

The Church (Assembly) and the Kingdom of God

by Elder Bob Allgood

Part 1 of a comparative study

There is no institution on the face of the earth greater than the New Testament Church. And there will be no greater assembly of saints than that which is gathered in eternal glory at the end of this time world. We are told in Ephesians 3:21 “Unto him (God) be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”. However sometimes we can get our terminology and definitions all mixed up and this can cause some confusion in the minds of those who hear us, and especially the student of the word.

We all use many terms and phrases NOT found in the Bible. Some cause less confusion than others, but most require defining and explanation. It is sometimes difficult enough to define Biblical terms without the added burden of having to define made-made terms which cannot be found in the Scriptures. Whenever man creates a “term” to express a doctrinal position, he is laden with the task of defining, explaining and proving what he created. This task may be easy or difficult. As examples, the English word “sovereign” cannot be found in the King James Bible, but most understand what is meant when one says God is sovereign. On the other hand the English word “control” cannot be found in the King James Bible, and we must define and explain what we mean when we say “God is in control of all things”. Does God’s control or cause the wicked deeds of man as it is claimed by those who believe in the absolute predestination of all things? I think not.

The terms “militant church”, “invisible church” and “church kingdom” are also terms which cannot be found in the Scriptures, and require defining and explanation, if indeed they can be defined and/or explained. Those who commonly use such terms have their own definitions, and those who hear them use such terms may think they understand what is under consideration. But others may not.

Without using a common text for this subject, since the terms Church and Kingdom do not appear together in a common verse in the Scriptures, I will begin by asking some questions, which I hope to answer from the Scriptures.

What is the Kingdom of God? Is the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven one and the same thing? Since God (i.e. the Godhead) reigns over His sovereign domain, (kingdom), who or what is included IN the term “Kingdom of God”? What is the true Biblical meaning of the word Church? Is there any such thing as a “mystical or invisible Church” (i.e. assembly)

taught in the Scriptures? Is the local NT Church and the (invisible) BODY of Christ one and the same thing? Has every human member of a local Church, (i.e. assembly), necessarily been “translated into the kingdom of his dear Son”? Cannot a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” or a “tare” be assembled with the “saints” in an assembly of Christ?

FIRST let's establish some facts according to Scripture (i.e. King James Version). Please check me out, and let me know if I have erred. The terms "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God" are New Testament terms and they do not appear in the Old Testament. Jesus said "The Law and the Prophets" (i.e. Old Testament Scriptures) were until John (the Baptist); since that time the kingdom of God is preached ---" (Luke 16:16). The word "KINGDOM" appears in the New Testament 158 times in 150 verses, including the times it appears in the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God". The Term "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" appears 33 times in 32 verses - all in the Gospel of Matthew. The term "KINGDOM OF GOD" appears 70 times in 69 verses; 5 times in 5 verses in the Gospel of Matthew; 15 times in 15 verses in the Gospel of Mark; 33 times in 32 verses in the Gospel of Luke (the same as does the Kingdom of Heaven appear in Matthew); 2 times in 2 verses in John; and 15 times in Acts through Revelation.

The word KINGDOM appears in the Old Testament 184 times in 166 verses and is used to speak of "many kingdoms" of various nations. However the New Testament KINGDOM OF THE MESSIAH is foretold in prophecy many, many times in "The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms". If one studies this subject and “rightly divides the word of truth” they would have to look at several of these Old Testament prophecies, especially those in Isaiah 9:6-7 and Daniel, chapters 7 and 9. They would see that these were all "FULFILLED" in Christ according to God's sovereign will.

Many of the Arminians have confused the fulfillment of God’s sovereign will concerning these O.T. prophecies with the rejection of Christ the King by the natural unregenerate Jew. Doing this, they have tried to reconcile their confusion with timely prophecies about a natural kingdom in a natural world. I know, I used to do this, and it was not until God opened my eyes to his sovereign grace did I see His sovereign kingdom IN Christ. God has always been SOVEREIGN and always will be SOVEREIGN in heaven and on earth - none can stay his hand. The Kingdom of God (or of Heaven) is governed by God (i.e. the Godhead) and it is written that Christ was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and King eternal.

