71 times in the New Testament. In mark 12:35 we read that Jesus "taught in the temple." That is the word *hieron*. That is, Jesus was teaching somewhere within the sacred precincts of the temple. When the church first started, the Christians in Jerusalem "... continuing daily with one accord in the temple ..." (Acts 2:46). Somewhere, perhaps, in one of the porches—at least within the sacred enclosure of the temple, the disciples met, taught, worshipped, and fellowshiped.

The second word which is used for "temple" is the Greek word *naos*. This word is used 46 times in the New Testament. It had reference to the inner sanctuary, the dwelling place of God—where God dwells. In heathen cultures and religions, it was the place of their deity. In the Jewish temple, it was where the priests went to meet with God on behalf of the people of Israel. As it has already been stated, it applies many times in the spiritual and metaphorical sense to the church. It comes from the verb *naio* and means "to dwell." So, the *naos* is God's dwelling place among men. Of this word, Thayer says: "used only of the sacred edifice." Later, in his definition, he tells us that in the New Testament it has reference to "a company of

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Christians, the church, as dwelt in by the Spirit of God. Of the body of Christ." Addressing the church in Corinth, Paul asks: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you" (I Corinthians 3:16)? He was impressing the lesson upon these young Christians that the church in Corinth was God's dwelling place.

The third word which is translated *temple* is *oikos*, or *house* (Luke 11:51). Both temple and house are used in this passage in Ephesians 2:21–22: "In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." "Temple," in this passage, is *naos* and means the church, God's dwelling place.

"Habitation" is from *house*, and it also refers to the church—that, the Christian people in Ephesus, and it, likewise, means "dwelling place," and is thus rendered in some modern, accurate translations. While the word *house* is used often to refer to the church in the New Testament, it more frequently has to do with the family relationship, to which we will give more attention later, than to "the house of God" as a temple or a place of worship where God dwells and meets with His people.

Before the temple was constructed by Solomon, Israel had a tabernacle. This was a portable, collapsible, movable structure which was used during the wilderness wanderings. Interestingly enough, the term *tabernacle*, also meant "God's dwelling place." He had said, "and there I will meet you, and I will speak with you ..." (Exodus 25:22). Describing the tabernacle, its furnishings, and service, Paul asserted that these things were "... symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices ... with the greater and more perfect tabernacle..." (Hebrews 9:9-11). In the next chapter, he calls the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law "having a shadow of the good things to come" (Hebrews 10:1). Twice in this same letter to the Hebrews, Paul refers to the church as "The true tabernacle." Christ, our High Priest, is "a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2).

Later, in the letter, he wrote: "For Christ has not entered the holy place made with hands, which are copies of the true ..."

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(Hebrews 9:24). Also, Paul teaches by inference that the church is the "second tabernacle" in contrast with the "first tabernacle" (Hebrews 9:9). Although there are many lessons he teaches us as he compares the "first tabernacle" with the "second," one of the strongest and most practical lessons is this: "Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain' " (Hebrews 8:5).

The emphasis here is that in the church we have a pattern and what we believe and practice must be governed by divine mandate. If this principle were followed, there would not be the hopeless division we encounter in the Christian world. What could be more calamitous than for the followers of Christ to be divided into "20,000 subgroups?" There are more than 2,000 denominations in the United States of America alone. If we had followed the injunction to "build all things according to the pattern shown" us by God in the New Testament this spiritual tragedy would have never occurred.

It is interesting and helpful to our understanding of God's pictures of the church that all three of these words: "temple" *naos*, "tabernacle" *skene*, and "house" *oikos*, mean the "dwelling place of God." You may be sure that one of the lessons intends for us to learn that if we would have association, fellowship, and communion with God, we must go and be where he "dwells," the church. To maintain that the church is unimportant and that one can be a Christian and have no connection with the church is false and contradictory at every turn. You see, the church is "God's dwelling place." It is His house; His habitation. It where God

lives on earth. Do you want to see Him, know Him, and speak with Him? Then you must come to where He is, the church!

There are 20,000 different churches in the world. This staggers the imagination, but each teaches a different doctrine, subscribes to a different set of rules, practices a different ritual, maintains a different school of thought, wears a different name, and holds different views and opinions. God must look with extreme displeasure upon this spiritually disarranged, disparate, and divided state of religious affairs. Men have been heedless to the prayer of Jesus, "I do not pray for these alone, but also

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for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21). The solution to this perplexing and difficult problem of religious division in Christendom is "See that you make all things according to the pattern ..." (Hebrews 8:5). "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God ..." (I Peter 4:11). "Who ever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God" (II John 9).

Let us return to our theme, "The temple is the church." It was with this great truth in mind that Peter addressed scattered Christians: "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5). In the New Testament, the temple is even more beautiful although it is not a building of gold and silver and precious materials. Its real beauty lies in the facts stated in the above passage. Christians comprise this temple. They are living stones in it. They are joined together with Him and with each other and rise to become a holy temple in which God dwells and "lives by His Spirit."

LIKENESS BETWEEN THE TEMPLE AND THE CHURCH

There is a beautiful analogy between the temple of the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. It has been already shown that it is the place where God meets and communes with His people. "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you ..." (Exodus 25:22). Let me here further emphasize that it is God's dwelling place among men; "I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell forever" (I Kings 8:13). The church made up of Christians is today God's dwelling place among men. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you" (I Corinthians 3:16)?

Another translation renders it: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you" (NIV)? In another letter to the Corinthians, Paul affirms: "For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and

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they shall be My people' " (II Corinthians 6:16). It is very interesting to learn that in the New Testament, the inspired writings speak of the *temple* as the *church* and literally say that this is where God *houses*. He uses the Greek word *katoiketerion* which means a *dwelling place*.

Moses spoke of this relationship centuries before. It had an immediate didactic application, but it also has a figurative application: "But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His habitation; and there you shall go" (Deuteronomy 12:5). The reason we know this to be true is because Paul declares that these things "were a shadow of good things to come."

I would like for you to give special notice to some words in these passages which seem to be "key words" for our understanding and appreciation: *meet, commune, dwell, live, walk, habitation, seek, come, and house*. All of these words describe and somewhat elaborate on the relationship that exists between Christians and God in the church. The beauty of this relationship is discussed by John in the Revelation: "Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God [*skene*—tabernacle] is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God' " (Revelation 21:2-3). This, as you will doubtless note from the language, is the church on earth among men. The source of it is heaven. It came down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. That is the most beautiful and the most important relationship that men in the world can sustain.

