

# Authentic Christianity

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"Authentic Christianity"

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## **Introduction**

Why are these studies called "Authentic Christianity"?

Confusion confronts those who want to know what Christianity is all about. It is estimated that there are now 33,800 sects and denominations in Christendom. All have their reasons for being separate. This makes it very difficult to find the truth.

At the beginning there was only one church and one teaching. Over the centuries much has been added, much lost and much altered. So the only way one can be sure of learning about genuine Christianity is by going back to the beginning.

The only historically authentic source of information on what Christianity was like at the beginning is the New Testament part of the Bible. It tells us how Christianity began. These studies aim to help you to gain an overall understanding of Christianity as revealed in the New Testament - "Authentic Christianity".

### **Test Exercises**

One of the best ways of learning a subject is to teach it to others. Because you will try to make sure you really understand the subject.

Each study has a test exercise. You are invited to write to one of your friends explaining what you have learned from the topic you have just studied. Do make sure your reasoning is sound and quote passages of scripture where relevant.

Do not send your letter to us (although we would be pleased to receive a copy). However if you have any questions do contact us at:

Correspondence Course Tutor  
Church of Christ  
Glamis Centre  
Glenrothes, KY7 4RH  
Scotland, United Kingdom

Use A Suitable Bible

Even though most Bible references are quoted we recommend you look them up in the Bible and take time to examine them in their context.

You can use almost any of the well known popular translations of the Bible. But we would advise you not to use paraphrases. Paraphrases like "The Good News Bible" are not suitable for this kind of study.

Finally, it is recommended that you print this course so that you may highlight or make annotations beside passages that may require further study.

**May God bless you richly and enable you to be a blessing to those around you.**

## Study 1 WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY ?

### IS IT CONFUSION and CHAOS ?

The Christianity of today has brought shame on the name of Christ. Christendom is split up into numerous organizations each guarding their own preserve.

The apostles warned that there would be schisms inside the church.

**Acts 20:30 Also of your own selves men shall arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves.**

**2 Pet.2:1 But there also were false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who privately will bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.**

Even during the lifetime of the apostles self-willed men started divisions.

**1 Cor.1:10-13 Now I beg you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me of you, my brothers, by those who are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**

**1 Cor.11:18 For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it.**

**1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

**3 John 9 I wrote to the church: but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receives us.**

The end product is that most of what we see today is far removed from the Christianity of the Bible. Christianity has become a laughing stock throughout the world. That is why many do not want to have anything to do with it.

### **TEST EXERCISE**

In a letter to your friend explain why there is so much division in Christendom.

## Study 2

### DIVISION AND FALSE TEACHING IS UNACCEPTABLE

1 Corinthians 14:33 ... **God is not the author of confusion ...**

The Lord Jesus wants all His followers to be one so that people might acknowledge His credibility.

**John 17:20-23 Neither do I pray for these alone, but for them also who will believe in me through their word; That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me.**

The apostle Paul reproved division amongst the Lord's people.

**1 Cor.3:3-4 For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men? For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?**

The Lord Jesus censured man-made religious alliances.

**Matt.15:13 ... Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.**

Man made doctrines were denounced.

**Titus 1:14 Not giving heed to ... commandments of men...**

**Matt.15:9 But in vain they do worship me (God), teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**

**Gal.1:8-9 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other [similar] gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed.**

**2 John 9-10 Whoever transgresses, and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ, has both the Father and the Son. If any one comes to you, and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, nor bid him God speed:**

The word Christianity is derived from the word Christ. Real Christianity must derive from the teaching of the Christ for it to be genuine Christianity.

#### **TEST EXERCISE**

In a letter to your friend explain why the division in Christendom is bad.

### Study 3

## WHERE IS TRUE CHRISTIANITY ?

Where Can We Find Pure Christianity ?

The media constantly reminds us that our coastal waters are polluted. No one in their right mind would dream of drinking a cup of water straight from any of our estuaries. If we want pure water we have to go to the source where it springs from the mountain.

Similarly, human depravity has progressively corrupted many good causes. To find purity, we have to remove the accumulated dross and go back to the source. This is particularly true with Christianity.

If we want pure Christianity, we must go back to the beginning, to the teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles.

