

Study 1. The Church and the Churches

READ: Acts 9: 31 and 11: 19-26

read the surrounding verses thoughtfully! Whichever category it may fall into, it is useful to remember that the word 'church' ALWAYS indicates 'people', and NEVER a building! It is the people who are 'the church' - not the structure in which they may happen to meet!

The New Testament uses a range of phrases when it speaks about Christian congregations in local areas. Think about some of them:-

1. They are **"churches of God"**. (See **1 Corinthians 11: 16 and 1 Thessalonians 2: 14**) This description should help us to grasp the DIGNITY associated with such a company of people.
2. They are **"churches of Christ"**. (See **Romans 16: 16**) Here is a forceful reminder that it is not 'our church' but His; the OWNERSHIP rights are His!
3. They are **"churches of the saints"**. (See **1 Corinthians 14: 33**) This expression points to their MEMBERSHIP. **"Saints"** are those who are 'set apart unto holiness', and we must understand that a local church, in the Biblical sense, is comprised only of saved persons, each one of whom is seen by God as one of His holy ones - a saint.
4. Closely linked to No. 3 above, is the thought that each local church is **"the temple of God"**. (**1 Corinthians 3: 16**) Being made up of **"saints"**, the local church is a dwelling place for God, the Holy Spirit. This description stresses the ideas of PURITY and HOLINESS.

Today, all kinds of strange teachings are taught! It becomes more and more difficult for a young believer to find 'a spiritual home'. The best advice we can offer is that you examine carefully what churches were like in New Testament days. What did they believe? What did they practise? What qualities characterized them, as people? Search for a present-day company of Christians who are attempting to follow the 'pattern' which God has given to us in the Bible!



KEY VERSE: 1 Timothy 3: 15

"I write so that 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."

In Unit A, we have thought mainly about the church in its widest sense. By this we mean the entire company of Christians, from the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2**) to the coming again of the Lord Jesus.

Within these limits, all who genuinely believe in Him as their Saviour and Lord, are His church. Neither nationality, race, colour, nor religious denomination play any part in it - they are **"all one in Christ Jesus"**. (**Galatians 3: 28**) There are many verses where the word 'church' is used in this inclusive sense. Read, for example, **Ephesians 5: 25 and Colossians 1: 18**.

It is equally clear that sometimes the word 'church' is used in a more restricted sense. We read, for example, about **"the church of God at Corinth"** (**1 Corinthians 1: 2**) and about the church in Philemon's house. (**Philemon 1 & 2**) When used in this sense, 'church' is referring to a company of Christians who are all living in the same general area. They comprise what may be termed 'a local church'.

The New Testament, then, has TWO distinct ideas:-

1. ONE 'complete church', made up of all true Christians in this age, as explained in Unit A.
2. MANY 'local churches', made up of believers in a given area, who meet to glorify and praise God and to spread the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you come upon the word 'church' in the Bible, you can usually tell which meaning is intended by carefully examining the context, or setting, in which the word occurs. This means you have to

Study 1. The Church and the Churches

1 EXPLAIN, AS CLEARLY AS YOU CAN, WHAT THE BIBLE'S TWO DIFFERENT USES OF THE WORD 'CHURCH' ARE. 2

2 LOOK UP THESE REFERENCES, SOME OF WHICH REFER TO LOCAL CHURCHES, OTHERS TO THE CHURCH IN ITS COMPLETE SENSE. ARRANGE THE REFERENCES UNDER THE CORRECT HEADING, IN TWO ROWS. *1 CORINTHIANS 16: 19, EPHESIANS 5: 25, MATTHEW 16: 18, ROMANS 16: 5, ACTS 9: 31, EPHESIANS 3: 10, 1 THESSALONIANS 1: 1, COLOSSIANS 1: 18.*

LOCAL:

COMPLETE:

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3 "A 15TH CENTURY CHURCH STANDS IN THE MARKET SQUARE."

a. IN WHAT SENSE IS THE WORD 'CHURCH' USED IN THIS SENTENCE?

b. IN WHAT WAY DOES THE BIBLE'S USE OF THE WORD DIFFER FROM THAT IN THE SENTENCE?