THE LORD'S NAME IS THERE

There are other lessons to be drawn from the first temple which are applicable to the church in the Christian age. In the eighth chapter of I Kings, Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple is recorded. In that prayer he speaks of God's name and its attachment to the temple. Here are some things he says: "That Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there' ... that all peoples of the earth may know Your name

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and fear you ... toward the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for your name" (I Kings 8:29, 43-44). A brief summary of the substance of these passages would be: (1) The Lord's name is there. (2) His house is called by His name. (3) The house was built for His name. How beautifully true all of this is as it applies to the church of the Lord.

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14-15).

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, or those in heaven and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). These passages say: (1) God's people, Christians, honor Christ in the wearing of His name (see also I Peter 4:16). (2) Salvation is obtained only in His name. (3) The Church was built by Him and for Him. He is a Son over His own house (Hebrews 3:6). The church is the church of Christ because it belongs to Him (Matthew 16:18); Romans 16:16). His name is there, it was built for Him, and it is called by His name!

IT IS HERE THAT HE HEARS OUR PRAYERS

"... and pray and make supplication to You in this temple" (I Kings 8:33). There is this similarity or resemblance between the temple of God for His people in the Old Testament and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ for His people in the New Testament. That is, it is in this relationship that God hears prayers. It is sometimes argued that God has heard the prayers of people that did not occupy the kinship of sons and daughters and examples like Cornelius are given (Acts 10). This is true and, in all likelihood, it is still true that God will help a person to find truth who is earnestly seeking after it.

This is really not the subject under consideration. For God to hear and forgive a person with regard to his sins, he must have a connection with God, and that connection in the Old Testament was in the temple. In the New Testament it is in the church. Let us look at some facts that have always been sp:

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"One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9). "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Those who refuse to bring their lives into conformity with the will of God need not expect God to hear and answer and bless them. "Because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke ... then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me" (Proverbs 1:24-28).

Peter restated a principle which had been difficult for him and other Jews to accept: "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:35). "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (I Peter 3:12). The Christian has access to the throne of God in the church. Maybe that sentence sounds redundant, but the truth here enunciated that one must be in the church to have the ways and means of approach to God. The sanctuary was that part of the temple where entrance to and communion with God

was obtainable. It is in Christ where this and other spiritual blessings are enjoyed (Ephesians 1:3). Our prayers and supplications to Him are made "in this house."

AND HE SHALL WASH

There is another point of analogy between the tabernacle or the temple and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before Aaron or the priests who came after him could enter the holy place, they must first wash. "And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments ..." (Leviticus 16:24). There was a laver which stood at the entrance of the tabernacle, and later, the temple, and before a priest could enter to attend to the needs of the people in God's presence, he must wash. It is interesting that the Holy Spirit used a word here which meant *the washing of the whole body*.

The word is used repeatedly in LXX Old Testament (Greek translation of the Old Testament) and is used many times for baptism in the New Testament. The word is *louo*, and always means *the washing of the whole*. This is a complete, thorough

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cleansing. It is what one would expect because before one can come into the presence of God to commune and have fellowship with Him, it is necessary that he first be *washed*.

In the New Testament, this *washing* has to do with baptism and, especially, *freeing* from *sin* (Kittel). Here are some passages that illustrate this point: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies *washed* with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and *wash away* your sins ..." (Acts 22:16).

THE CHURCH IS A FAMILY

One of the most familiar and frequently used expressions for the church is *house*, in the sense of a family. This is among the dearest, most intimate, and most meaningful relationships that a person maintains in this world. This concept of the church as a *family* is essential, personal, and close. I do not know how many valuable and practical lessons we may deduce from it, but I see love, warmth, sympathy, sharing, cooperation, unselfishness, and sacrifice as essential elements which characterize the family. Perhaps there is no other human connection that so binds and supports a nation as the home. So, the Holy Spirit, through the words of the apostles, uses this picture of a *household*, and related representations with which to explain the functions of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, let us simply look at some of those passages of scripture that use this *design* with which to illustrate and emphasize need spiritual lessons: "...you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15). "But Christ as a

Son over His own house, whose house we are ..." (Hebrews 3:6). "In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house ..." (I Peter 2:5).

The word *house* in the New Testament is *oikos*. There are several variations of it, but it means a dwelling, a family, a lineage, a spiritual house or structure. There is a very form of

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the word *katoikeo*, which means "to inhabit, to indwell, to have an abode" (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*). One of the most reassuring and satisfying promises that the Christian has is that God dwells among his family. The church is His abode on the earth. Paul says it is a house "in which God lives by His spirit." That guarantee is priceless. That confidence which it engenders in our hearts is worth more than silver and gold.

The church is more than a house as we consider a house and a family is more than a mere house. The church is called the *family of God*. "From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:15). It is interesting and, I believe, important, that the word for *family* is the Greek term for father, *patria*. This is because the family is represented by the *father*. God intended it to be so. The father is the head of the family. He is the one who provides for and sustains the family. The term indicates that he is "the founder of family." In this passage, Paul is not distributing the family into groups. The passage literally says "out of whom every family in the heavens and upon the earth is named." He is gathering them into one family—the church. Paul is recognizing and acknowledging that all saints, or Christians, in heaven and on the earth form one family. While this is true, absolutely, the idea to which he is giving particular emphasis is that the whole family of God is named after him. On earth, we take a special interest in those who bear our name. So God makes full provision for those who are His children, members of His family, and who honor Him by wearing His name.

There are a number of designations and phrases in the New Testament which inspired men used to complement the concept of the church as a family.

FATHER

Although I have not counted the number of times the expression *father* is used of God, it must be several hundred times. The Bible always uses *word pictures* with which people are most familiar and from which they may be able to draw the lessons of life. Everyone knows what a father is. Even children who do not have a father possess a longing for one, and children whose fathers are evil wish they had good fathers. Jesus, knowing the place a father occupies in a family and in

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the hearts of his children, taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father in heaven ..." (Matthew 6:9). An oft repeated salutation of Paul to the churches throughout the Roman Empire was, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father" (Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:3; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2). There are countless important functions the father fills and numberless blessings he provides. How remarkably dependent we are on him! "Give us this day our daily bread." The child that prays to the Father implores, "Lead us ... deliver us ... forgive us." Without this care from Him, life would be very difficult. Paul uses the expression "Giving thanks to God and the Father. ..."