In the New Testament the word "Kingdom" and the terms "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God" are often synonymous and interchangeable. Some have the strange idea that they are not, but the Scriptures proves this true. In our text it says "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came

into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God". In Matthew 4:12 we read "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee --". Matt. 4:17 says "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". These are the exact same events. Matthew adds, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom". It seems to me that a 3rd grade student would understand that both Matthew and Mark are speaking of the same thing, but using different terms. But some of us went to Bible College or a Seminary and our professors helped confuse our minds.

The terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are interchanged in Matthew 19:23-24: Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God". It is obvious that Jesus is talking about the same kingdom, but as strange as it may be, some preachers go to College to get some professor to help them to misunderstand this. We could go on and give several more examples, but I do not believe this point needs further proof.

God does not leave us in darkness to depend upon man's theories or ideas as to what is the Kingdom of God. God tells us in His word what the Kingdom of God is. Jesus said "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation -- for behold the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). The word "observation" comes from the Greek word "parateresis" and means "inspection or ocular evidence". This teaches that the kingdom of God can not be seen with the physical eye. Jesus then says "Behold the kingdom of God is WITHIN you".

Paul, who certainly understood "the kingdom of God" better than any of us today "went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God" said very clearly that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy IN the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:7). Make no mistake about it there are many similarities and likenesses between the kingdom of God and the local Church assembly – but there is a distinct difference, because all of God's elect people who have been born of God are IN the kingdom of God, but not all of them are in the New Testament Church assembly.

If I was called on to illustrate the Dominion of God over his Creation and the Universe, The kingdom of God, and the Church of God – all in one drawing, I would first draw a large circle, and within that one another circle, and within that one another circle. If you please I would draw "a wheel in a wheel".

1. This first circle would represent God's Sovereign Dominion over God's creation of all things and the entirety of the universe. God reigns supreme over the beast of the field, the fowls of the air, angels and spirits, and the whole human race, both elect and non-elect.

God says, "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil (i.e. judgment): I the LORD do all these things" (Isa. 45:5-7). God asked Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding" – let us read Job 38:4-41, and answer is we can. As converted Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes unto heaven, and his understanding returned unto him, and he blessed the most High, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he (God) doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:34-35).

2. The second circle which is within the first circle, would represent "the kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven" which is, IMO, the "kingdom of his dear Son". This is the kingdom into which ALL who were chosen by God IN Christ before the foundation of the world, and who are born of God by His Spirit are "translated" in regeneration. This is conveyed by Paul in these words, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature —" (Col. 1:12-15).

In my opinion (IMO), this is the "kingdom of Christ" that Daniel saw when he wrote, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:12-13). This is the kingdom received by Christ when he ascended into glory and sat down at the right hand of the Father, and God said unto our God, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the

heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Heb 1:8-12).

IMO, This is the kingdom in which ALL of God’s elect shall dwell. One must be “born again” (from above) in order to see (perceive) and enter (spiritually) into this kingdom. This kingdom is the REALM of Christ, the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God. Alexander Maclaren wrote, “The kingdom of God is realm in which God’s will is being done in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 17:20-21 when Jesus says, The kingdom of God is within you (or in the midst of you) he is speaking of Himself constituting God’s kingdom at that time. He himself was the realm in which God’s will was being done in the power of the Holy Spirit”. This is “the kingdom of God that cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you”. It is “Christ in you, the hope of glory”. This is the “kingdom of God” that is “not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). This kingdom is INHERITED by all the elect of God.

3. The third circle (which is within the second circle, which is within the first circle) would represent the New Testament Church (i.e. Assembly) of born again, believers who have been properly baptized in water and added to the church by the Lord. And to this I will speak more in detail later in due course.

