

# *The Church*

# THE CHURCH

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God has been moving wonderfully by His Spirit in these last days, revealing hidden truth concerning the church. The perfecting of the church is that which God has begun to do. He is bringing His Church together that it may be one even as Christ prayed in John 17:21-23. All gifts and ministries are given for this purpose.

In this article it is our sincere desire to teach, by God's help, the revelation He has been unfolding to us by the Holy Spirit since February of 1948, when He visited us here at Sharon Schools in such a glorious way. God has been unfolding truth, line upon line ever since, and we thank and praise Him because He is still moving on by His Spirit. We will look at this truth under these headings:

1. WHAT THE CHURCH IS.
2. WHAT ITS FUNCTION IN THE WORLD IS.
3. WHAT PLAN GOD HAS FOR IT IN THE FUTURE
4. HOW IT IS GOVERNED.

The church is not a building on the corner of a street where people go and have a service and then go home. It is not a religious denomination or organization. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, (Petros)-(Little Rock), and upon this rock (Petra)-(Christ) I will build my church (Ecclesia); and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The English word "church" comes from the Greek word "Ecclesia" meaning called out ones. The name church is used approximately seventy-five times in the New Testament. God puts a high value on her for she is a purchased possession. The Church was purchased by

Christ, not with silver or gold but by the precious blood of Christ. I. Peter 1:18,19, Acts 20:28.

The church is called out of the world and cleansed from sin by faith in the redemptive work of Christ. Rom. 3:23-27. When Jesus was here upon the earth He taught using earthly illustrations to describe deep spiritual truths. The Scripture uses many earthly illustrations to describe the church, which bears out the importance of it in God's eyes. Here are some of them with brief comments:

1. A BUILDING - Temple. In Matt. 16:18 Jesus referred to a building when He first spoke of the church to Peter saying, " ... thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Peter likens the church as unto a stone building, calling the believers lively stones. I Peter 2:5-8. In constructing a stone building, lime stones are fitted together, using mortar made of lime, sand, and water. When the mortar is exposed to the air and sun, it hardens and becomes stone again. Thus the many stones become one. Mortar is a type of the Holy Spirit working in us, blending us together into one stone in Christ, into a Holy Temple, a place of worship, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, I Peter 2:51, such sacrifices as presenting ourselves as living sacrifices. Rom. 12:1 also, the sacrifices of praise, doing good, and sharing with others. Heb. 13:15-16. It is the place where God chooses to dwell. Eph. 2:19-22.

It is God's building. I Cor. 3:9. Christ is a son over this house. Heb. 3:6, "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

It must be built solidly upon a good foundation if it is to be strong to stand the storms and floods arrayed against it. This Temple is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. Eph. 2:19-22. I Peter 2:4-8.

2. A BODY. Christ is the head of the body, the church. Col. 1:18. Eph. 1:22-23.

The Church is a many membered body, all with different and important ministries. Rom. 12:3-8. I Cor. 12:12-31. Eph. 4:11-16. As the head is not complete without the body, we learn through this illustration, the function of His church and how He has ordained the body to complete His ministry which He began when on earth, as the head. In being acquainted with the function of the human body we understand how that we, as members of the body of Christ, are dependent upon the head for direction, and upon each member's gifts and ministry, just as the body is dependent upon each of its members, and has need of all. I Cor. 12:12, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." Also Rom. 12:4-5, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another."

Many members but only one body.

3. THE BRIDE - Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom - John 3:29-30, Rev. 21:9. The Song of Solomon gives us a beautiful picture of Christ and His Church.

Matt. 25:1-13 has its setting in the old Jewish wedding. There is much to be learned through this picture, not only the bride but her attendants, pictured here as ten virgins, were to be pure and chaste, and filled with the Holy Spirit, ever watchful and ready for the coming of the bridegroom.

When we think of a bride, we think of one clothed in white, representing purity and righteousness. She is beautiful in the eyes of the Bridegroom, and her eyes reflect her love for him. She is the picture of submission. Nothing in this life could portray the oneness of Christ and His church any better or more beautifully than that of marriage. It is the most intimate relationship a man and woman can know, God said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: 'and they twain shall be one flesh. " Matt. 19:5.

Paul in Eph. 5:21-33 teaches deep truth on that which makes a happy and perfect marriage in the eyes of God. In verse 32 we read, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." In our submission to Christ we can know a closeness and fellowship with Him that goes far beyond our natural understanding. Let us seek to be one with Him.

4. THE FAMILY OF GOD. God is Our Father, Matt. 6, Eph. 3:15. comes our elder brother. Rom. 2:9-13.

We must be born into this family. John 3:3, I John 5:1.

God recognizes us as His children John 1:12, I John 5:1, Eph. 5:1.

Many Scriptures teach us how we begin as babes and grow up into maturity to be manifest as His Sons. Rom. 8:14 tells us:

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Also Rom. 8:29: We are taught how we are to one day be conformed into the image of His Son.

5. A CITY - many dwelling places, one city. Christ is the Light of the City of God. Rev. 21:22-23. This city has a foundation. Abraham looked for the city that had foundations whose maker and builder is God. Heb. 11:10-16. In this life there are no dwelling places that are stable and abiding. In Heb. 13:14 we read, "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Gal. 4:26, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." According to Heb. 12:22 we have come unto that city. Rev. 3:12 and Rev. 21:9 tells us that the overcomer is to have a part in the temple, and the city of God. This city sends out light far and wide. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Matt. 5:14.

6. HUSBANDRY, GARDEN, OR VINEYARD. "Ye are God's husbandry." I Cor. 3:9. The Song of Solomon 4:12-16. God our Father is the husbandman and He cares for His garden, His vineyard.

John 15:1. Matt. 21:33-46. A Husbandry produces food for the hungry. It gives off a sweet fragrance.

It is delightful and full of beauty. Many plants make up the one garden.

The oneness of the church is again set forth here in this object lesson.