Know the Father is the source of our lives and the Provider of all our needs, we should not be ungrateful nor neglect to give Him thanks. "... and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks" (Luke 17:16).

Jesus said on one occasion, "I honor My Father" (John 8:49). This entails respect, obedience, and surrender of one's self to him. "... because I do not seek My own will," Jesus further states, "but the will of the Father who send Me" (John 5:30). Peter exhorted Christians to whom he addressed his letter to be "... obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts" (I Peter 1:14).

To teach another lesson in this family relationship, he said, "And if you call on the Father ..." (I Peter 1:17). The thought is: "if you call on God as your Father." There are two notable lessons in this passage: (1) One must have the right to call God his Father. If you are not in His family, you have no just claim to address Him or call upon Him. No one except the children in my family have the privilege to address me as Father. It would be embarrassing and inappropriate for someone outside my family to call me his father. That claim belongs only to the person who has been born into my family (John 3:5); I Peter 1:23). (2) One must exercise that right regularly. It would be difficult to imagine a child in a family who never addressed his father; who never called on him; and who never had any communication with him. That would be a very unusual and strained situation. It is likely that such a child would receive few, if an, blessings from the father, and not much benefit from being a member of the family!

In Paul's discussion of another consideration of the family, he speaks of the father, or the husband, as the head, *kephale*, of his wife and principal in his family (I Corinthians 11:3). This is not to infer that he is more important than other members of the family, but it does say that he is the one to whom the family members are subordinate. Subordination is not inferiority. Most of us occupy in some relationships of life, a subordinate position. As Christians we should make every effort to be subject to *civil government*. Subjection, however, does not mean inferior. The wife is subject to the husband, but not inferior to him. The children are to obey their parents and that means that they are to hear them, listen to them, and submit to their instruction (Ephesians 6:1). The children are not, however, inferior. They are equal as human beings and are just as precious

and valuable in the sight of God as any other person. God is the author of this arrangement in the family. It is not only good; it is the best arrangement. Let us be happy with it.

CHILDREN—SONS

In this picture of the church as a family, the writer of the New Testament represent Christians as *children*; as *sons and daughters of God*. The most beautiful and significant relationship gives expression to the position, the spiritual connection, that we occupy to our heavenly Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God" (I John 3:1). As children of God, Paul names some the assurances and blessings we possess. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16-17). To be God's children implies in heritage and a share in the glorious eternal life of Jesus Christ. As children we have blessings and privileges here and now as well as the final inheritance. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). "As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness ..." (II Peter 1:3). "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). It is almost too great a privilege to conceive. We are Christ's and all things are ours. We are heirs to this title of Sonship and the great estate which He so freely shares with us.

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The word *teknon* means a child, a son or daughter, but further, it is a term of endearment and of gracious acceptance. What peace and serenity a Christian has in the assurance that he is loved and that he has been fully accepted and wanted and that he is united with the Father in His family. There is a very warm and endearing form of this word, *tekinon*, which Jesus and the apostles used and which can be translated, "My little children" (Galatians 4:19; I John 2:1; John 13:33).

The New Testament seems to use the terms *sons and daughters* interchangeably with *children*. In Galatians 3:26–27, Paul makes this statement: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The apostle is here affirming that it is *in Christ Jesus*, i.e., *in God's family*, the church, that we are the sons of God. *In Christ* is one of Paul's favorite expressions to indicate the channel through which the great blessings of the gospel are realized. The word sons, *huios*, "denotes those who have come into the full enjoyment, so far as the present life is concerned, of the position which their birth has entitled them" (*Pulpit Commentary*). It certainly, explicitly tells of the relationship we have with the Father.

The context of the third chapter of Galatians indicates that at an earlier time as *children*, we have passed out of that nonage into possession of full-fledged sonship. The word is often used to imply the connection that we sustain as members of God's family, our resemblance to the Father in respect to the

privileges granted and that we enjoy in the family, and, also, the character of God's sons. We are the *highborn ones*, it is declared by the writer of Hebrews (12:23). We are sons and daughters of Royalty and princes and princesses of the King. In character, we should live far above and apart from the world. "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:17-18).

BROTHERS

In our relationship with God we are children, or sons and daughters, but in our relationship to one another in God's family, we are brothers and sisters. This is an expression which

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is used 234 times in the New Testament. That is emphasis on the family concept of God's people. The church is a family and most of the time *brothers* (brethren) is used in the spiritual sense of our interest in and our regard and service to fellow Christians in the church of the Lord. It would be impossible within the compass of this lesson, to make reference to all of the passages which have to do with us as brothers and sisters in the household of God. Neither could we tell of all the obligations and considerations we are due one another. We can give a sampling of it and, perhaps, it will stimulate you to give it further thought and study. It can be rich and ennobling to our lives. At the top of this lit should go this one: "Little children, ... A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:33-35).

Seventeen times in Romans 16, Paul charges the Christians to greet the brethren because there must be warmth and an affinity in the family of our Father. Paul insisted, in his letter to the Corinthian church, that as brothers they should speak the same things and that there be no divisions among them, but that they be joined together in the same mind and judgment (I Corinthians 1:10). In this family which belongs to God, brothers and sisters are to be united. Division will weaken, devastate, and eventually destroy the family. When it is broken into fragments and bits and pieces, its love and harmony are gone and so is its usefulness. For this reason, James enjoins on us: "Do not grumble against one another, brethren ..." (James 5:9). Stephen used a very appropriate example of this lesson by citing the incident in which Moses tried to reconcile two of his Israelite brothers: "And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?' "(Acts 7:26)?

Paul admonished the Galatian Christians to restore a brother who was caught unexpectedly by sin (Galatians 6:1). It was to be done in the spirit of gentleness which would show genuine love and concern. If one of the brothers erred from the faith, the stronger brother was admonished to bring him back. In doing so he

would save a soul from death and cover many sins (James 5:19). We have got to care about our brothers and sisters in this wonderful family.

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This family relationship, the church, is the dearest and closest men can have on this earth toward one another. One of the principles that sets Christianity far above any other religion or system of ethics in this world is our attitude toward and our treatment of our brothers and sisters in Christ. You will see this truth made abundantly clear and beautifully exemplified in the lives and teachings of the apostles: "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being" (I Corinthians 10:24). "... just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of man, that they may be saved" (verses 32–33). "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). "For you, brethren, ... but through love serve one another (Galatians 5:13). "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (I Peter 3:8–9).