**2 Tim.4:2-4 Preach the word; be ready, in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching; but they will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts , having itching ears; And they will turn away their ears from the truth, and will be turned to fables.**

The only historically authentic source of information on pure Christianity is the New Testament. We have to go back to New Testament principles.

**Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write to you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.**

**2 Tim.3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works.**

**IS IT CLARITY and SIMPLICITY ?**

People tend to expect truth to be complex. The Christianity of the New Testament is so uncomplicated it is too simple for many to accept. The following units explain its simplicity.

### **TEST EXERCISE**

In a letter to your friend explain where we will learn about true Christianity.

## Study 4 SIMPLICITY IN THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

How do we join the church?

Becoming a member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not like joining a club. The Lord Jesus is building his church by adding certain people to it.

**Matt. 16:18 ... I (Jesus) will build my church; ...**

**Acts 2:41 Then they who gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them (i.e. the Lord's church) about three thousand souls.**

**Acts 2:47 ... the Lord (Jesus) added to the church daily such as should be saved.**

The Lord Jesus adds to His church anyone who:-

1) believes that the Lord Jesus is what He claimed to be,

**Acts 8:36-37 ... they came to some water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what prevents me from being baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**

2) repents of his/her life of sin to follow Him unquestioningly,

**Acts 2:37-38 ... when they heard this, they were pierced in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent,....**

3) submits to baptism in water appealing to God for their sins to be forgiven

**Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**

**1.Pet.3:21 .. even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the appeal of a good conscience\* to God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:**  
(\*Greek = a good conscience's appeal)

**Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

According to the Bible this is the only way to become a member of the Lord Jesus' church. Also He adds you to His church - not to a denomination. You will be simply a Christian - not a denominational brand of Christian.

### **TEST EXERCISE**

In a letter to your friend explain how to become a member of the Lord's church and that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ it is not a denomination.

## Study 5 SIMPLICITY IN BAPTISM

What is Baptism?

The New Testament was written in Greek. Baptism is from the Greek word 'βαπτίζω' meaning immersion.

It requires a lot of water

**John 3:23 ... John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.**

Because it is a burial under water and a resurrection from under water

**Rom. 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

**Col. 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, in which also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead.**

In English translations of the Bible the word "baptism" means "immersion".

There is no magic in baptism. The water is simply water

**1 Pet.3:21 ... even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the appeal of a good conscience to God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:**

There is no power in any words said by the person doing the baptism. Neither the words, nor the status of the person doing the baptism make it valid

For your baptism to be valid, you must really believe

**Acts 8:36-37 ... they came to some water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what prevents me from being baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**

For this reason there should be witnesses at your baptism, to hear you confess that you do believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God

**1 Tim.6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, unto which you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.**

For your baptism to be valid you must really repent

**Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

There is no record of babies being baptized in the New Testament, only of repentant believers

**Gal.1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**

If you trust the Lord Jesus you will try hard do what He says

**John 14:15 If you love me, keep my commandments.**

**John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves me, he will keep my words: ...  
24 He who does not love me does not keep my sayings ...**

Zeal is not enough

**Rom.10:2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.**

Professing one's faith is not enough

**Matt.7:21-23 Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name and have cast out devils in your name? and done many wonderful works in your name? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you who work iniquity.**

We must obey what the word of God says

**Rom.10:16-17 ... they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah said, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

### **TEST EXERCISE**

In a letter to your friend explain what baptism is and who may be baptised.

## Study 6 SIMPLICITY IN CHRISTIAN LIFE AND IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Simplicity in the Christian Life

Baptism is the beginning.

Acts 3:19 **Therefore you must repent and turn, so that your sins might be blotted out**

You should then continue to learn from the New Testament more about the Lord Jesus to become increasingly like Him in your life.

2 Pet. 1:3 **Just as his divine power has given to us all things that relate to life and piety, through the knowledge of him who has called us by his glory and virtue:**

He also wants you to worship with others whom He has also added to His church.

Heb. 10:25 **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together ...**

Acts 2:42 **And they continued steadfastly in: the apostles' teaching and the sharing, and the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.**

Simplicity in the Local Church

In the Bible the word "church" is never used of a physical building. It always refers to people.

1 Thess. 1:1 **Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, to the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ**

Gal. 1:13 **For you have heard .. how .. I persecuted the church of God, ...** (and Philp.3:6)

You do not need a building to be a proper church. The first Christians did not have church buildings. The earliest churches met in houses and in hired rooms, wherever it was convenient. They were, none the less, real, fully fledged churches, the Lord's churches.