So as I presently see it (and I may be wrong and have to change my mind as this study progresses), the Sovereign Domain of God is over all his creation, over all the universe, over every creature, and over all the human race, both elect and non-elect. The kingdom of God pertains to the elect of God chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, predestinated unto eternal glory, called and justified by God and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. The Church of Christ is primarily speaking of a local assembly of born again believers, properly baptized in water and contending for the faith once delivered unto the Saints. The New Testament gospel church is not the Kingdom of God but IN the kingdom of God. The church is not inherited but entered into through obedience to God’s word.

Part 2 of a study

With those things that are written above I believe I sufficiently established these Biblical precepts:

1. The terms “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” are New Testament terms and cannot be found in the Old Testament.
2. The terms “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” are often, if not generally, synonymous and interchangeable. Proof text: Matthew 19:23-24
3. The “gospel of the kingdom” as preached by Jesus in Matthew 4:23, is the same “gospel of the kingdom of God” as preached by Jesus in Mark 1:14.
4. One aspect of the Kingdom of God, and there may be several aspects, is that it is “spiritual”, and not physical or material. The kingdom comes not with observation (natural visual sight) and is within you or in your midst (Luke 17:20-21). The kingdom of God is “not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). In this sense “the kingdom” is the realm in which the will of God is being done in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit.
5. The sovereign dominion of God over his creation, including the human race and the universe, encompasses that which is called in the New Testament, the “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven”, and this “kingdom” encompasses the New Testament Church (Assembly).

IF I have not erred so far, then I believe the following to be true. Since the terms “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are synonymous with the terms “kingdom of Christ” (Eph. 5:5) and “the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13), and the “kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” – and since this is the kingdom prepared from before the foundation of the world as the inheritance of the saints, (Matt 25:34) for all of the elect of God, THEN this INHERITANCE is not limited to those blessed to see and enter the New Testament Church (Assembly). In other words, those true believers who are in the NT gospel church are in the spiritual kingdom, but everyone in the spiritual kingdom of God is not in the NT gospel church.

I know of NO scripture that ever speaks of the New Testament Church (Assembly) as being the “inheritance” of the elect (i.e. saints) of God. If you do, I would appreciate hearing from you so that I may become enlightened on this matter. It seems to me that if the NT church is an inheritance for the saints of God then they would not need to “repent and be baptized” in order to enter the NT church (assembly). An inheritance is received not earned. On the other hand, in Matthew 25:34, Jesus said to his Sheep “Come, ye blessed of my Father, INHERIT the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”. What the Sheep had done in verses 35-40 was evidence proving they were Sheep and not works by which they earned their inheritance.

This inheritance is for ALL of God’s elect, not just those who have been blessed to find the New Testament Church (Assembly). Peter wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1st Peter 1:3-5). Surely no one but the Calvinist will argue that ONLY those elect IN the NT Church (assembly) are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation”.

ALL of God’s elect who have been born of God’s Spirit have His Spirit bearing witness with their spirit that they are children of God. Paul wrote, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:15-17). Surely no one will claim that ONLY the elect IN the NT Church (assembly) are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”.

It seems obvious to me, from the context of the scripture, and from other scriptures, that the words in 1st Corinthians 6:9-11 is talking about the eternal kingdom of God and not the NT Church (assembly). Paul wrote, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”. None who have not been made the righteousness of God by the imputed righteousness of Christ shall inherit the “kingdom of God”. And so Paul added these words, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”. Since the NT Church (assembly) is IN the inherited Kingdom, then those who have been washed, sanctified, and justified – and have repented and been baptized are also IN the NT Church which is IN the kingdom.

This same principle is taught in Ephesians 5:5-10. Paul wrote, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord”. Paul makes it clear that God the Father, “hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his

dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins -" (Col. 1:12-14).

It seems to me that those who have been translated into the "kingdom of Christ and of God" which is the "kingdom of his dear Son" and then blessed to hear and understand the "gospel of the kingdom" (which they inherited), then they are to walk "as children of light" – even in the NT Church (assembly) if they have been blessed of God to be added to it.