A young, recent convert Christian in New Zealand has warmly and effectively described and defined this relationship in a letter: "I am enjoying very much the fellowship of my brothers and sisters in the church. I just couldn't continue without them. It is so wonderful to wake up and feel needed and loved ... I am still you in Christ and so vulnerable to the ways of Satan. I pray very hard for help to continue my new life undaunted. I have found that some old friends I had before my baptism are not such good friends anymore. It's funny, but I don't feel loss without them—just a little sad that they can't share, or won't share my joy." It is inexpressibly great to be a child in God's family.

THE CHURCH IS A BODY

One of Paul's most noble and majestic concepts of the church is as a body. All of his pictures of God's people are splendid, for that matter, but that with which we meet so frequently in the pages of Paul's letters is the *church* as a *body*. It is a very prevalent term, *soma*, and has diversified application. Thayer says of it: "It is used of a number of men closely united into one society, or family. ..." Then, he further comments that it is

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spoken of as "the spiritual body of Christ of which he is the head." *The International Stand Bible Encyclopedia* calls it figurative language for the church of Christ's body, the organism through which he manifests His life and in which His Spirit dwells (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:24). The *Analytical Greek Lexicon*

defines the word as the *aggregate body of believers, the body of the church*. One would expect many lessons to be found in the thirty-five times it is used of the church in the New Testament. The analogies or partial resemblances Paul draws between the church and the human body are picturesque, powerful, and practical to the Christian and I would invite your careful consideration of each one of them in your private study. Some of the obvious lessons we will consider in the scope of this study.

ONENESS

Regardless of his figures used of the church, Paul's basic idea is that there is only *one body*. With this truth clearly enunciated, he makes sure that his listeners understand that this body is the church and that it is the body of Christ. Notice the prominence, even the insistence, Paul gives to this point: "So we, being many, are *one body* in Christ" (Romans 12:5). "For as the body is *one*" (I Corinthians 12:12). In that same verse, he declared, "But all the members of that one body, being many, are *one body*." Inasmuch as the body is one, "there should be no division in the body" (verse 25). "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4).

In your reading of these various passages, you will be impressed that he speaks of the *body*, not *bodies*. From all of this, we should learn that believers in Christ should be one. They must be one to please God. Recently, I noticed in a new book which had been produced through about fourteen years of research into the many religions of the world, and particularly a study of the sects of Christendom, that there somewhere near 20,000 denominations which claim to be Christians.

Jesus earnestly prayed for unity (John 17:20–21), and the apostles urged Christians to be united (I Corinthians 1:10). Paul exhorted Christians to make every effort "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). This is indispensable to the

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spiritual growth of the church. We cannot expect to reach out to the lost and convert them to Christ except we be one. There is no possibility of our becoming "mature, attaining to the full measure of perfection found in Christ" unless we are perfectly united in the same mind and judgment. Jesus said that if we are not one, the world will not believe that God sent Him. So, if we are going to be the body of Christ, we have no option. As far as the decision for us to be one is concerned, it is taken entirely out of our hands.

It is a well known fact that the *Christian world* is not one. It seems hopelessly divided. When every religious group teaches a different doctrine, wears a different name, has a different philosophy, makes of itself an island and runs a blockade around it, unity (oneness) not only seems hopeless, but the ones enmeshed in this division seem helpless. Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the only one who can correct and amend that deplorable situation. There is only one way for it to be set aright—completely and unreservedly submitting to His revealed will for us. Wrongs can never be rectified and mistakes cannot be adjusted until we resolve to be guided

by His words. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11). Division, with its attendant chaos and confusion, is never cured in any relationship of life if man is left to his own wisdom to accomplish it. This accounts for wars between nations, revolution within nations, hatred, bitterness, and animosity in communities, and strife, frustration, and open rupture of millions of homes across the world. The solution is willing surrender of self to the will of God. Setting that principle in motion in our lives is more difficult. The hardness of the human conscience and the stubbornness and rebellion of the human will are strong deterrents to the remedy. We should know by now, after all the centuries of unrest and division, what is the panacea of our ills and what is the cure of our diseases, but we refuse to take the cure. Do not lose sight of the fact, however, that the Holy Spirit said: "The body is one." We had better do our utmost to make it so!

CHRIST IS HEAD OF THE BODY

No more important truth is stated about the church as a body than that Christ is the head of it. This entails the question of authority. "... and gave Him to be head over all things to the

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church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23). The support of that statement is found in the context where Paul declares God "raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion" (verses 20-21). More than that, He gave Him a title above all others and placed all things under His feet (verses 21-22). That is a picture of absolute authority. As the human body is completely controlled, automatically or discretionally, consciously or unconsciously, by the *orders* given by the head, so the church, the spiritual body of Christ, is regulated, exercised, directed, commanded, restrained, and whatever else composes its being and activity, by Christ who is its head. "And He is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18).

The body would be one in the truest sense if we recognized and respected the fact that Christ is the head of it and the every *movement* emanates from the head. When men believe, teach, and act as it suits themselves, the body is convulsed and, if not corrected, will be ultimately devastated. To be one, the body must work harmoniously. Any contradiction within it tends to destroy it. When individual religious leaders, or groups of such men, presume to act as the head of the church to direct its motions and control its functions, tragedy to the body inevitably ensues. Let me repeat, in substance, what has been said in a former lesson: "No council, no pope, no priest, no preacher, no bishop, or any other man, has any authority to enact any religious rule, to legislate any belief, to formulate any doctrine, or to impose it upon the body. The body takes its orders and directions only from Christ." To know and appreciate this would solve many of our problems.

COOPERATION AND SHARING

Paul said that every part of the body "should have the same care for one another" (I Corinthians 12:25). Each has a work to do and an office to perform, and it does so with the assurance that it is important to the body and that it contributes to the function of it. The body is not made up of one part but of many parts. Paul illustrates that by saying: "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body' ... and if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body' " (I Corinthians 12:15-16). The senses

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of hearing, smelling, and seeing are all important. God has thus arranged it. So it is in the body of Christ, the church. We have many members "but all the members do not have the same function" (Romans 12:4). We are fully aware of this truth, but then another truth is strongly urged; that of sharing and cooperating with every member of the body "so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Romans 12:5). In that cooperation between Christians, there is always a feeling sympathy and helpfulness. "And if one members suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ and members individually" (I Corinthians 12:26-27). For Christians to possess these similar and conforming interests, feelings, ideas, and deep love for one another will guarantee the peace, unity, and growth of the body. This is a joy beyond reckoning.