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4 READ *PHILIPPIANS 2: 15*. THESE WORDS WERE WRITTEN TO A CHURCH WHICH WAS TO "SHINE AS LIGHTS . . ." a. HOW DO YOU THINK THE CHURCH WOULD DO THIS?

b. SUGGEST SOME WAYS IN WHICH A 'BIBLE PATTERNED CHURCH' WOULD "SHINE" TODAY.

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5 ANSWER TRUE OR FALSE TO THE FOLLOWING:-

a. True churches belong to Christ.

b. The N.T. tells how the first Christians built ornate, expensive churches.

c. In the Bible, the emphasis is on the people, rather than on the stone work.

d. The New Testament 'pattern' for church life holds good for the 21st century.

e. The N.T. permits both saved and unsaved to have full church membership.

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6 "THE CHURCHES OF THE SAINTS" - *1 CORINTHIANS 14: 33*

a. Who are "the saints"?

b. How does a person become a saint?

c. What do you think are the main responsibilities, or duties, of a saint?

d. Why can a person who is not a saint NOT be a member of a Christian church?

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7 SUGGEST SOME REASONS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF SO MANY KINDS OF 'CHURCHES' TODAY?

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This study sheet belongs to:

Study 4. Local Church Practices - The Lord's Supper

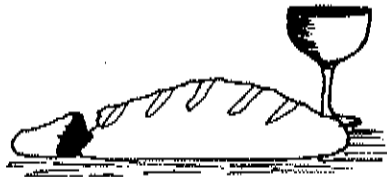
READ: 1 Corinthians 11: 17-34



KEY VERSE: 1 Corinthians 11: 26

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

The second ordinance given by the Lord Jesus to His church is often called **"The Lord's Supper"**. (See v. 20) Sometimes other names are used - such as **"The Breaking of Bread"** or **"Communion"**. These words are also found in the Bible. (See Acts 2: 42 and 1 Corinthians 10: 16)



It was the Lord Jesus, on the very night of His betrayal and arrest, who gave instructions to His disciples about this ordinance. They had all gathered in a large, upstairs room to celebrate the annual Jewish Passover.

While they were gathered together, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to God for it, and then said, **"Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me"**. (v. 24) He then took a cup of wine, and likewise thanked God for it. He explained to His disciples that the cup would act as a symbol of the new covenant (or agreement) in His blood. He then invited them to drink from the cup.

Paul told the Corinthians that by carrying out the Lord's instructions, they would proclaim **"the Lord's death till He comes"**. (v. 26)

It seems that in the early days of the church the Christians attempted to combine the Lord's Supper with a social meal, sometimes called an 'Agape' or 'Love-feast'. Sadly, these 'love-feasts' were open to abuse, and some folk ate and drank far too much. If you read **verses 20-22** again, you will now understand Paul's words of rebuke. Before very long, the 'love-feasts' were dropped, to allow the ordinance, which the Lord Jesus had introduced, to have its proper place.

Now let us focus on **THREE** points which are important throughout the whole of the church age:-

1. THE SIMPLICITY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

In taking bread and wine, the Lord was using two substances which were easily available, even to the poorest people. He did not ask for extravagant ceremonies, or beautiful furnishings. What He requested was very simple! We believe that even in this present time, the Lord Jesus is pleased when His people do as He has requested, simply according to His instructions.

2. THE SACREDNESS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Because it is the LORD'S Supper, it has a very hallowed and special atmosphere about it! Nothing evil must ever be allowed to become mixed with it. This explains why Paul writes so strongly in v. 22, **"What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?"** Their greediness and drunkenness were a disgrace, and were totally out of character with the Lord's Supper. Paul goes on to say, **"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat"**. (v. 28)

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

We do not believe that any change of substance occurs in either the bread or the wine - they both remain exactly what they are! But the bread becomes a **SYMBOL** of His body given for us, just as the cup **REPRESENTS** His blood shed for our forgiveness. (**Matthew 26: 28**) The Lord's Supper, therefore, is very special to Christians, because it is our Lord's chosen way to help us never forget His great sacrifice for us. We remember, in the Supper, how His body was given and His blood was shed, for our salvation. We not only look back to Calvary, but we also look forward to His coming again, as **1 Corinthians 11: 26** teaches.

These two ordinances of the church - Baptism and The Lord's Supper - present a challenge! If you have become a Christian, you should not only be baptized, declaring your association with the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but also declare the Lord's death regularly, by meeting with believers to remember the Lord. Behind these ordinances is all the authority of our Lord Jesus: we, therefore, should not treat them lightly. It is by being obedient and submissive to Him that we show that we truly love Him!