IMO, much confusion would be eliminated if everyone who reads the word "church" in the scriptures would mentally insert the word "assembly", and think of a "called out assembly of born again (from above or by the Spirit of God), believers (in Jesus the Christ), who had been properly baptized in water". But this will not happen, and religious people, including most Primitive Baptists, will continue to refer to a "building" as "the church". IMO, the phrase "church kingdom" (which is not found in the scriptures) would never have been imagined if the Greek word "Ekklesia" had been translated "Assembly". But let me explain and continue to provide more proof of the above proposition.

With one exception, the words CHURCH and CHURCHES as translated in the KJV Bible come from the Greek word "Ekklesia" meaning "A Called Out Assembly" of people. King James set down a set of rules for the translators and the third (3rd) rule required "the old ecclesiastical words to be kept," such as "church" instead of "congregation" or "assembly". The word Ekklesia is translated Assembly 3 times in Acts 19, and Church or Churches 115 times in the rest of the KJV; 36 times as church (singular), and 79 times as churches (plural). The one exception is found in Acts 19:37 where the "town clerk of Ephesus" said, "For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess". The word "churches" in this passage is the Greek word "hierosulos" and refers to buildings such as "temples". Of the 115 times the word "Ekklesia" is translated Church or Churches, 114 times it is referring to a local, New Testament visible church or churches. Only one time in Acts 7:38 it speaks of Moses being with "the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina".

When considering the word Church or Churches in the New Testament, using a contextual method of interpretation, IMO, the primary application should always be FIRST to the local, visible church or churches to which the words are written. In only a few cases does the context of the scripture allow for a SECOND application to the invisible body of Christ, referred to as the Bride in the Revelation, to be assembled in heaven or eternal glory. The word "Bride" is found five (5) times in the NT, once in John 3:29, and four (4) times in the Revelation of Christ. In Revelation 21:2 John saw "the holy city,

new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”. It will take a study within itself to discern what John saw or what is being talked about by John, and the Lord willing, that will be done in due course.

Jesus was the first to use the Greek word "Ekklesia" in the New Testament. In Matthew 16:18 we read, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. IMO, Jesus is speaking generically of the local, visible, New Testament assembly that HE will build on Himself as the Rock, and the spiritual revelation that HE is “the Christ, the Son of the living God”. This is the church (the house of God) that is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15) in this time world.

Some may wish to argue that Jesus was speaking of the “mystical church or invisible church” – which terms cannot be found in the scripture, but the rest of the context does not support this argument. For Jesus went on to say in verse 19, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”. Jesus gave to the First Church the keys of the “kingdom of heaven” which IMO, proves the church was IN the kingdom but the kingdom was not limited to the church.

These “keys” represent the authority to open or close, bind or loose, only within its own assembly, things that pertain to the kingdom of God on earth. This precept is taught by Jesus when HE again used the word "Ekklesia" in Matthew 18:17 when dealing with internal church discipline. Jesus said, “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican”. This 2nd and 3rd use of the word “church (assembly)” cannot refer to a non-existent “mystical church or invisible church”.

The next time we find the word "Ekklesia" used in the New Testament is in Acts 2:47. We are told that “they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” and “they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church (assembly – ba) daily such as should be saved”.

IMO, this passage lays the foundation for the characteristics – doctrine and practice – of a New Testament church, and proves that those IN the church are IN the kingdom, but not all who are IN the kingdom are IN the church.

Part 3 of a study

As I understand it, the “kingdom of God” and the “kingdom of heaven” are synonymous with the “kingdom of Christ” (Eph. 5:5) and “the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13), and the “kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”, and the “purpose of God according to election” places ALL of God’s elect IN this kingdom, but not IN the New Testament Church (Assembly). ALL the elect of God, including the “old testament saints” from righteous Abel on (you can start with Adam if you prefer), including Gentiles and Hebrews (Jews), are by God’s “eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” IN “the kingdom”. Jesus said in Matthew 8:11, “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” – and in Luke 13:29 “And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God”.