7. VINE. Christ the main stock of the vine; we are the branches. John 15:1-17. In this passage of Scripture we have a beautiful picture set before us, presenting wonderful truth. In this illustration we have again the truth of Christ, and His called out ones being one, because you cannot really separate a vine from its branches, they are one. Our Heavenly Father is the Husbandman that cares, and dresses this vine. Each branch is to bear fruit; it is a very solemn fact that the branches that bear no fruit are pruned, and taken away. The branches can bear fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. The key of how fruitful the branch is, is its abiding in the vine. The life in the main stock of the vine, is the life that goes into all the branches. Christ's life is eternal life; it is an uncreated life. Though they nailed Him to a cross and buried Him in a tomb, yet, this uncreated life could not be held by the chains of death, and up from the grave He arose. Hallelujah. We know this life now as the resurrection life. When you believe in Christ as your Saviour, this life is imparted to you. The more you abide in Him, this life will flow through you, cleansing and quickening you. It will quicken even your mortal body. Rom. 8:11. We are joined to Christ like the branch and the vine; let not the things of this world come into your life, causing a restriction in the flow of this life, or causing you to be pruned from the vine. The life of the vine is not only in the branches, but also in the fruit. All who partake of this fruit partake of the life of the vine. A list of the fruit of this life-giving flow is found in Gal. 5:22-23. In John 15:16 we read, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." One of the qualities that this life is rich in, is love. Let the Love of Christ abide in you.

8. A FLOCK OF SHEEP. God often speaks of His people as sheep. Ps. 95:7, Ps. 100:3. Sheep are tender natured animals, very dependent upon the shepherd for food and protection. They are animals that are hard to drive but are easy to lead. If the shepherd loves his sheep, they will soon know his voice and follow him. Jesus said in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

We are His sheep. I Peter 2:25, "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." In John 10:1-18 Christ is presented as the Good Shepherd, and we the sheep of His pasture. He gave Himself for us, and will guide us into green pastures, and beside the still water. He provides a fold, a place of shelter, rest, and safety. Is. 53:6. Ps. 23. Heb. 4:1-16.

In the church God sets elders to be shepherds, to take oversight of the flock, and feed them. Acts 20:28. I Peter 5:1-4. It is to His little flock He promises the Kingdom. Luke 12:32.

9. A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD. I Peter 2:9. A priest is one who stands between God and man to bring man's needs before God and convey the answer back to man. We have examples of godly men in the Old Testament who exercised the office of a priest. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18, ministered the first communion (bread & wine) to Abraham, and blessed him. Abraham prayed on Lot's behalf and God delivered Lot out of Sodom. Gen. 18:17-28. Moses interceded for Israel. Ex. 20:19,20 also 32:11-14. Job offered sacrifices for his children. Job 1:5. Then came the Levitical priesthood. Christ was made a priest after the order of Melchisedek which is a Royal Priesthood. His name means King of Righteousness and King of Salem - King of Peace. He was so identified with the eternal one, all earthly identity was lost. Christ's priesthood differs from the Levitical priesthood as did Melchisedek's. His appointment was not of men. Heb. 7:16 tells us He was made a priest not after the law of carnal commandments but after the power of an endless life. The work of Christ follows the pattern of the Levitical priesthood. He possessed all the qualities that were required. Heb. 4:14-16, Heb. 5:1-6. It was necessary that a sacrifice for sin be offered to make sinful man righteous so that he could have

communion with a righteous God. Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice and took His blood into the true most Holy Place in the Heavens. His blood atoned for the sins of men once and for all. Heb. 9:22-28. Not only has He opened the door into the Holy Place for us by His blood, but has made it possible for His church to enter into the Holy of Holies and become Kings and Priests with Him. Rev. 1:5-6, Rev. 5:9-10. The church one day will be the Kingdom of Priests that God planned Israel to be. Ex. 19:6. They failed when they worshipped an idol. Let us press on and enter into this Royal Priesthood.

10. A CHOSEN GENERATION. Christ headed that new generation. He was a Son of God. He came to call the whosoever out of the world that they may believe on Him and He would give unto them eternal life. John. 3:16.

He gives us of His own Spirit that we no longer belong to this earthly realm but become citizens of the heavenly realm. Eph. 2:19.

The whole creation waits for the day when the sons are fully manifested. Rom. 8:19. Christ is our eldest brother. Rom. 8:29. He is our Captain to lead His called and chosen as sons into glory. Heb. 2:9-11.

11. A HOLY NATION. Christ brings His church into the Kingdom and lets them live under His rule, for He is Lord and King. He does this before His Kingdom is established on the earth. He prepares the church to rule and reign with Him in the Kingdom age. Luke 17:20-21.

Through the cleansing of His blood and His Word, by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, God makes a people Holy in this present evil age. I Peter 1:15-25.

He calls His church to a rest remained for the people of God. Heb. 10. His will is to be carried out in people. Eph. 5:17.

12. A PECULIAR PEOPLE. A people for a possession. A people who do not belong to this world and again Jesus is their leader. John 15:18-27.

A people of faith. They are peculiar to this world, for they look for the real that is eternal yet unseen to the natural eye. II Cor. 4:18. Heb. 11 teaches us the peculiarities of the ones in Old Testament days that were called. By faith they set aside all earthly desires that they might attain unto the first resurrection, the resurrection that will be before the kingdom age, so they can rule in it.

The world knows nothing about The church walks in light now forth the praises of Him who them out of darkness.

13. AN ARMY. Reference is made in the Old Testament to God's people being an army. When this move began, God revealed much from Ezekiel's vision. Ezek. 37:1-10. As it was in that day, if Israel be dead to the things of God, and separated into many nations, so also the church was in our day divided into many denominations, and cold. By the outpouring of His Spirit, a mighty prophetic move, He would bring together His body, and they would be one like a mighty army.

The vision conveys unity, strength, power, and a beautiful order that comes from submission. The church will be strong because Jesus said in Matt. 16:18, " ... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

14. STEWARDS. The important message to be learned here is submission to Christ, our Lord and Master, and those that are set over us in the Lord. A steward must be faithful, I Cor. 4:2. Luke 12:42-48, watchful, diligent, Luke 12:35-41. Matt. 25:14-30, and dedicated to our Lord and Master. Luke 16:9-13.