Study 4. Local Church Practices – The Lord's Supper

1 LOOK UP THESE REFERENCES, AND WRITE DOWN THE NAME WHICH IS SUGGESTED IN EACH FOR THE SIMPLE MEAL BY WHICH WE REMEMBER THE LORD:-

1. Acts 2: 42
2. 1 Corinthians 10: 16
3. 1 Corinthians 11: 20

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2 WHEN THE LORD JESUS INTRODUCED THE LORD'S SUPPER:-

- a. What TWO substances did He use?
- b. What did He say each of them would represent?
- c. From this point onwards, what was to be the main reason for Christians 'eating and drinking', in accordance with His instructions?

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3 WHAT PROMPTED PAUL TO SAY TO THE CHRISTIANS AT CORINTH, "WHAT! DO YOU NOT HAVE HOUSES TO EAT AND DRINK IN?" 1 CORINTHIANS 11: 22

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4 IN THE BIBLE READING, PAUL INDICATED WHEN THE LORD'S SUPPER COMMENCED AND WHEN IT WILL END.

- a. From v. 23, write down the words which describe the STARTING POINT of the Lord's Supper.
- b. From v. 26, write down the words which mark the FINISHING POINT of the Lord's Supper.

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5 READ ACTS 20: 7

- a. On what day of the week did Christians meet together?
- b. For what purpose did they meet?
- c. What special significance is attached to the day on which they met?

3

6 ANSWER TRUE OR FALSE TO THE FOLLOWING:-

- a. The bread reminds us of the body of the Lord given for us in His death.
- b. The cup reminds us of the blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
- c. The Lord's Supper was eaten on the last day of the week.
- d. The Lord's Supper is intended ONLY for true believers in the Lord Jesus.

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7 SUGGEST REASONS WHY PAUL URGES CHRISTIANS TO EXAMINE THEMSELVES IN PREPARATION FOR EATING THE LORD'S SUPPER. (SEE 1 CORINTHIANS 11: 27-29)

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100

Total marks for this Unit

Return your study sheets to:
PBS Centre or to:

25

Total marks for this study

This study sheet belongs to:

Study 2. The Structure of a local Church

READ: **Philippians 1: 1, 1 Timothy 3: 1-13 and Titus 1: 5-9**



KEY VERSES: 1 Peter 5: 2 & 3

“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers ... being examples to the flock.”

In the modern world, people form clubs, associations, societies and fellowships of all kinds! A common interest draws people together. Usually, their interest grows as they meet and share with each other. As the club or organization develops, leaders are recognized, and a list of rules is drawn up, to which the members adhere.

The previous Study has shown that a local church is not a humanly arranged society or fellowship. It is very much more than that, for it is indeed **“the church of God”** and **“the temple of God”**. (*1 Corinthians 1: 2 and 3: 16*)

In the light of this, it need not surprise us to discover that God, in His Word, has given instructions about how a local church should be structured. The opening sentence of Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi is a useful ‘key’ in helping us to understand this. The verse says, **“Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons”**. (*Philippians 1: 1*)

There are THREE points here about which we should be clear:

1. All the members of the church are included in the word **“saints”**. They are all ‘God’s holy ones’! As shown in Study 1, a person who is not a saint (i.e. saved) is not a true part of the church.
2. Some of **“the saints”** are **“bishops”**. (Perhaps **“overseers”** is a more easily understood term.) Within the framework of the church, these are the men who, like shepherds, ‘watch over’ the spiritual well-being of the whole church, by their wise advice and sound Bible teaching. It is not the idea of being ‘bosses’, but of being examples and guides to all. Look up the **Key Verses**, and read them!
3. Other **“saints”** are **“deacons”**; this word simply means ‘servants’. It is used in the New Testament to denote those who serve the local church. The deacons’ work may be more ‘down to earth’ than

that of the overseers who act as the ‘shepherds of the flock’. The deacons, nonetheless, are vitally important in the structure of the church.