It seems to me that Paul had this understanding and wrote, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:3-6). Again he wrote, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:29-30).

I have never been able to spiritually discern how the "purpose of God according to election" and the doctrine of predestination could pertain to one's membership in a local New Testament Church (Assembly). Let's consider this FACT. Jesus said in Matthew 11:11 “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”. IMO, “he that is least in the kingdom of heaven” is speaking of Christ himself. The word “least” is translated from the Greek word “micros”, meaning lesser in age. Jesus was six months younger than John but “greater than he” in the Kingdom. John the Baptist was IN the Kingdom but not IN

the New Testament Church (Assembly). Just like ALL the “old testament saints” – Gentiles and Jews – who died IN the Lord, John the Baptist had not been baptized in water – even though he was sent by God to baptize.

When Jesus began his earthly ministry after being baptized by John, he “went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom”. Mark tells us, “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (1:14). Since there is only ONE GOSPEL (Gal. 1:6-9), the “gospel of the kingdom” as preached by Jesus in Matthew 4:23, is the same “gospel of the kingdom of God” as preached by Jesus in Mark 1:14, and is the same as the “gospel of Christ”, “the gospel of God”, “the gospel of the grace of God”, “the gospel of peace”, “the gospel your salvation”, etc.. I cannot find where the “gospel” is ever referred to as “the gospel of the Church”. This does not mean that the church does not preach the gospel – but the good news (or gospel) is about the “kingdom of God’s dear Son”. Paul spent his entire ministry preaching “the gospel of the grace of God.” As he said in Acts 20:24, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

“The kingdom of God’s dear Son” had been foretold by the Prophets hundreds of years before. Isaiah wrote, “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 judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”. When the KING was born into this world, “the angel of the Lord came upon them (the shepherds), and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”. CHRIST the Lord, means the Messiah, the anointed one of God, the KING of the Kingdom.

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). In the same sense the local, visible, New Testament Church (Assembly) of Christ is IN the world but not to be part of the world. But IT will no longer be the same local, visible church (assembly) when it is presented to himself with ALL the elect of God IN glory as “a glorious church, (assembly) not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”. For then it will be “holy and without blemish”.

But this cannot be said of a local, visible, New Testament Church (Assembly) here on this earth, because we dwell in these earthen vessels, and the church is made up of SINNERS.

It seems to me that the New Testament gospel Church, as taught in the scriptures, is always a particular local, visible assembly of born again believers who have been properly baptized in water. There is no such thing as a “Holy Catholic (universal) Church” or an “Invisible Church (assembly)” taught in the scriptures. There will be a Church (Assembly) in glory when all the redeemed (elect) are gathered together to be “with the Lord”. The term “The Primitive Baptist Church” is a misnomer unless it is being used generically to speak of a particular local, visible Primitive Baptist Church or Churches. Technically speaking there is no such thing as “The Primitive Baptist Church”.

The term “the church” appears in seventy (70) verses of scripture in the New Testament. However, in almost all of those verses the reference is to a particular church (assembly) in a particular location. As far as I can tell there is no such thing as a “Holy Catholic (universal) Church” or an “Invisible Church (assembly)” taught in the scriptures for this time world. I do not find any “Denominational Headquarters” for the New Testament Churches taught in the scriptures. I do not find where any natural man is to be called the Pope or Ruler over the churches of Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of His church and churches. There are Bishops, Elders and Deacons within each church, but they are not to “Lord it over God’s heritage”. Since I have introduced two creatures at once, a Universal Church and an imaginary Invisible Church (assembly), I will deal with the Catholic or universal aspect first.

There is “The Roman Catholic Church” with all its Babylonish idolatry and sexually perverted priest. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest body of “Christians” (?) in the world. It has about 1 billion members -- nearly a fifth of the world's population. The pope, who is the bishop of Rome, serves as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. He governs the church from Vatican City, a tiny independent country within the city of Rome.