In the final warfare recorded in Rev. 17:8-18 the Lamb of God will overcome the beast. Notice Verse 14, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

Some may feel that some of the illustrations I have used refer to companies within the church, and this may be true, but the lesson being taught is applicable to all who would desire full sonship.

The way in which God calls and adds to the church is clearly stated in the Word of God.

God's first calling was to Abram. The first church was Israel. It is referred to in Acts 7:38 as the church in the wilderness. They were His chosen people.

The Christian Church had its beginning on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:38-41.

Thousands of souls who heard the sermon of Peter with the accompanying signs and wonders enquired, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them. Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they that gladly received His word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

1. They repented.
2. They believed.
3. They were baptized.
4. They were added to the disciples -- The Church.

NOTE:

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to be saved. Acts 16:30,31, Rom. 4:5-8, John 3:16. Rom. 5:1, Acts 5:14.

To be saved is to be added to the church. Acts 2:47.

IT'S FUNCTION IN THE WORLD:

The main function of the church in this world is to manifest and glorify the Son.

When Jesus was here upon the earth in the flesh He manifest God His Father. I Tim. 3:16, John 14:7-12, John 17:1-4.

Jesus prayed in John 17 that even as He had glorified the Father, that the Father would glorify Him. In order for this to come about He prayed for the church that it might be sanctified, set apart from the world, made Holy, and that He might be in the church as God dwelled in Him, that they may be one and that the love of the Father may be in them, so that the world might see and believe in Him.

God gives us these various pictures in His Word in speaking of His church, teaching us how that everyone of them producing to their fullness by the contribution of every part would exalt the Christ.

What a picture, the church functioning like a healthy body with every member contributing! Every need that arose would be ministered to in mighty power.

Likewise the building, the temple, rising to its completeness, inhabited of God by His Spirit, certainly proclaims the glory of the risen Christ and on and on we could go.

When the Greeks came to the disciples and asked to see Jesus and they told Jesus. His answer was John 12:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

What Jesus was saying here was that if He died for the sins of the world, they that believed in Him would be able to be like Him. He would be manifest in them.

The church is to be a witness of Him. Acts 1:8. The church is to preach the gospel in the world. Not that everyone is what we think of as a preacher, but everyone as members of the body, in their walk and

in their particular ministry proclaim that Jesus saves, and that He changes lives.

Those that believe and are baptized shall be saved. Mark 16:15,16.

Called, like Israel of old, to be a justice from henceforth even forever. The people for His name, with the laws of written upon our hearts. Heb. 8:10, I Peter 2:10. There is much that could be said here in regards to the way each member of the body functions, a particular member and ministry but we will have to leave that for another time.

#### GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH IN THE FUTURE:

In Col. 1:18-19 we read: "And He (Christ) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him (Christ) should all fullness dwell." In Col. 2:9 we read: "For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness (or completeness) of the Godhead bodily."

Christ completes the Godhead but I also want you to see that the church is the completeness of Christ. This is actually what is taught in Col. 1:18, 19 and also in Eph. 1:22-23: (God) "Hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness (completeness) of him that filleth all in all."

The body completes the head so that the two are one.

When the kingdom of God is established on the earth, Christ will not rule alone but with His body. Rev. 1:5-6. II Tim. 2:12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." In Is. 9:6-7 the prophet declared, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and

to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

This prophecy was not just spoken of Christ’s first coming, as Christ the head, but also of the time when He would come and establish His kingdom upon the earth, and also His rulership in the eternal ages to come.

And so the prophecies speak of Christ the head and body, as King. The government shall be on His shoulder. That’s a part of the body. I Cor. 12: 27 , "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. God will continue to add to His governing body in the Kingdom and also in the ages to come. Keep this in mind as we speak a little on companies later on. Eph. 1:3-10 Weymouth conveys God's great plan for the church in the future, on into the ages to come.

What God has declared concerning the church will one day come to pass. It will come into perfection.

God's plan calls that one creation will be restored to head in Christ, just as it has been presented in the above passage and also in I Cor. 15:22-28.

In verse 23 we notice that God has an order in bringing all into life, perfection, that full maturity.

And while all the teaching we have given is for the whole church, nevertheless we believe God restores the church through dealing with various companies, and these truths apply to each one as they come up the ladder. One day we will see the whole called-out company, His body, perfected, then Israel, then eventually the whole world.

The company God is dealing with now as we know it, is a first fruits company, James 1:18, and there are other companies within His called-out number, but we will not say much about them. What we do

desire and are concerned about is growing up in Him, as He has revealed to us. That is our responsibility. But let us not be high-minded but realize God is dealing with all believers and the world, in preparation for restoring the whole creation. Praise God!

The following is a teaching of the revelation given in 1951. Let us take heed to it, because it is still truth. God now is calling for the Sons' Company, a first fruit company. Rev. 12 teaches us this: When God speaks of the church, He means the called-out ones wherever they might be found or for what reason they may have been called-out. There are groups of God's people everywhere, each in different stages of growth and experience. Some people are called-out of the world but do not believe in any further experience or revelation. Others are called out from those who have embraced salvation to a further experience of sanctification. From the sanctified people are called out a baptized people. From the baptized people are called out a gifted people. From the gifted people are called out a fruitful people. And finally there will be a calling out of those who have reached the maturity of sonship. The particular body of people where you worship, undoubtedly was called forth at one time from some other group of God's people. Around their present revelation of truth, therefore, they are a called-out assembly. There is therefore, a church within a church; a wheel within a wheel. In Gideon's army there was a special chosen company of three hundred; an army within an army. In David and his four hundred men there was an Israel within Israel who finally took the Kingdom. Israel was called "The church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). They were God's called-out ones. They were called out of the bondage of Egypt. Many stages of consecration may be witnessed even amongst natural Israel. There was a company called "the mixed multitude", that went up out of Egypt with Israel, and then there was Israel in general, who were called to a greater measure of consecration as the people of the Lord. Then from amongst them there was a tribe of the priesthood called to a still closer walk with the Lord in a still greater measure of consecration. Of all that came out of Egypt by Moses, Joshua and Caleb alone, with the younger generation, were called to a still newer experience of entering the promised land. All these companies were called out ones but some were called to go where others refused to go. The New