Rom. 16:5 **Likewise greet the church that is in their house ... , ,**

Philemon 2 ... **to the church in your house:**

The Bible attaches no importance whatsoever to church buildings. On the other hand the church which is His body of people is so important to the Lord Jesus that He died for it. He did not die for buildings.

Ephesians 5:25 ... **even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;**

There is the universal church which the Lord is building.

Matt. 16:18 **...I will build my church;....**

Then there are local groups. These are His local churches.

Romans 16:16 ... **The churches of Christ salute you.**

Col. 4:15 **Salute ... the church ... in his house**

Only those that the Lord has added to His universal church can legitimately be members of one of His local churches.

Acts. 2:41-42 **Then those who gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in: the apostles' teaching and the sharing, and the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.**

### **TEST EXERCISE**

In a letter to your friend explain how a Christian should live and worship.

## Study 7 SIMPLICITY IN THE WORSHIP

In New Testament times all of each group of Christians made a point of coming together for a special period of worship every week.

**Acts 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break the loaf ...**

**1 Cor. 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you put by itself in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.**

This weekly gathering would take place sometime between Saturday sunset and Sunday sunset. This period is called "the first day of the week" and is derived from the Old Testament way of reckoning days, i.e. from sunset to sunset.

**Gen. 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.** (vv. 8, 13, 19, 23 and 31)

The main purpose of that meeting was to recall how the Lord Jesus died for our sins. It is an act of remembrance.

**1 Cor. 11:23-26 ... the Lord Jesus ... took bread ... and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me. Also in the same manner he took the cup, ... saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. Because whenever you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you relate the Lord's death until he comes.** (also Matt.26;27, Mark 14:24 and Luke 22:19)

During the meeting someone would pray on behalf of all of the congregation, giving thanks for the loaf. Then they would share an unleavened loaf to represent His body, which He had given for them.

**Matt. 26:26 ... Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.** (see also Mark 14:22)

Then someone would again offer thanks on behalf of the congregation and they would share a cup of grape juice to represent His blood, which He shed for them.

**Matt. 26:27-29 ... he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, All of you drink from it; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I tell to you, I will not drink ... of this fruit of the vine until ...**

**Mark 14:23 ... he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank from it.**

**1 Cor. 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless ...**

There is nothing cultic in observing the Lord's supper. It is simply the way the Lord has asked us to remember Him. The loaf remains only bread and "the fruit of the vine" remains only grape juice.

Nothing magic happens to the bread or grape juice when thanks is given. Nothing mystical happens to the people who eat and drink them. "Blessing it" is saying thank you for its importance. Matt. 26:26 ... **Jesus took bread, and blessed it ...**

1 Cor. 11:23-24 ... **the Lord Jesus ... took bread: and when he had given thanks ...**

1 Cor. 10:16 **The cup of blessing which we bless ...**

Matt. 26:27 ... **he took the cup, and gave thanks ...**

There is no advantage taking any of it to the sick. It won't do anything for them.

The whole congregation was to take part in this communal act of worship.

1 Cor. 11:18 ... **when you come together in the assembly ...** and v.20 **Therefore when you come together into one place ...**

The communal act portrayed their oneness in Christ.

1 Cor. 10:16-17 **The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The loaf which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one loaf, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one loaf.**

As part of the worship the members would give what they could afford into the groups fund.

Acts 2:42 **And they continued stedfastly in: ... the sharing ...**

1 Cor. 16:1-2 **Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you put by itself in store, as God has prospered him ...**

2 Cor. 8:12-13 ... **if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have. ... not that other men be eased, and you burdened ...**

2 Cor. 9:7 **Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver.**

2 Cor. 8:5 ... **they ... first gave themselves to the Lord ...**

It would be used at the group's discretion to help the needy or for promoting church work.

2 Cor. 8:14 ... **that now at this time your surplus might be a supply for their needs, that their surplus also may be a supply for your needs ...**

Philippians 1:5 **For your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now;**

Philippians 4:15-16 ... **no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again to my necessity.**

Take note that they did not solicit money from non-members.

3 John 7 **Because for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the nations.**  
They would also pray and sing.