There is “The Episcopal Church”, which is a break off from “the Church of England”, which has over 100 dioceses and about 12,000 clergy in the United States. It supports missionary activities in many parts of the world. A General Convention of bishops, priests, and laity that meets every three years governs the church. A presiding bishop heads the convention's House of Bishops and the Executive Council, which puts the convention's decisions into practice. The church has about 2,500,000 members. The Headquarters are in New York City.

There are other “denominations” that could be used to illustrate the Universal aspect of man-made organizations, but these should suffice. The true New Testament Church has no “head” but Jesus, and no headquarters but in heaven. Each and every church is autonomous, with Christ as her head, to carry out the business of the individual, particular church. When Jesus gave the “keys (authority) to the kingdom of heaven” to the apostles, they were to be used in New Testament Church in a local church manner, not in a catholic or universal manner. This is obvious from HIS teachings in Matthew 18:15-17. One of the vital characteristics of a New Testament Church (assembly) is “church discipline”. No where in the scriptures is “church discipline” designated to an authority outside the local assembly. The “rule” of catholic or universal church denominations is carried on under the establishment of “the clergy”. The separation of “the clergy” from “the laity” and the rule of “the clergy” over “the people” is nothing more than the doctrine and deeds of the Nicolaitans. Jesus told the church at Ephesus “thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate”. Jesus told the church in Pergamos, “So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate”.

On the day of Pentecost when the Lord added 3,000 souls to the church at Jerusalem, those that gladly received the words of Peter’s preaching, “continued stedfastly in the “apostles’ doctrine” and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). It does NOT say they continue in the “Apostles Creed” which is a Roman Catholic and Protestant declaration of their belief, including a belief in the “Holy Catholic Church”.

Here is the basic Roman Catholic form of the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The Protestant form generally substitutes the word Maker for Creator and uses catholic or Christian instead of Catholic. When the word “Catholic” is used as a noun it refers to a member of a Catholic church, especially a Roman Catholic. When it is used as an adjective it refers to the Roman Catholic Church or to “the universal Christian church” (?).

This unscriptural idea of a “universal church” seems to have rubbed off on some of my brethren among the Primitive Baptists who speak of “The Primitive Baptist Church” in the same sense as some do “The Catholic Church”. All of us use the term “the church” or “the Primitive Baptist Church” to speak of a particular church or the PB churches in general, just as we would talk about “the American housewife” or “the Ford automobile”. But when one uses the term “THE Primitive Baptist Church” in the sense that there is only ONE Primitive Baptist CHURCH, then IMO, that is going “catholic or universal” with the doctrine.

One cannot be baptized into “THE New Testament Church”. One must be baptized into a particular New Testament Church in a particular location. One cannot be baptized into “THE (Holy Catholic) Primitive Baptist Church”. One must be baptized into a particular Primitive Baptist Church in a particular location. One cannot attend “THE Primitive Baptist Church”. One must attend a particular Primitive Baptist Church.

I first began to notice that some Primitive Baptists hold to the idea of a “catholic (or universal) Primitive Baptist Church back in 1994. In the Philippines Journal “Under the Mango Tree” Jeff Harris used this terminology on the ordination papers of those he ordained, by saying “We, the undersigned Elders of THE Primitive Baptist Church – etc..” The idea of there being “THE Primitive Baptist Church” went so far, that there was a LOGO designed to promote it. I first saw this logo in the spring of 1994.

After reading the Ordination Certificates used in the Philippines, which began with the words, “We the undersigned Elders of “THE Primitive Baptist Church”, I examined my own ordination certificate and sure enough it begins with the same words, “We the undersigned Elders of “THE Primitive Baptist Church”. This tells me that whoever designed the “Ordination Certificate” did not have a good understanding of the doctrine of the New Testament Church as taught in the Scriptures. IMO, this statement is not only unbiblical it creates some problems and confusion.