Let us explore briefly one other truth regarding the body. Paul draws a parallel between the husband and wife relationship and Christ and the church. He does it in these words: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). "Headship" authority is taught in this passage. That lesson we have already pointed out, but here Paul adds that Christ is the Savior of the church, His body. The beginning point of that salvation in Christ is our baptism. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (I Corinthians 12:13). This act of faith brought us into Christ (Romans 6:3), and we became members of the spiritual body of Christ, the church. He asserts that it is "this" body he saves. It behooves us, then, to change our relationship from "in the world" to "in Christ," becoming members of His body, for this is the place of safety, refuge, and salvation.

THE CHURCH IS A VINEYARD

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into the vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth

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and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have ye been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first' " (Matthew 20:1-8).

A.L. Williams, in an exposition of Matthew in the *Pulpit Commentary*, makes this statement about the *kingdom of heaven*: "The kingdom of heaven is the Church of Christ, whether militant on earth (when the laborers are hired) or triumphant in heaven (when the reward is bestowed)."

The word *kingdom* signifies God's rule in the hearts and over the lives of His people. It is the *kingdom of heaven* in that it is *from heaven*. That is, heaven is its origin; its source. It is not a kingdom of *men, by men, or for men*. It originated with God, derives from heaven, and is, therefore, more important than the *Roman kingdom* or any other kingdom produced by and proceeding from man. Besides that, it is a *heavenly kingdom*. It has to do with spiritual principles and external values. God rules in man's life in every quarter and His standard governs men in righteousness and His law and order lead men ultimately to the home of the soul.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE

There is a parallel between the church and the landowner who is seeking workers to labor on his farm or in his vineyard. There are some very pertinent and relevant lessons that relate to us as Christians, as we are considered laborers in the Lord's vineyard:

1. **Early in the morning.** This indicates a need and an urgency. At vintage grape gathering time, there was probably a great need for workers and, in order to secure the laborers, it was necessary to rise early in the morning. The Greek *agora*, the Roman forum, and the Eastern market place were the places where expectant workers were gathered together. As the Lord Jesus Christ has left us to represent Him as far as service

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in His church is concerned, we should rise early in the morning to seize those prospective laborers who can be of value to His cause as producers of good fruit. Souls are precious and time is of the essence. Men everywhere are lost. May we feel the compelling obligation and the choiceless imperative to seek men early lest they be lost forever.

2. **To hire men.** The word *hire* denotes several obvious facts: (1) Accountability on the part of the one being hired. This simply means that the person is both responsible and answerable for his actions. He is bound by promises made and he incurs responsibility for discharge of duty. A failure to acquit himself in keeping with his obligation will involve him in blame. (2) Agreement. This implies acknowledgement, recognition, consent, and approval. When one goes out to hire

someone for a particular task, the job description is given, stipulations are named, a salary is stated, and an offer is made to the potential laborer. The potential laborer has both the right and the power to accept or reject the offer. If he agrees and concurs with the offer, he is hired.

These are solid truths with regard to one's conversion which is coming into the Lord's church to serve as a laborer. One must be old enough to be accountable. He cannot be an infant or a small child because he must first understand and then approve with all his heart what is offered, and meet the conditions which are named by the *landowner*. There is a call to answer, a duty to perform, and an obligation to meet—all in response to an understanding of the Lord's requirements and an agreement to fully comply. "Now, when he had agreed with the laborers ... he sent them into his vineyard."

Another impressive and convincing truth about conversion is that when one is *hired* to work in the Lord's vineyard, he is not forced or coerced into the work. Being hired is voluntary. The goodness and love of God morally constrains us but one is neither taken by surprise nor compelled under pressure to become a child of God. Slaves are driven under the lash, but compulsion is not God's tool to induce people to work in His vineyard. The only kind of service acceptable to God is willing, voluntary, and intentionally rendered from a heart of love and devotion. This should forever settle the question of whether children are subjects of the

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gospel and liable to the authority and direction of God Almighty and owing allegiance to Him. It must be seen that only those who are old enough and adult enough to be *hired* can be laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

3. **Into.** This word is a preposition, *eis*, and the dictionary defines it thus: "From the outside to the inside of." It is a term of transition, of movement, and of change from one state, place, or condition to another. We say that one comes into a room. That is, he makes a change or movement from the outside to the inside. Likewise, the Lord wants men and women to leave the marketplace of the world—the bustling, noisy scene where men are engaged in the pursuit of pleasure in the restless and eager struggle for riches in the hunting and reaching out for power and popularity—and enter *into* His vineyard to labor for Him and receive the reward at the close of Life's day. *His vineyard* is where the Christian serves. it is not true that one can be as good a Christian *outside the church* as he can be *in the church*. This narrative story told by Jesus says that we must come *into His vineyard* to work and be rewarded.

I have never hired very many people in my life to work for me. In some countries where I have lived, we have provided food and housing for our students attending the schools of preaching and Bible studies. We had a rule that each student should work three hours per day to help defray his expenses. By doing that, it kept the project from being entirely gratis. In all the those years, I never found a student who felt that his schooling should be free of cost or expense to him. The student also well understood that having agreed to the regulations of the school program,

he was under obligation to do the work he was assigned and to do it *in the way* that the school administrators determined it be done and exactly as they specified.

While these students and other employees learned that simple lesson, in religion not many of us have come to that realization or have it fixed our minds. Almost everywhere I go and with whomever I sit down with to study, the attitude toward God's word seems to be that "I am at liberty to believe and do in religion whatever seems right, provided I am supremely honest in it all." Otherwise, you could not account for the endless differences in religious beliefs and practices. It seems that the

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laborer is left to his own wisdom and discretion to determine and settle the entire matter of the spiritual direction he will take. This is not the prerogative of the employee.

If a man wishes to build a house for his family and gives the builder a blueprint of the plan which represents his desires and aspirations for the structure, the builder is not at liberty to insert, delete, or in any way, change any part of the plan. The builder does not have the license to substitute other building materials for those called for in the design. He understands that well and, if he has any honesty, he will scrupulously *build it according to the pattern*. Sadly, in the religious world, men feel they have a free hand to do *what is right in their own eyes* (Judges 17:6).

The laborer has no such independence. His latitude in what he believes and practices is circumscribed by the directions in the *blueprint*! He must learn that he does not have the leeway to do his own will and, when he does, unity among believers will ensue and Christ's church can march to certain victory.