Testament church, called forth by the apostles, was called forth from what remained of the church in the wilderness, (which was Israel), with the addition of the Gentiles who were called out through the ministry of the apostle Paul. This proves that one church or called-out assembly can come forth from another church or called-out assembly. From the formal and sectarian ranks and the confusion of Babylon, a church is now coming forth; a church of spiritually endued saints, called out to attain the maturity of sonship. God is now raising up the builders (the five ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) to build this new body who will be a habitation of God through the Spirit, and they in turn will perfect all of the others who are called out, and raise their experience from glory where they now reside unto the glories that are above them. This will continue until all believers have been raised to perfection, until the entire church will be a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. God recognizes all believers as being His children but He does not recognize them all as being of one stature. He still sees some as babes, some children, some young men and some fathers. There will be no divisions over man-made doctrines. The doctrines of the apostles will be established again. There will be no division as at Corinth over the personality of men, for personalities shall be swallowed up in the glory of the ministries which God has given. All God's people will be brought into unity some glorious day, but now, first of all, a body is being formed by the Spirit of God who will be a first-fruit company, a group of forerunners to live and demonstrate that perfect unity of the Spirit; and through that body all other believers will one day enjoy the same blessed experience. In this great universal church, composed of many different companies, each in its own sphere of spiritual maturity, there should be no division on the ground of certain spiritual experiences. Those who profess to have greater light should show the Spirit of Christ in toleration for those who cannot see. It must always be the aim of those who believe they are higher, to lift others up to their level of experience. Though there came a day of separation between Abraham and Lot, Abraham in the higher experience that he had with God always directed a loving hand back to his carnal nephew, who chose the way of Sodom and who could not see Abraham's faith. Let those who are coming away from the selfish ambitions of Lot, and who are believing that God is greater

than the things of this world, always seek to intercede for those who do not manifest the growth of the Spirit. Let us seek to lift others higher, remembering that there is also another level above that of Abraham, even the experience of Melchisedek who was without "beginning of days or end of life" who blessed Abraham: and undoubtedly "the less is blessed by the better."

#### ITS GOVERNMENT:

The government of the Church is for the implementing of God's order for the Church to walk in. It is also the order that will be established on the earth in the Kingdom age. In this Move of the Spirit, God is revealing and restoring to the Church His order that will bring the Church into oneness and unity.

God has planned and ordained that in the last days He would bring natural Israel, that has been scattered over all the earth and among all people, back to the land that He has promised them through their father, Abraham. God has also planned and ordained that in the last days He would gather together His Church, out of the many spiritual nations (denominations), where they have been scattered and separated by divers kinds of doctrines and creeds, and bring them into Christ and make them one in Him, and this, too, will become a reality.

It may be hard for some to believe that this will come to pass, but let me bring to your minds some of the Scriptures and truths that God has shown us in the way He has been leading us.

In Ezekiel 37:1-14, we have a picture of both Israel and the Church in their scattered condition. The Prophet saw in this vision a valley of dry bones and even he, when asked, "Can these bones live?" replied, "Oh Lord, Thou knowest". It may look like a hopeless condition, but when God decreed that the body should come together, then nothing can prevent it. What is impossible in the natural, God will, through His Spirit, accomplish it for He can do even as the Psalmist said: "He sendeth forth His Spirit, He reneweth the face of the earth". Ps. 104:30. As the prophet Ezekiel obeyed the command of God and began to prophesy, there was a noise and shaking as the bones came

together, bone to his bone, sinews and flesh came upon them. Then He prophesied to them again, and life came into them and they arose and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. What a picture! Separation and weakness changed into oneness and strength, impossible to man, but brought about by the operation of a spiritual gift and ministry.

The purpose for which God has restored the gifts of the Spirit is to bring forth ministries, by them an order will be established in the Church that will cause all its members which have been separated and kept apart by several doctrines, to flow together even as described in Eph. 4:15-16. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Jesus prayed for the unity of His chosen ones. John 17:21-23, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and has loved them, as thou hast loved me."

I am sure we all look forward in anticipation to the day when the church will have been made perfect in one, the Father and Son dwelling within each member, radiating forth, causing the world to believe in Jesus.

In coming to know God through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, one of the first things we learn about Him is that He is a God of order. Everything concerning our universe, which is the works of His hands, speaks of order. Every star, planet, along with the earth, moon and sun, move along in their proper orbit that God has set for them. The Scripture teaches us God has an order for Israel and they also teach us that He has one for the church. I Cor. 14:26 - "that all things be done unto the edifying". Verse 33 - "God is not the author of confusion but

of peace as in all the churches." Verse 40 - "Let all things be done decently and in order."

From the time of the calling of Abraham we have pointed out in the Scriptures a pattern of government for God's elect that is different to any other form of government in the world. It was for Israel, it is for the church today, it is for the kingdom tomorrow; and I am sure it will be in the ages to come, for He has said, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." Is. 9:7. His form of government is not a democracy but a theocracy. God being supreme, either ruling directly or through those whom He chooses and sets. From the beginning of this present creation until the calling of Abraham, God dealt with the whole world, and He took direct charge, but when it pleased Him to raise up a special people for Himself through Abraham, He also shared His rulership. He made him a father over his own household, and a shepherd over those that went with him to the land that God called him to. As his family increased, so also his responsibility, but God added to Him others to share the rulership of Israel. The office that God instituted then was that of an elder.

There were elders of families, (Gen. 50:7), elders of congregations, (Lev. 4:15), elders of cities (Deut. 19:12), elders of tribes (Deut. 5:23), elders of the nation, Israel, (Ex. 3:16).

The office of eldership was carried on into the church age and will carry on into the kingdom age. Jesus spoke of the faithful becoming rulers over cities - Matt. 25:21-23. Paul also wrote, "If we suffer (with Him), we shall also reign with him", II Tim. 2:12. An elder's office is one of rulership, I Tim. 3:4.