Acts 2:42 **And they continued stedfastly in: ... the prayers.**

Matth. 26:30 **And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.**

Eph. 5:19 **Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;**

They did not use musical instruments in worship. They were introduced much later – by man. God has asked us to praise him in song. He has not asked Christians to worship with musical instruments.

Col. 3:16 **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**

We must concentrate on worshipping both spiritually and correctly. That is what God wants.

John 4:23-24 **But the hour comes, and is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.**

They would also read the scriptures and have teaching from the word of God.

Acts 20:7 **And upon the first day of the week ... Paul preached to them ...**

Acts 2:42 **And they continued stedfastly in: the apostles' teaching ...**

1 Corinthians 14:26 **... when you come together, each has a psalm, has a teaching ...**

Colossians 4:16 **And when this letter is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that you likewise read the letter from Laodicea.**

1 Thessalonians 5:27 **I charge you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the holy brethren.**

That meeting was called "the breaking of the loaf".

Acts 2:42 **And they continued stedfastly in: ... the breaking of the loaf ...**

There might also be other meetings for prayer and study but the meeting for "the breaking of the loaf" was specifically observed as a group, once every week.

Taking part in this ceremony does not procure forgiveness of sins. On the contrary, it is vital to be in the right frame of heart and mind before taking part.

1 Cor. 11:27-29 **Therefore whoever eats this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But a man must examine**

**himself, and in that manner eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not appreciating the Lord's body.** Even under the Old Covenant, differences had to be sorted out first.

**Matt. 5:23-24 ... if you bring your gift to the altar, and there you remember that your brother hath something against you; Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**

When Christians sin they do not need to be re-baptized. They should repent and pray to the Lord Jesus - no one else. He is the Advocate with the Father.

**1 John 1:8-10 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**

**1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I write these things to you, so that you do not sin. Yet if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.**

### **TEST EXERCISE**

Write a letter to your friend explaining what you have learned about the Lord's supper as well as when it was observed and what else they did when they met together.

## Study 8 SIMPLICITY IN ORGANIZATION

Those added by the Lord to his universal church qualified for membership of the local church.

**Acts 2:41-42 .. they who gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

They were simply Christians only and churches of the Lord Jesus Christ only.

**Rom. 16:16 ... The churches of Christ salute you.**

Each local group was independent and self governing. When a group had qualified men they were to appoint them as supervisors(see NOTE) over their congregation. They would appoint several supervisors in each congregation.

**Acts 14:23 And when they had appoint for them elders in every congregation ...**

**1 Tim. 3:1-7 This is a true saying, If a man desires to be a supervisor, he desires a good work. A supervisor then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy for dirty money; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One who rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of those who are outside; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.**

**Titus 1:5-8 For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city, as I had appointed you: If any are blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a supervisor must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy money; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;**

All members were encouraged to carry out their role in the work and worship of the church.

**2 Timothy 2:2 And the things which you have heard heard of me amongst many witnesses, you commit the same to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.**

**Titus 2:2 That the older men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience.**

**Ephesians 4:12-16 For the maturing of the saints, for the work of serving, for the building up of the body of Christ: Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: So that from now on we are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the men's deceitfulness, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, might grow up in all things, in him who is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fittingly joined together and compacted by that**

**which every joint supplies, according to the effective working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to building up itself in love.**

There was no distinction between clergy and laity:-

All Christians are God's clergy from the Greek word κληρος - heritage as in 1 Peter 5:3 "Neither as being lords over God's heritage ..."

All Christians are God's laity from the Greek: word λαος - people as in Romans 9:25 "As he also said in Hosea, I will call them My people , which were not My people ..." and in Revelation 21:3 "... they shall be His people, and God Himself shall ... be their God."

There were no diocese, no central authorities, no pyramid organizations. There were no denominations or alliances. Neither Jerusalem nor Rome were headquarters. The Lord's church has no headquarters on earth. Its headquarters is in heaven where the head - the Lord Jesus - is.

**Matt. 23:8-9; 11-12 But don't you be called Revered One: for one is your Mentor, even Christ; and all you are brothers. And don't call any man on the earth your Father: for one is your Father, who is in heaven. ... 11 But he who is greatest amongst you will be your slave. And whoever exalts himself will be debased; and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**

The Lord Jesus is the head of the church. He is the only head. His church has no head on earth. There is no organisational hierarchy between Him as head and the local congregation.