Men do not always heed the call. He calls again and again by the gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14). It may be the loud noise of the world or it may be willful deafness, but the call often goes unheeded and it may become fainter and fainter. The call is into His *kingdom* (I Thessalonian 2:12) or vineyard, as this parable relates.

You may have observed in the reading of the entire story that only those who left the marketplace and came *into* his vineyard were paid. This was according to the agreement. If one agrees to work *in* the vineyard but works elsewhere, he need not expect to be paid—although he may work as diligently outside the vineyard as he would inside.

There is another thought which is important to this lesson. He hired these people to work in His vineyard. The text literally says *to hire workmen into the vineyard of him*. In the world today, men say, "It matters little in whose vineyard we work, so long as we work." This kind of thinking has produced more than 20,000 vineyards in the Christian world. The truth of the matter is, we must work in His

vineyard if we expect Him to reward us at the close of the day. Only then will He say, *call*

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the laborers and give them their hire. Only then will He say to the redeemed, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (Matthew 25:34).

4. **The eleventh hour man.** From early morning throughout the day the landowner continued to go out to find men to work in his vineyard. This indicates a persistence, tirelessness, and relentlessness that spells genuine patience. It also speaks of urgency and insistence because of the importance of it all. In the marketplace there are those who have been brought up in wicked surroundings and prefer idleness, whose training has been godless, and whose examples have been devilish. These need repeated visits and exhortations. The day was now nearly ended. Only one hour remained. It would soon be night and no man could work. For the last time the landowner went into the marketplace. God, in His great mercy and love for mankind, calls again and again. "The Lord is not ... willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). "... God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:3-4). With this same care for lost sinners, you and I should go into the *marketplace*, hoping to engage men and women in God's service.

This was the eleventh hour; and the reason, they said, that they were not working was because *no man has hired us*. Some men spend their whole lives, willfully and intentionally, in the service of Satan, and, when the eleventh hour comes, they want God to accept them and reward them, just as he does those who have labored through the heat of the day. This will not happen. You cannot waste your life in the world, in *idleness*, in doing nothing, and rightfully expect the Lord to reward you handsomely. You cannot be that kind of an *eleventh hour man*.

You see, these people he approached in the eleventh hour had never had an opportunity before—no man had hired us. You cannot defer obedience through the years of your life and spend it in gratification of the flesh and expect to be an eleventh hour person. You can, however, regardless of your age, heed the call of the Lord to work in His vineyard though the sun may be almost set. Whatever time you have left, let me admonish you to spend it in laboring for the Lord in His church.

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THE CHURCH IS A SCHOOL

Of all the figures of speech and metaphorical expressions which are used in the New Testament for the church, none is alluded to more frequently than the

similitude of a school. Similitude simply means that one thing resembles another. The church is like a school. In fact, it may be said that the church is a school. Christianity is, essentially and preeminently, a taught and learned religion. "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:45).

Notice these essential prerequisites to being a Christian: (1) Men must be taught of God. (2) The process required listening to what God has to say. (3) Learning from Him. Only then can one come to Jesus.

ITS BUSINESS IS TO TEACH

"To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known ..." (Ephesians 3:10). Paul calls the church "... the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15). *Teaching* is likely the most distinct, well defined, and prominent feature that distinguishes and represents the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are many words in the New Testament for teach. They are, of course, related in meaning. Here are some of them: instruct, educate, school, edify, enlighten, direct, guide, discipline, show, command, herald, preach, and others.

These words are used hundreds of times and all of them say that Christianity is evangelistic in nature. Propagation is the law of spiritual life as well as physical life. It is something to be shared with others. Our duty in the school of Christ is "holding fast the word of life" (Philippians 2:16) as we "shine as lights in the world" (verse 15). Our business is to cause people to understand. Paul puts in in these words, "and to make all see" (Ephesians 3:9).

One translation has it to *make plain*. That is the kind of teaching we like. The New Testament makes the will of God *plain*. But it must be taught in order to do so. "So it was that for a whole

year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people" (Acts 11:26). Thayer, the New Testament language scholar, has this to say about the word *teach*: "To hold discourse with others in order to give instruction. To instill doctrine into one." This is the word that is used frequently of Jesus' *teaching* and describes what he did. He instructed and instilled doctrine into others. "I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1). When men both *do* and *teach*, their effectiveness will be tremendous.

Jesus not only imparted information, he showed people the application of His teaching. He left them something to follow (I Peter 2:21). In discussing the practicality of Christianity with the elders of Ephesus, Paul said: "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this ..." (Acts 20:35). Interspersed in Paul's writings are frequent references to teaching by example: "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Philippians

3:17). Another: "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do" (Philippians 4:9).

What makes Abraham, from the pages of the Old Testament, so admirable a character is the fact that he taught his people and lived the example before them. God said to him: "For I have known him, order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord ..." (Genesis 18:19).

God knew that Abraham would discipline and instruct his children. He would exercise his God-given authority over them in *commanding* them; but more than that, he will set the example before them. The verse says *after him*. He will show the way. He will lead out so that they may follow. What produces problems insoluble in the home and the church in our time is that much *telling* is done but not much *showing*. Such teaching is ineffective. It is, you may be sure, hypocritical. Someone has asked, "How can I hear what you say when what you are is forever thundering in my ears?"

A child, or anyone else for that matter, will pay little heed to what you say unless you set the example of that application of that teaching in your life. To insist upon others being faithful and obedient to God, but not to practice it in

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one's own life will be unsuccessful and of no force in the lives of those whom we address. To teach that there are harmful and evil practices in the world from which Christians should abstain is good teaching. But it is absolutely ineffectual unless the teaching is put into practice in the life of the teacher. Inasmuch as the church is a school with the responsibility of teaching others, there are some questions people wish to ask in the that there are some plain Bible answers to them.

1. Who in the church is charged with this task of teaching others? A satisfactory answer on this question can be found by reading a number of passages. "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2). This says that faithful men should qualify themselves to be able to teach. It seems that all Christians in the early church felt the need to share the teaching of Christ with others. "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end" (Hebrews 6:11). Formerly, in this letter, he had said to them: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers ..." (Hebrews 5:12).