It is clear, then, from *Philippians 1: 1*, that God has shown us how a local church is to be regulated. This teaching is expanded in the other Bible Readings. Note these points:-

- i) Another name for a **“bishop”** (or **“overseer”**) is an **“elder”**. Read *Acts 20: 17*, where Paul invites **“the elders of the church”** to come to meet him: note that in *verse 28* he tells them (i.e. the elders) that **“the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God”**. Look also at *Titus 1: 5 & 7*, where the words **“elders”** and **“bishops”** (or **“overseers”**) are used interchangeably.
- ii) It is God’s plan that there should always be more than one elder, or overseer, in any given church. Read *Acts 14: 23 and Titus 1: 5*. Where this pattern is followed, it acts as a safeguard against any one man taking control of the whole church.

For both elders and deacons, the Bible insists on very high moral qualifications! The qualities listed in *1 Timothy 3* and in *Titus 1* stress the need for church leaders to be men whose lives are marked by good behaviour. They must be **“not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, . . . just, holy, self-controlled”**. (*Titus 1: 7 & 8*) It is God Himself, by His Holy Spirit, who puts them into positions of leadership, and, therefore, they must be careful to live at all times according to His will.

The New Testament portrays churches where every one is a believer in the Lord Jesus. All the members belong to ‘the family of God’. This is not to say, however, that all members have the same role, or function, in the church. Godly, mature men are ‘elders’; some others are ‘deacons’, serving the church in helpful ways. Those who are younger benefit from their example and from their care. Our responsibility is to respect them, and **“to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake”**. (*1 Thessalonians 5: 13*) All of us should also **“obey . . . and be submissive”** (*Hebrews 13: 17*), always remembering that true shepherds lead their flocks into the best pastures!

Study 2. The Structure of a local Church

1 SUGGEST SOME WAYS IN WHICH A CHURCH, IN THE BIBLICAL SENSE, DIFFERS FROM AN ORDINARY, MAN-MADE ORGANIZATION.

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2 PHILIPPIANS 1: 1 USES THREE TERMS TO DESCRIBE THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI. WHICH WORD IS USED FOR:-

- a. The members who serve the church in some special way?
- b. All the members of the church?
- c. The members who are leaders of the church?

3

3 THE KEY VERSES PICTURE THE CHURCH AS 'A FLOCK', OVER WHICH ARE 'SHEPHERDS'.

- a. What other name can be given to the 'shepherds'?
- b. In what ways should the 'shepherds' be "examples to the flock"?
- c. Read the next verse in 1 Peter 5. Who is "the Chief Shepherd"?
- d. In what way will 'the shepherds' be rewarded?

4

4 READ AGAIN PAUL'S WORDS TO THE ELDERS FROM EPHESUS, IN ACTS 20: 28

- a. In this verse, what does he tell them their duty is?
- b. The verse suggests a reason why "the church of God" is so special to God. What is it?

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5 CHECK THE SENTENCE WHICH AGREES WITH THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE, AND WRITE OUT A BIBLE VERSE TO SUPPORT YOUR CHOICE.

- a. One person should take full responsibility for leadership in the church.
- b. There should always be more than one man to guide, instruct and care for the church.

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6 READ 1 TIMOTHY 3: 1-7.

- a. Express, as clearly as you can, the meaning of verses 4 & 5.
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- b. Choose two of the other characteristics in this passage for a man who is a leader in a local church, and give reasons why you consider them to be important.
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7 WRITE A SHORT PARAGRAPH TO EXPLAIN WHAT A YOUNG CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE SHOULD BE TOWARDS THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH TO WHICH HE/SHE BELONGS. (CLUE! READ THE VERSES MENTIONED IN THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE STUDY!)

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This study sheet belongs to:

Study 3. Local Church Practices - Baptism

READ: Acts 2: 41 & 42 and Romans 6: 1-14



KEY VERSE: Romans 6: 4

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Local churches, from the time of Christ's apostles onwards, have tried to fulfil the instructions given by their Head, the Lord Jesus. These instructions are often called 'ordinances' - a name which emphasizes the fact that they carry with them all the authority of Christ Himself. They are 'ordinances' because He is the One who commanded them to be observed.

In this Study, we shall concentrate on BAPTISM, an ordinance which was introduced by the Lord Jesus just before His return to Heaven, following His resurrection. To His apostles He gave these instructions, **"All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". (Matthew 28: 18 & 19)**

In the earlier Studies of this series, we have noted that the history of the first churches is recorded in **The Acts of the Apostles**. When we read that part of the Bible, we can see very clearly that all who became Christians were baptized. For example, **Acts 2: 38-41** tells us about the baptism of several thousand people; **8: 36-38** records the baptism of one man; **16: 15** recounts the baptism of an entire household.