**Eph. 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.**

**Col. 1:18 And he 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 preeminence.**

The common bond between all groups was the Lord Jesus, and the teaching of the apostles.

**Eph. 2:20-22 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fittingly framed together develops into an holy temple in the Lord: In whom you are also built together for God's dwelling through the Spirit.**

**Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in: the apostles' teaching ...**

The only historically authentic source of information on this is the New Testament. Creeds and articles of faith are man-made and fallible. The New Testament is the only reliable authority on matters of faith, worship and Christian living.

**2 Pet. 1:3 According as his divine power has given to us all things that relate to life and piety, through the knowledge of him who has called us by his glory and virtue:**

**2 Pet. 1:19-21 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; to which you do well that you take notice, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arises in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is anyone's private**

**interpretation. For the prophecy did not come in old time by the man's will: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**

**Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the mutual salvation, it was needful for me to write to you, and implore you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.**

### **TEST EXERCISE**

Write a letter to your friend explaining how the church was organized.

### **NOTE**

"supervisors" (Greek: επισκοπος) is sometimes translated by the words "bishops" and "overseers". They are also described as elders (πρεσβυτερος) and as "shepherds and teachers" (ποιμενας και διδασκαλους) this last sometimes translated "pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11 A.V.)

Compare A.V. in: 1.Peter 5:1-4 ("elders", "flock", oversight "chief Shepherd"), Acts 20:17 ("elders") & 28 ("flock", "overseers", "feed" i.e. like a shepherd ) Titus 1:5 ("elders") & 7 ("bishop") and 1.Timothy 3:2 ("apt to teach").

The supervisors were responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. They would also chose "servants" sometimes translated "deacons". These would assist in the physical needs of the congregation, 1.Timothy 3:8-10. The apostles stated the qualifications but the congregation did the choosing, Acts 6:1-3.

In Ephesians 4:11, "apostles", "prophets" and "evangelists" are also mentioned. Evangelist means "preacher of good news" they were sent out by congregations to preach the gospel in new territory, Acts 21:8, 2 Timothy 4:5, Acts 16:1-3, 1.Timothy 4:14 and Acts 13:2-3. The apostles and prophets of Christ passed away once the word of God was established. This is covered in the next study

## Study 9 DECENTLY AND ORDERLY

### Current Eccentricities

The early church was required to do everything in a decent and orderly manner.

1 Cor. 14:40 **Let everything be done decently and orderly.**

Nowadays "faith healers" make specious claims of cures. Sick folk come away disappointed. The exhibitionism displayed in worship would be comical if it wasn't serious. The Holy Spirit is brought into disrepute. God will judge the perpetrators.

**Matt. 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven unto men.**

**Heb. 10:29-31 Of how much sorer punishment, do you suppose, will he be considered worthy, who ... insults the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, Vengeance belongs to me, I will repay, says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge his people. It is a frightening thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

The ability to perform miracles was a temporary measure. It was transferred only by those apostles who were personally commissioned by Christ.

**Acts 8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,**

**1 Cor. 9:1-2 ... am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet without doubt I am to you: because you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.**

**2 Cor 12:12-13 Truly the evidences of an apostle were totally consistently practised by you, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches ...**

The apostles of Christ have passed away together with the miraculous gifts, which included the ability to prophesy, speak in unlearned languages, cure diseases and deformities. On the completion of the scriptures, the gifts of knowledge and prophecy (vital in the churches infancy) became superfluous.

**1 Cor. 13:8-13 Love never fails: but whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are languages, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will fail. For we know bit by bit, and we prophesy bit by bit. But when that which is complete arrives, then that which is piecemeal will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I understood like a child, I thought like a child: but when I became a man, I put away childlike things. For now we see in a mirror obscurely; but then face to face: now I know incompletely; but then I will know just as I am also known. but now faith, hope, love, continue, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

Genuine Christlikeness

Faith, hope and love remain the hallmarks of the Lord Jesus' followers. In the next life, faith and hope will have fulfilled their purpose and love will be supreme.

**John 13:35 All men will know by this that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**

Love must not be confused with lust.

**Matthew 5:28 ... I tell you, That whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.**

**1 John 2:16 For everything that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and life's pride, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**

Love does not seek self gratification and does not have devious ulterior motives. Love is a genuine, unselfish and active concern for the ultimate welfare of others.