2. Whom must we, as the church, teach? The original charge was to go the world over and preach the gospel to every one (Mark 16:15). Every nation of the earth was to be included (Matthew 28:19). The need is present and is as great today as it was then. There is nothing to indicate that God has changed His plan. Those early Christians understood the scope and the geography of the Great Commission, for they went to the ends of the earth. "... the gospel which you

heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1:23). Jesus had charged them to be "... witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

In addition to teaching and saving the sinner, we are commanded to teach and edify one another, "For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). "... teaching and admonishing one another " (Colossians 3:16). The older women are commanded

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to teach (*school*) the younger women (Titus 2:4). They are to *teach, give instruction*; but this verse specifically says that they are to school the younger women. The word for school or teach in this passage is *sophronizosin*. That means to *train* as in a school. To steady them by guiding them, holding on to them. Great stress is placed upon our teaching the weak. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1).

3. When and where should this teaching be done? The first century Christians took the matter very seriously. They possessed a tireless zeal. "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). They were steadfast in this work of the church (Acts 2:42). Paul said that it was a matter of *night and day* with Him (Acts 20:31).

In passing this instruction on to others, he requested that it be done in season and out of season. He was simply saying, "Preach it to others when you have opportunity and when you do not have opportunity." In other words, **make the opportunity**. It may not come otherwise. It is interesting to observe from the New Testament accounts *where* all the teaching was done: *publicly and from house to house* (Acts 20:20). It was taught in the market places, by a well, along the seaside, in a boat, from a mountain top, in the synagogues, under the porches of the temple, by a grave, in a prison, and along the road. For us to be the church as it was at the beginning of the Christian era, we must continue to practice the spread of Christianity as they did.

4. What are we required to teach? As important as any other aspect of the work of the church as a school is this question. May I give you this brief outline to serve as a guide: (1) The word of God alone must be preached (II Timothy 4:1). (2) Only the good news of Jesus—His death, burial, and resurrection for our sins must be preached (I Corinthians 15:1-4). (3) We must preach the kingdom and the things that pertain to the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12, 31). (4) The center of that teaching must be the cross—Christ crucified (I Corinthians 1:18; 2:2). (5) Jesus reminded the apostles to teach all that He had commanded them during His time among them (Matthew 18:20). (6) We must teach and contend for the faith once for all

delivered to the saints (Jude 3). (7) Out teaching must be made up of the whole council of God (Acts 20:27). (8) John affirmed that it must be the teaching which comes from Christ (II John 9). (9) Peter issued the injunction that if any man speak, he must speak as the very words of God (I Peter 4:11).

CHRIST THE MASTER TEACHER

One of the most interesting features about the church as a school is that Jesus is called *teacher* almost fifty times in the New Testament. Some translations have this word *master* instead of *teacher*. In our generation, and in several generations preceding, the word *master* suggests a slave relationship, but this is not the idea at all in this discussion. I believe, more than anything else, Jesus is called and portrayed as a *teacher*. "... Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews ... said to Him, 'Rabbi, we that you are a *teacher* come from God' " (John 3:2). It would be both interesting and profitable to trace out all the times Jesus is called *teacher* and see what great lessons he has for us and the whole world.

HIS DISCIPLES WERE STUDENTS

Just in this connection of Jesus as the *Master Teacher*, those who followed Him were called disciples. The word is *mathetes* and it means a *student, a pupil, a learner*. The word disciple is found 265 times in the New Testament, and while it is not necessary for God to say something 265 times for it to be important, the repeated use gives emphasis to the fact that members of the church are students in Christ's *school*—that they are always learners of His, and that they learn for the purpose of imparting that information to others who still live in darkness and ignorance.

Very early in the ministry of Jesus, the word *disciple* began to take on the connotation of *follower*. This was because they had set no place as a classroom for the teaching which He did. As seen in a previous comment, His classrooms were wherever He found an audience; and the special teaching and training He did for His disciples was along the highways and hedges. Inasmuch as the disciples *followed* Him from place to place, one understands how the meaning of *followers* became affixed to discipleship. There has never been a time in history, since the

days of Jesus' personal ministry, when the truth that the church is a school has been more pertinent than this day in which we live. The whole world is the classroom and there are billions of potential students. The teachings of Jesus are more direly needed now than ever before. May the fact weigh heavily upon every Christian that if men are ever led to Christ, we, Christians, must be the teachers who impart that message of light and of life and salvation to them.

THE CHURCH IS A SHEEPFOLD

Paul relates a truth which is both surprising and difficult for us to comprehend. He says, "And He put all things under His [Christ] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the *fullness* of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23). It is not possible for you and me to fully understand how the church is or can be the "fullness of Him who fills all in all."

This is the reason why I have been examining the church under these different *figures of speech* or *word pictures*. The ideal would be for us to have a complete, total picture of the church. We could then better understand and appreciate it and it would be easier to tell others what the church is and what it can mean to the world. But, I suppose that an all-sided, complete portrait cannot be drawn, but the marked resemblance between the church and a body, a kingdom, a family, a temple, and other such pictures, can produce a more comprehensive image of the church that will make a beautiful and lasting imprint on our hearts. A fuller view of the Lord's church can definitely help us in its identification and in the appreciation of its importance to mankind.

In laying the foundation for this thinking in Jesus' day, He presented a *likeness* which was readily understandable to the people He addressed. That *comparison* was of God's people to *sheep* and to a *sheepfold*. The Pharisees in the audience did not understand His application of the comparison. Listen to the record of John, "Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them" (John 10:6). The basic lessons of the *representation* His disciples did understand, and, in later years, some of the apostles used the same comparison.

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THE CHURCH IS THE FLOCK

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God ..." (Acts 20:28). "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers ..." (I Peter 5:2). In verse 3, he admonished them to be "examples to the flock." "... he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door ..." (John 10:1). The word is *poimnion*, and the Greek lexicons define it as "flock of Christian disciples." The church at Ephesus was God's *flock*. The Christians whom Peter addressed to various geographical points over the Empire comprised the *flock of God*. To introduce the church to His disciples and others, Jesus drew a beautiful picture of His followers as *sheep*, Himself as the *shepherd* and enunciated some truths concerning both which would characterize them in their relationship to each other and ultimately to the world. Here are some lessons Jesus taught about the flock.

1. **They hear His voice.** "To him the doorkeeper opens and the sheep hear his voice" (John 10:3). "... and they will hear My voice" (verse 16). "My sheep hear My voice" (verse 27). Why does He keep saying that His sheep hear His voice? There is nothing more important for discipleship than listening to what Jesus has

to say. This involves a number of factors: (1) One must hear with attention. In growing up, children do not always listen attentively to what their parents say. The cost of not listening is sorrow and even disaster. (2) One must hear with understanding. To be able to do God's will, we must first understand what the will of Lord is (Ephesians 5:17). (3) One must hear receptively. He must not go away and forget. "... and is not a forgetful hearer" (James 1:25). To all of the churches in Asia, John wrote, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says" (Revelation 2:7). This principle is clearly explained by Jesus in His sermon on the mount. "Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them" (Matthew 7:24).