The word "elder" in the Greek signifies old, aged, bearded. While he may not altogether be an old person, we do understand from this that he must be a man of maturity, with experience in living and walking with God, not a youth or novice.

In Israel, the father of the home was the elder; he held this position for life. It was his duty to instruct and guide his family in all the order

God had given Israel to walk in. When his son established a home of his own, he became the elder of his family, but on his return to his father's home, he became subject to the eldership of his father. The picture we have here is true in the church, for the ministry of an elder is the ministry of a father. In the church, there are three levels of eldership:

1. The apostles, who are responsible for guiding the universal church in the order of God.
2. The elders who are responsible for the local churches, to teach and guide them in the order and truth that has been committed unto them by the apostles.
3. The husbands and fathers who, like the Israelite fathers, are responsible for their own family being established in the truth that comes from God through the other offices of eldership.

#### APOSTLES:

The Greek word that "apostle" comes from is "apostolos", meaning a sent one, also messenger. The apostle is not elected by the people, but called and appointed by the will of God. Gal. 1:1.

**PAUL, an APOSTLE, (not of men neither by man, BUT BY JESUS CHRIST and GOD THE FAATHER, who raised Him from the dead).**

No power in this world can displace the apostle of Christ from that office. The only way it can be dissolved is through sin or lack of consecration. Paul said, "For I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (Disapproved)" I Cor. 9:27.

Only through an intemperate life and failure to walk in the perfect will of the Lord could Paul ever have lost the apostleship which had been committed unto him. Paul was not appointed by other apostles,

but Peter, James, and John, recognized that his call and ministry was of God. Gal. 2:8-9.

The following Scriptures teach us that apostleship is a Divine call and Appointment. Luke 6:13, "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles."

Acts 1:1-2, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen. "

Romans 1:1-5, "Paul, A servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name."

Eph. 4:7-8, "But unto everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Verse 11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

The five ministries mentioned here are all apostolic and were found in those who were apostles in the early church. Paul refers to himself as a teacher. II Tim. 1:11, Jesus gave Peter a shepherd ministry, John 21:15-17, and John and Peter likened their ministries to the universal church as unto the elders (shepherds) of the local churches, III John 1, I Peter 5:1. They are a travelling ministry that circulates through the local churches. Their particular work is described in the Scripture as one that lays a foundation for the church to be built upon and in so doing becomes a part of the foundation. For the church is not only pictured in the Scriptures as a body, but as a house. Heb. 3:6, and a

temple, Eph. 2:21, and the members are living stones. While they minister to one another they build upon the foundation laid by the apostles, I Cor. 3:10, and become a part of the superstructure, I Peter 2:5.

The following Scriptures point work and ministry of the apostle, 3:10-11. Paul states: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

This is the foundation (rock) that Jesus said He would build His Church upon. Matt. 16:18.

The apostolic ministry presents Christ as the Redeemer, who loved and gave Himself for the Church, Eph. 5:25, that it may be rooted and grounded in Him. Eph. 3:17.

Turning now to Eph. 2:19-22, we come to the Scripture that teaches us that the apostles and prophets become a part of the foundation. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The foundation of the Church is Christ in three aspects:

1. Redeemer and source of all life.
2. The Anointed One (ministries).
3. The Word of God (the Scriptures).

The chief corner stone, Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, the Saviour of the Body, Eph. 5:23, the source of its life, I Cor. 15:22.

The one that gives ministry gifts to the church, I Cor. 12:5, Eph. 4:11, these gifts cannot be separated from Him. Our ministry is the anointing we have received from God. II Cor. 1:21.

I John 2:20 and 27 teaches us that anointing is truth. What is truth? He person. Jesus said, "I am the truth". 14:6.

A true ministry, whether travelling or local, cannot be thought of as differing from the anointing. II Cor. 4:1-2, "THEREFORE, SEEING we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Verse 7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us".

Whatever ministry Christ calls us into, He comes by His Spirit to make His abode in us as such. John 14:23, He is the apostle; Heb. 3:1, He is the prophet; John 4:19, He is the evangelist (Greek "euggelist", announcer of good tidings); Luke 8:1, He is the pastor (Greek "poimen", translated "pastor" once, Eph. 4:11, "shepherd", 15 times); John 10:14, He is the teacher; Luke 13:10, He is the shower of mercy; John 8:11, He is the giver in simplicity; "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." John 14:27; "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity." Rom. 12:8; He is the intercessor, I Tim. 2:5, It is Christ living in us that is our ministry, this is the treasure we have in earthen vessels.

Christ is also the Word, John 1:14. God's Word is truth. John 17:17, Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63.

The words that the apostles teach and establish the church in, are the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and are found in Heb. 6:1-2, which are repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

All true doctrine finds its roots in these principles and is presented to the Church through the ministry of apostles and prophets, to whom He has chosen to reveal them. Eph. 3:5. Satan will try to keep the church from seeing the true foundation, for without it the Church can never stand in the evil day, but be like the House Jesus spoke of in Matt. 7:27.

May the Lord open the eyes of all believers to see the foundation we are to be built upon. For if the foundations be destroyed, what will the righteous do? Ps. 11:3. But God assures us of the strength of this foundation in II Tim. 2:19. "Nevertheless, the foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." I have pointed out that the apostle holds the office of an elder in the universal church and that office being one of a father over the whole family of God, having the same responsibility and love for them. Paul speaks about this love and care in II Cor. 11:28. "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." I Cor. 4:14-15, "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

I Thess. 2:11, "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged everyone of you, as a father doth his children." Doctrine comes to the church by revelation received by the apostles.

Eph. ~ 3: 5, "Which in other ages was made known unto the sons of men, as it now revealed unto his holy apostles prophets by the Spirit."

I John 1:5, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you."

The church is to abide continually in this doctrine.

Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Acts 16:4-5, "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith."

The whole church, having received the same doctrine, is brought into the unity of the faith. So this is a very important part of the apostolic ministry. Its design and purpose is shown in Eph. 4:12-16. "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ:

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." You can see by these Scriptures how important the order of God and His government is, in bringing together His Body by the apostolic ministry He has given, the Body of Christ becoming one, and becoming productive; the world believing in Christ, even as Jesus prayed.