**1 Cor. 13:1-8 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never fails ...**

The love of God, as seen in the Lord Jesus, imbues us with love if we let it. He said: "And I (the Lord Jesus), if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32). He died on the cross for us, that includes you.

**1 John 4:8-11 He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this was revealed the love of God towards us, in that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.**

**1 John 4:19 We love him (God), because he first loved us.**

**Rom.5:8 ...God commends his love to us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**Gal. 3:1-2 O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently portrayed, crucified among you? I would learn from you just this, Did you receive the Spirit by the works of law, or by the hearing of faith?**

**Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**

**Philippians 2:1-11 So, if there is, in Christ, any companionship, if any of love's soothing, if any of the Spirit's sharing together, if any compassion and empathy, complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being soulmates with one purpose, doing nothing in rivalry nor from empty self importance; but in humility each esteeming the other better than themselves. None of you must be concerned about your own things, but each one of you should instead be concerned about the things of others, because you should allow the same attitude to be in you, which is in Christ Jesus: Who, existing in the rank of God, was not insistent on holding in his grasp being altogether equal with God but relegated himself, taking on himself the rank of a slave, becoming<sup>1</sup> like humans. Moreover, finding himself in form as a human, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Moreover, for this very reason, God has highly exalted him, and granted him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should emphatically acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

### **TEST EXERCISE**

Write a letter to your friend explaining how God changes hearts.

## **Study 10**

### **WHAT ABOUT NOW?**

#### **CHRISTIANITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND WHAT WE SEE NOW**

N.T. The Lord Jesus is building only one church.

NOW There are over 30,000 denominations, all started by men.

N.T. Division and false teaching is unacceptable.

NOW Every denomination has its reason for being separate.

N.T. The church of the Lord is simple.

NOW The denominations are complex.

N.T. The membership of each congregation would choose several supervisors from within their congregation having scriptural qualifications.

NOW Churches with one man Pastors, Ministers etc. with ostentatious titles like Reverend etc.. chosen by the hierarchy having man made qualifications.

N.T. Each congregation self governing according to scriptural principles, directly under Christ the only head. No earthly head. No earthly centralisation.

NOW Pyramid structures, diocese, synods, affiliations, councils, earthly heads with sub-heads of varying degrees of complexity.

N.T. The teaching of the apostles as revealed in the New Testament.

NOW Man made rules of faith, creeds, conditions of membership, canon law etc.

N.T. Local church membership consisted of those who believed in the Lord Jesus, repented and were immersed for the remission of their sins.

NOW Membership depends on the various terms laid down by the hierarchies.

N.T. The only rites are immersion of repentant believers and observance of the Lord's supper each first day of the week (the breaking of the loaf).

NOW Numerous and varied rites, ceremonies, holy days.

N.T. Reverent worship according to the principles revealed in the New Testament.

NOW Numerous and varied ways of worshipping.

But there are independent groups of immersed believers all over the world who are simply Christians. They meet together to remember Jesus each first day of the week. They have no set of dogmas or articles of faith but simply try to follow the principles of the New Testament. Usually they call their congregations simply: churches of Christ (Romans 16:16) [in parts of India:- Jama'at Al Masih]. But not all who call themselves churches of Christ are following the New Testament. Some even belong to a centralised hierarchy. Do compare what they teach and practice with the New Testament. That is the ultimate authority.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

All we are asking is:-

1) Please take note of what Christianity should be like according to the New Testament, so that the Lord Jesus regains the respect due to Him.

**Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**

**Proverbs 23:23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.**

2) If you have not already done so, consider Jesus' claims and become a Christian the Bible way. - There is no other way to become a real Christian.

**1 Thess. 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.**

3) Meet with an independent group of such Christians to worship in the New Testament manner.

4) If you cannot find such a group, it only needs two to begin one.

**Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst.**

5) Use the New Testament as your guide in worship and in life.

If you have vested interests in a denomination you are going to find it difficult. For example if you are a cleric or have relatives or friends who are entrenched in a denomination. You might reason with them but what if they will not listen? Pray for strength to follow the Lord. Don't be like these religious rulers:-

**John 12:42-43 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.**

Thank you for completing the studies. If you think we might be able to give you helpful advice, do not hesitate to contact us.

May your study of His word be a blessing to you.

## **TEST EXERCISE**

Write a letter to your friend advising them from the scriptures what they ought to do.