Arising from a thoughtful reading of **The Acts**, there are several points which we ought to note:

1. People were always baptized AFTER repenting and believing the gospel. **See Acts 8: 36 & 37; and 16: 29-34.** In the light of this, we should turn from our sins, and receive the Lord Jesus as our Saviour BEFORE we are baptized.
2. They were baptized **"in the name of Jesus Christ"**. (**Acts 2: 38, 10: 48, 19: 5**) This indicates that they had accepted His authority over their lives. They acknowledged Him as both their Lord and Saviour.

3. They were baptized by being immersed in water. Indeed, the word 'baptize' means 'dip'. The **Key Verse** says that baptism is like being buried and being raised again; this proves that we should go completely under the water, when being baptized!

4. Both men and women were baptized. (**Read Acts 8: 12**) In the matter of being saved, there is no distinction between the sexes; the same applies with regards to baptism - each of us needs, personally, to obey the Lord Jesus!

Baptism is a 'picture' or a symbol, of a spiritual truth. We need to understand clearly that the water used is not 'holy water'; neither does the person who baptizes a new Christian have special powers. Being baptized does not MAKE anyone a Christian! Rather, it is a voluntary acknowledgement that we now BELONG to the Lord Jesus Christ. In our baptism we are saying that He is our Lord.

To understand the spiritual truth which is symbolized in baptism, we must think carefully about the Bible Reading, **Romans 6: 1-14**. Here Paul is teaching the Christians that to belong to the Lord Jesus involves being associated with Him in the great events of His death, His burial and His resurrection. Just as He died, so God sees us as 'dead' with Him; as He was buried and was raised again, so, in God's reckoning, have we! Our former sinful lives are finished! We now reckon ourselves **"to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord"**. (**See Romans 6: 11**)

Look at the diagram at the bottom of the page. It helps us to understand that when a Christian goes down into the water, at baptism, he is showing that he and his old life have been crucified and buried with Christ. As he comes up out of the water, he is showing that he is going to live a new life controlled by the Lord Jesus.

As God's children, we should obey Him in every possible way! If you are a Christian, have you been baptized in obedience to His Word?



Study 3.

Local Church Practices - Baptism

1 READ ACTS 2: 41 & 42, AGAIN.

- a. How many people were baptized?
- b. According to v. 41, what had they done BEFORE they were baptized?
- c. According to v. 42, what did they do AFTER they were baptized?

4

2 'BAPTISM IS ONE OF THE ORDINANCES OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.'

- a. What is meant by 'an ordinance'?
- b. What authority did the Lord Jesus claim to have, just before He returned to Heaven?

3

3 IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT IS TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES, WRITE SHORT ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS:-

- a. WHO should be baptized?
- b. HOW should baptism be carried out?
- c. WHY should a Christian be baptized?
- d. WHAT is baptism according to Peter's words in 1 PETER 3 : 21?

4

4 ANSWER EITHER QUESTION (I) OR QUESTION (II):-

- (i) Have you ever seen a person being baptized in water? Describe what took place.
- (ii) Read ACTS 8: 35-39. The Ethiopian asked, "What hinders me from being baptized?" Write, IN YOUR OWN WORDS, an account of what happened after this question.

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5 A SYMBOL IS A MARK, OR SIGN, WHICH STANDS FOR SOMETHING MUCH GREATER THAN ITSELF. OF WHAT THREE EVENTS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LORD JESUS IS BAPTISM A SYMBOL?

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6 GOD VIEWS BELIEVERS IN THE LORD JESUS AS PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED, BEEN BURIED, AND BEEN RAISED AGAIN WITH CHRIST. (ROMANS 6)

- a. In what way can Christians show that they have accepted this teaching?
- b. What is meant by walking "in newness of life"? (Romans 6: 4)

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7 FOR A CHRISTIAN TO MAKE PROGRESS SPIRITUALLY, OBEYING GOD IS VERY IMPORTANT.

- a. Mention another way, in addition to being baptized, in which a Christian should be obedient to God.
- b. Write out 1 Samuel 15: 22.

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