All fathers must set an example for their family to walk in, I Cor. 4:16, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me". Phil. 3:17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." II Thess. 3:7, "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you."

They are that link in the Spirit to Christ and the Father. I John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." While the New Testament refers to as many as twenty-one apostles, there seems to have been a significance in twelve. It was important that Judas' place be filled, and of the ones referred to as apostles, only Matthias seemed to be numbered with the eleven. Twelve is a ruling number, and while the others were able to receive revelation and lay the foundation, they

looked to these brethren to guide them in it. The twelve took responsibility of all those that ministered doctrine and used caution when new ones were added to them. In Acts 9:26-30 we have the record of Paul being added to them, and in Acts 11:19-26, after they received word that Antioch had received the gospel, they sent Barnabas and he in turn got Paul to join him. From there the door opened to them to enter into the ministry God had called them to, Acts 13:1-2; (with the sanction of the Spirit and the blessing of the apostles.

## ELDERS OF LOCAL CHURCHES

Local Elders are local men with jobs; each church has more than one. These brethren are not elected by the people, but are called of God for this office, the apostles being responsible for their appointing after the Holy Spirit has indicated them for such. Their appointment is also for life, unless they were to disqualify themselves by not walking in the order of God. In III John 9:11, John makes known to the church that Diotrephes had disqualified himself and he was being removed from the office because of not being in submission to the travelling ministry.

Acts 14:23 tells us about Paul and Barnabas, and when they had ordained elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed.

Titus was directed by Paul to appoint elders in every city in Crete. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I appointed thee."

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER: I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9. The word elder and bishop are synonymous terms, Titus 1:5, the word Presbytery is used for a group of elders. These qualities are actual Christian attributes that God has ordained to be in every member of the church. An elder must be an example by being first a partaker of the fruits, II Tim. 2:6, that he may lead all the flock which he is an overseer of into a holy, Godly life.

He must desire the office, not a natural or covetous ambition, but coming from a heart of love for the truth and the flock of God.

Blameless, not having a reputation of a troublemaker.

The husband of one wife, not a bigamist. Vigilant - watchful, cautious, not careless about the things of God regarding himself or the flock.

Sober, not becoming drunk, well-balanced in his thinking, moderate in all things; self-disciplined.

Hospitable, one that enjoys people in his home, etc.

Must be able to teach. He must teach the apostles' doctrine.

Not given to wine. This takes in all alcoholic beverages. He is to be filled with the Spirit instead. Eph. 5:18.

No striker. A striker is one that refuses to cooperate unless things go his own way; one that rebels against authority.

Not one that loves to fight with either words or fists.

Patient. Very important in this office, in order to help the stumbling one and the feeble find their way.

Not covetous, not to desire that which belongs to another. A covetous man is a respecter of persons and will disrespect them just as quickly. His interest in Godliness must be first. I Tim. 6:6.

One that ruleth well his own house. What a man is in his own home is what he will be anywhere; if his wife and family walk as he walks in the order of God, he will have no trouble leading the church.

Not a novice, an inexperienced person, not a new convert because of the danger of being lifted up with pride, which brings about a fall such as that of the devil. Prov. 16: 18 .

He must have a good report outside the church, of good reputation, one of honesty and faithfulness.

Titus also bears out the necessity of these qualifications. He repeats these: Must be blameless as the steward of God, the husband of one wife, have faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly.

Not self-willed (stubborn), must be teachable.

Not soon angry, again the importance of being an elder as being one who has self-control. Provo 16:32. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.

A lover of good men, sober, just, must have had the experience of justification of faith. Rom. 5:1. That he might lead others into the experience of being just. Not guilty before God, having been washed by the blood of Christ. Heb. 9:14.

Holy: to set one's life apart for the service of God. Sanctification. II Cor. 6:17; I Thess. 5:23; I Peter 1:15-16.

Temperate, moderate in all things, also marked by the absence of extravagance, violence, or extreme partisanship. James 2:1. Holding fast the faithful Word as he HAS BEEN TAUGHT, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

These are the faithful men Paul spoke to Timothy about when he said, "And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the SAME commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Elders are shepherds over the flock of God. Peter writes in his first Epistle 5:1-11, giving the elders some very solemn teaching regarding their office and the responsibility that rests upon them; he refers to his own experience as a general elder and shepherd. First, they are required to feed the flock of God. If he possesses the qualifications mentioned above, he will have no trouble doing this - in teaching the doctrine committed unto him - in understanding each member, exercising patience and walking uprightly before them. He must take his office in the spirit of submission and love for the flock, not as a duty to be performed, not for money or what he will get out of it, but of a ready mind. Not as lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock: not a lot of demands for personal attention but a leader that loves God and loves His truth.

The rest of the verses speak of the reward of the faithful elder and much exhortation on their own walk; the dangers of pride being a snare of the devil and the power of humility, casting all their care upon God.

In Acts 20:28 Paul speaks to the Ephesian elders, giving them some very stern instruction knowing that he would not see

them again. They were to take heed to themselves as elders, and to the flock of God. Though Paul was the instrument God used to set them, he puts emphasis on the truth that the Holy Ghost had made them overseers to feed the flock of God, which was purchased by the blood of Christ. God holds the Church very dear; let all the elders realize this and be very devoted to God that they might contribute their part in presenting the Church to Him, pure, chaste and one. II Cor. 11:2.

In verses 29-30, Paul gives them this warning, and may all the present-day elders hear and take heed to this warning also:

"That grievous wolves shall enter in among you not sparing the flock". These can be discerned by the Spirit, I John 2:18-20, but you will miss seeing them until they have done damage if you rely upon your natural abilities. "Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." When it

becomes obvious that this is taking place the other elders should talk to the guilty one concerning the danger he is committing himself to and those that follow him. If the Elder will not be corrected, the apostolic ministries should be contacted as they are responsible before God for this man's setting. They are fathers to him and can help him. If he will not be helped, then they must relieve him of his office. We have an example of this in III John. An elder by the name of Diotrephes became one that was trying to draw away disciples after him. The apostles had received word about it and John wrote to another elder, Gaius, giving instruction on how to carry on until he arrived to correct the disorder.