2. **They follow Him.** "And they sheep follow him [doorkeeper]" (John 10:4). In verse 27, he said, "and they follow Me." Jesus left us "an example, that you should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:21). Christians, as sheep, should follow Jesus, the Shepherd, in everything He taught, and His example in all

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that He did. This means a resigning of our will, a total surrender of ourselves to Him, a foregoing of our feelings and wishes, and without question following closely behind Him. Men do not always want to follow where He leads. In fact, some want to go out ahead of him and, in a fashion, tell Jesus where they want to go. If He leads in a direction which displeases them, they either cease to follow or turn about in another direction. "Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me ...'" (Matthew 8:22). The church will not remain the church of Christ and will not long endure as Christ's sheepfold unless it recognizes this important truth—following after Jesus.

3. **They will not follow a stranger.** "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers" (John 10:5). Jesus is not here teaching that it is impossible for His followers to turn away from Him and go after another. That has always been possible. God made us with the power of choice and He will not take it from us. But knowing and loving the Shepherd and listening to His voice, they refuse, of their own knowledge and volition, to pursue another course or comply with another teaching.

The Christian is admonished frequently to *stand fast*, not to turn back, and never surrender to *enemy forces*. Rather, they are admonished to "watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong [courageous]" (I Corinthians 16:13). "Stand fast in the Lord," Paul comforted the Philippian Christians in his support of them (Philippians 4:1).

There is also the teaching that the Christian should flee certain things. This is not because he is a coward, but because there are dangers which are better avoided and there are temptations which can be averted and warded off by taking flight from them. This does not mean abandoning the faith or evacuating our stronghold. It does mean that by taking this course we thwart the devil, insure our own safety, and increase our own spiritual strength. We make our escape from evil and stand fearfully aloof from all that is false.

Christians should expect such reminders and warnings as: "Flee sexual immorality" (I Corinthians 6:18); "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (I Corinthians 10:14); "But, you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith ..." (I Timothy 6:11-12). There are times

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when one should stand fast and courageously in fighting against wrong, but there are other times when the Christian should shrink from iniquity, shun it, and run from it so as to frustrate sin and prevent calamity. Knowing the dangers of the world and the weakness of human flesh, Paul cautioned Timothy in advance, "Flee also youthful lusts" (II Timothy 2:22).

Jesus is saying that the sheep should not follow strangers. They should not go after false doctrine and false teachers. He was dissuading them from being attracted to anything or anyone except Himself. In later years, they were attracted to others but should not have been. "For I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29). Peter issued a similar warning: "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you ... And many will follow their destructive ways" (II Peter 2:1-2).

In the first century, as in our own time, Christians became enamored by religious leaders with strong personalities and unusual abilities and were captivated by the appeals they made. "... and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18). Our Lord expressed confidence in His sheep that they would not listen to the voice of strangers nor follow them, but rather flee.

THE SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP

Shepherd is another term for the place, the work, and the relationship of Christ to His church. It enlarges our view of Him and His position. It is an endearing term and what makes it so is that it generates confidence, dependence, and love. That Jesus is the Shepherd of the flock, our Shepherd, gives rise to feelings of peace, concordance, and affinity. What is more peaceful and what scene expresses nearness better than sheep huddled together with the shepherd watching over them?

The term *shepherd* is used variously of Jesus in the New Testament. He is called "the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (I Peter 2:25). The writer of Hebrews refers to Him as "that great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews 13:20). Peter speaks of the elders in the local congregations as shepherds, but

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he speaks of Christ as “the Chief Shepherd” (I Peter 5:4). Jesus refers to Himself as “the good Shepherd” (John 10:11, 14). In the development of this lesson, He taught that “there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

As the Shepherd of the sheep, one is immediately impressed with the lesson of authority. “Shepherd of the flock” is just a different way of saying that Christ is the head of His church. He is the King in His kingdom, the Landowner in His vineyard, and the master teacher in His school. In this position of honor and leadership, Jesus:

1. **Leads the flock.** “... and he [shepherd] calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (John 10:3). Jesus says that there is more to it than that: “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him ...” (verse 4). Jesus shows us the way, and He does it by going out ahead. He has left us the best example in everything that we need—our thinking, our speech, and our actions. He has both told and shown us how to handle every situation in life, whether it be the treatment of our enemies, the relationship we sustain to government, or the loving and serving of our fellowman. The church looks for leadership to Him.

2. **He feeds the flock.** He has provided everything we need “to life and godliness” (II Peter 1:3). The church does not have to seek elsewhere for its spiritual food. “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). It is lamentable and dangerous for God’s people to go to the world, to the philosophies of men, to the politicians of nations, or to the social ethics of humanism, and expect to satisfy their appetites. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ...” (Matthew 5:6). He promised to fill our lives and satisfy all our soul’s longings.

3. **He knows His sheep.** This is one of the greatest consolations the Christian has, for implied in the expression “I know My sheep” are love, ownership, and the manifestations of affection. What joy fills our hearts in the certainty that Jesus knows all about us. He has an understanding and a fellowship feeling for us in all of life’s business and concerns. The positiveness and absolute definiteness that He loves and recognizes, perceives, and appreciates all of the circumstances of our lives is the most constraining

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influence the Christian can have. If our lives are not upright, however, this thought can be fearful, for “there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account” (Hebrews 4:13).

4. **There are other sheep.** “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). The implication of the language of Jesus is not a second fold. Lenski, in his comment on this verse, says: “Jesus knows only one church or kingdom of God.” These other sheep were the hosts of future Gentile

believers. They became believers in the same way that the Jews did—hearing the gospel of Christ and becoming obedient to it. “God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:17–18).

5. The Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. “... and I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:15). This truth is the summit of it all. This is not only the culmination, but the very pinnacle of Christianity. Language fails us when we try to describe the significance of this act on the part of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. The sacrifice and the love that prompted it is the median sun and the zenith of any gift of grace ever bestowed on the human race. “... I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). This expression of love on the part of the Shepherd should motivate us, His flock, to a lifetime of following after Him.

May the beauty and power of the church be seen in the various word pictures He has drawn in the pages of His Book.

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