Paul concludes his talk to the Ephesian elders to be on guard and to remember how he ministered among them for three years, warning them day and night with tears.

Elders are to watch for the souls of the flock as those that must give an account of them. Therefore, the Scripture exhorts us to obey them. Heb. 13:17. They are not to be rebuked, but they can be entreated as a father. I Tim. 5:1. The apostolic ministry is not to receive an accusation against an elder except there be two or three witnesses. I Tim. 5:19.

#### ELDERS IN THE HOME:

The order is the same in the church as it was in Israel - the husband and father is to be the elder of his home. He is the one God has appointed to be the head of his household, and has been made responsible for both the spiritual and material needs of the family. To be a good elder he must also possess the qualifications already given that are required in elders. Every husband should read these qualifications and the instruction given to elders, and pray much about the seriousness of his office. It has been said, "As goes the home, so goes the church; as goes the church, so goes the nation." This is a great truth. God will require of him the way the family walks. I Sam. 3:13; Ps. 37:25-26. May every man take the stand Joshua took when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Josh .. 24:15. He is to be a head to his wife. I Cor. 11:1;

Eph. 5:23. Being a head does not mean a big boss over his wife and children. In fact, the Scripture says an elder must not be a lord over God's heritage, but an example. I Peter 5:3. A man's wife is a gift from God. Gen. 2:18 & 22. So also are their children. Ps. 127:3. The elder of the home does not rule by pushing himself on the family or by their fearing him, but the Scripture references given teach us that he is to guide with loving his wife and children. He is to follow the example of Christ, his head, and his love is to be like Christ's love for the church who gave Himself for it. This love causes him to live with his wife according to knowledge, giving honour unto her as unto the weaker vessel, as being heirs of the grace of God together, that his prayer may not be hindered. I Peter' 3:7. He will not provoke his children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:4. He will instruct his children right, Provo 1:8-9, and will walk before his household right, Psalm 101:2; making known unto them the truth. Is. 38:19. His wife will find it easy to reverence him, Eph. 5:33 and feel toward him as Sarah did Abraham. I Peter 3:6. His children shall be a crown to him and he shall be their glory. Prov. 17:6.

#### DEACONS:

The word "deacon" comes from the Greek word "diakonos". It is translated "deacon" three times, "minister" twenty times and "servant" seven times. The verb form of this word is "diakoneo" translated "administer" twice, "minister" seven times, "minister to" once, "minister unto" fifteen times, "serve" ten times, "use the office of a deacon" twice. It means to serve not as a slave but as a willing servant. As indicated by the ways in which these words are translated we can see that this office in the church is filled by one who serves rather than gives direction such as that of an elder. The deacon is a helper to the elder. The office of a deacon is a very important one in the church. I Tim. 3:13, "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

We have pointed out how there are three levels of eldership in the church, this is also true of deacons.

1. The travelling deacon who has a general ministry to the universal church, their ministry compliments the apostolic ministry.
2. The local church, they are the elders' helpers and assistants.
3. The home, a man's wife is his help-meet which means a suitable helper, one who compliments him by meeting him at his limitations.

#### TRAVELLING DEACON:

When the word "diakonos" is translated "minister", it almost always speaks of the "travelling deacon". This has been an office that people didn't know was in the church until God began revealing it through the move of His Spirit. Today God has raised up some travelling deacons to assist us in our labours and we thank God for them. Their ministry is very effective and very necessary. We are finding that the ministry of a deacon is not only in ministering the things of the temporal but also the spiritual. He must be a spiritual man.

There were several travelling deacons in the early church. We will name some such as Tychicus, Erastus, Timotheous, Titus, Epaphras, Onesimus, Artemas, these men all were deacons to the general church and stood ready to minister at any time as Paul or the other apostles had need of them.

These ministries do not act on their own but they receive direction from elders. In this case it is the apostolic ministry that directs them. Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus for a purpose. Eph. 6:21-22. "But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts." Tychicus is named as a member of Paul's party. Acts 20:4. Timothy and Erastus were also faithful ministers ready to serve the apostle at any time. Acts 19:22. Epaphras was a faithful minister (diakoneo) who ministered faithfully in Colosse, establishing them solidly in the

faith so that Paul could write to them of the deep truths of God just like he did to the Ephesians where he himself had laboured for three years setting the church in order. Col. 1:7. "As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ." When the travelling deacon completed his mission he returned to the ministry that sent him giving him full information of the work done, and how the churches were doing.

Titus was sent to Crete to establish local churches and ordain elders in every city setting in order the things wanting. Titus 1:5. When Titus finished that work, Paul wanted him to join him in Nicopolis and Artemas was being sent to carry on watching over the churches, Titus 3:12. Both Titus and Timothy travelled extensively. Paul sent Titus to Corinth to teach them about giving. II Cor. 8:6. II Cor. 12:18. Timothy was sent to Corinth by Paul, I Cor. 4:17. We also have record of him being sent to Ephesus, I Tim. 1:3. These brethren along with others often travelled with Paul. Of the seven brethren that were appointed deacons first, Acts 6:2-7, Stephen and Philip both became known as deacons in the Word with power, Stephen seemed to have the ministry of miracles. (I Cor. 12:28), Acts 6:8. He preached with great power and wisdom. He became the first Martyr. Philip went to Samaria preaching Christ also with mighty power and many were saved. Acts 8:5-8. He became known as the evangelist, Acts 21:8. Much more could be said about this office and ministry in the church but I think this is sufficient to show you there is such a ministry and the necessity of it operating in the church today. They do not receive revelation for the church to walk in but teach the apostle's revelation, II Tim. 2:2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

#### LOCAL DEACONS:

This is a very important office in the local church. These brethren are the local elders' helpers. They must be spiritual men with a good understanding of the revelation. (Apostles' doctrine). There is much to be done in the way of practical things in the local church, however,

there is a large field for them to minister both in and out of the service with the gifts and ministry God has given them.

The deacons appointed at Jerusalem in Acts 6 were given the responsibility of ministering to the need of the widows among them. This gave the apostles more time to minister the Word of God. As pointed out earlier, some of these local deacons did have a good ministry in the Word and as they ministered in the local church, the gift made room for them and it opened up to them a general ministry to the universal church.

There is a big field in the local church for the deacon to fill and is of utmost importance. I will name some things that should come under the office of the deacon but there is far more than this.

1. The locating of meeting places.
2. Preparing the meeting place for service. Setting up of chairs, janitor work, etc., etc.
3. The preparing of the communion and serving it as well as taking it to the sick that are not able to attend the service.
4. The taking up of the tithes and offering in the service. Also the business part of the local church should be looked after by the deacons under the direction of the elders.
5. Seeing that which needs ministering to by the church either those that are within the church or outside such as the poor, widows, fatherless, aged, bereaved, shut-ins, etc., etc.

There are many more things that could be named but we have taught this in the elders and deacons meetings. Deacons should see that the strangers that attend service are only strangers once. They should bring to the attention of the elders any need they should know about. Many have a ministry in teaching, prophecy, exhortation or leading a meeting. If so, they should be used in this.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON: Acts 6:1-7, I Tim. 3:8-13.

He must be a spiritual man to fill a spiritual office. Acts 6:2.

1. He must have an honest report, held in high respect because of his honesty and good character.
2. Full of the Holy Ghost. Must be a spirit-filled man, with spiritual gifts operating in his life.
3. He must be a man of wisdom. He is an example also to the flock and he must be able to give wise counsel. Several of his duties will require wisdom to carry out, so that the Lord is glorified. I Tim. 3:8.
4. He must be grave, a serious man being respectable, one that is a steady person.
5. Not double tongued, not backbiters or talebearers.
6. Not given to much wine, not addicted to alcohol.
7. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Having an appreciation and reverence for the divine truth revealed by the Holy Spirit.
8. Blameless - not to blame, above reproach.
9. They must have a good wife, serious, dependable, not a gossip but one that can be confided in.
10. The husband of one wife. Not a bigamist.
11. They must manage and handle their home well, their children being orderly.

The deacons are also appointed by the apostles or travelling deacons, directed by them, Act 6:3. I Tim. 3:8.

In Acts 6, the people were asked to recommend seven men for this office but they were not elected by them, they were presented to the apostles with a good report. The apostles, after they prayed about them, then appointed them to the office by the laying on of hands. It is a lifetime call unless they disqualify themselves through sin and an intemperate life. If for some reason the local elder or deacon moves to another church he would vacate his office as it belongs to the local church. For example, the office of an elder is an office of authority in the local church and is filled by one who possesses a ministry and is not a ministry in itself. This is also true of the deacon's office. The vacant office would have to be filled by another. If an elder or deacon were to hold this office in another church they would have to be appointed by the ministries and given the charge and responsibility to that flock. I Tim. 3:10 tells us that they should be on probation first and after proving themselves are ordained to the office. The statement, let these also be proved refers to the fact the elders are to be set this way also. These are important offices in the sight of God.

#### THE DEACON IN THE HOME:

The husband's helper is his wife. After God created Adam He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Gen. 2:18. You will notice that she is not a helpmate but a helpmeet - a suitable helper. This presents her as one that complements her husband. She is able to supply that which he lacks and be a balance to him, that together they may be as one fulfilling the purpose for which God has sent them, in bringing their children up in the ways of God, which is their first responsibility before God, and that they might exercise their ministry in the Church effectively, and the world.

I hesitate to try to define the ministry of husband and wife, because they merge into one another as they share the same concern and love for their own, which is their charge. The only time sharp distinctions can be made is when we look at the extreme sides of their ministry. Then we see that the husband is to take the lead role and his wife is to be in submission to him. When love reigns, they work together

smoothly as one. The elder and deacon on all levels are to be very close.

Submission is provided in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is enlarged by the love of the one or ones we are to submit to. Submission is the Spirit of Christ in us that causes us to honour those we are to obey and makes us desire to do so. Submission is not this attitude, "I will do it because I have to". That may be the first step, but it does not please God any more than if your children respond to you that way. But when they obey with joy in their hearts, this makes you happy. In the Church, we all must learn submission. Eph. 5:21. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." This makes it so we understand those that are to submit to our ministry, no matter what level it is on.

Being a helpmeet, the wife has the right to entreat her husband with respect for him. She has the duty of making many suggestions; she does not have authority to do things against her husband's will. Num. 30:12. But on the other hand, the husband (elder) is not to be self-willed. They share the bringing up and the guiding of their children. Prov. 1:8.

Paul says that the married man seeks how to please his wife and the married woman seeks how to please her husband. I Cor. 7:33-34. Prov. 18:22 tells us that, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth that which is good and shall obtain favour of the Lord".

This elder and deacon team are also appointed for life. Rom. 7:2. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Matt. 19:6.

**THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR A DEACON'S WIFE.** I Tim. 3:11, "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things". These are qualifications that the wife in every home should possess. More qualifications are outlined in Titus 2:3-5, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their

husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed". I Peter 3:1-6. "LIKEWISE, YE wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

These are beautiful qualities and every woman should seek to have the Lord perfect them in her. The woman that possesses them is pictured in Proverbs 31:10-31.

May the Lord help us all in fulfilling the ministry God has given us and use whatever office we are placed in, well, for His glory. And may all remember, in this there must not be a favourite ministry on any level, but respect the plurality of ministries He has given to be over the Church. There is no such thing as a chief elder on any level we have spoken of. All carry equal authority in order to balance one another. I Cor. 14:29-30. However, the newly appointed or younger elder must respect the experience of the senior elders. I Peter 5: 5 .

This is God's way of making His government strong: one person can err very easily, but with many sharing the same office, there is safety. Proverbs 24:6. If one should go astray, the others are to correct and restore if it be possible. Gal. 6:1. I John 5:16.

The church can accept unfolding revelation without fear, but with confidence knowing that the Spirit has witnessed to it being truth through the different ministries sharing the same office of

responsibility. Matt. 18:16. Praise God for His wonderful order of government.

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