If apostate or liberal Elders who have departed from the faith remain Elders in “THE (catholic) Primitive Baptist Church”, and all the Elders which have “kept the faith” are Elders in this same imaginary “catholic Primitive Baptist Church”, how then does one “come out from among them and be separate”? Where does this catholic Primitive Baptist Church assemble itself? Who is the pastor? What songs does the assembly sing? Who does the preaching? Who is the treasurer? How is church business conducted? How is “church discipline” conducted? Of course these questions will also apply to the imaginary “invisible church” when I get around to that subject. Would it not be better for the Ordination Certificate to read, “We the undersigned Primitive Baptist Elders at the request of such and such Primitive Baptist

Church in such and such city, etc. etc.”, rather than “We the undersigned Elders of THE Primitive Baptist Church”?

Part 4 of a study

The New Testament gospel Church, as taught in the scriptures, is always a particular local, visible assembly of born again believers who have been properly baptized in water. There is no such thing as a “Holy Catholic (universal) Church” or an “Invisible Church (assembly)” taught in the scriptures. There will be a Church (Assembly) in glory when all the redeemed (elect) are gathered together to be “with the Lord”. One may take the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:18 (when the word "Ekklesia" is first used) and construe that Jesus was talking about (1) more than ONE local assembly or, (2) just the church in Jerusalem or, (3) the assembly of all Saints to be gathered in glory, when he said “upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. But one will be hard pressed to take the words of Christ in Matthew 18:15-17 (when the word "Ekklesia" is used the 2nd and 3rd times) and construe anything other than a local, visible, New Testament Church (assembly) dealing with internal church discipline. One cannot take the words in Acts 2:47 (when the word "Ekklesia" is used the 4th time) “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” and construe anything other than a local, visible New Testament assembly, unless they make the word “saved” mean “saved eternally”.

The 5th time the word "Ekklesia" is used it is in Acts 5:11 following the death of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. There it says, “And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things”. The words “and upon as many as heard these things” limit “all the church” to the church at Jerusalem which heard of these things. The word "Ekklesia" is used it is in Acts 7:38 but there it is speaking of the Jewish assembly in the wilderness with Moses.

The 6th and 7th time the word "Ekklesia" is used to speak of a New Testament Church (assembly) is in Acts 8:1. “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” and in Acts 8:3, “As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison”. It is obvious that “the church” in Acts 8:3 is the same “church which was at Jerusalem” in Acts 8:1. So far we have found NO place where God’s word introduces the idea of a “catholic (universal)” or “invisible” church (assembly).

The next time we find the word "Ekklesia" used in the Scriptures it is translated CHURCHES (plural) instead of CHURCH (singular). Due to Paul's persecution of "the church which was at Jerusalem" – "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Following Paul's conversion recorded in Acts 9 we read in verse 31 "Then had the CHURCHES (caps mine – ba) rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied". If God intended that we believe that the New Testament Church (assembly) was to be a "catholic (universal) church" it seems to me that the Spirit of God would have directed the writer to say "Then had THE church rest, etc.." But instead the inspired word of God reads CHURCHES (assemblies) throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria. I could "rest my case here" ☺ but why stop when I'm on a roll. ☺

In Acts 11:22 we read, "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem". In Acts 13:1 we read, "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers". In Acts 20:17 we read, "And from Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church". In Romans 16:1 we read "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea". In Romans 16:5 we read, "Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved". In 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul wrote, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth" and again in 2 Corinthians 1:1, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia".

When writing to more than ONE church Paul used the term CHURCHES. In Gal. 1:1-2 we read, "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia". In Ephesians 1:1 Paul wrote, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus". In Colossians 1:1 he wrote, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse". In 1st Thessalonians 1:1, "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ" and again in 2nd Thessalonians 1:1 "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". NO WHERE do we find any indication that Paul ever believed in a "catholic (universal) church (assembly).

Our Lord and Saviour refuted this false teaching of a "catholic (universal) church) when he instructed John to write to the seven (7) churches in Asia.
Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write;
Revelation 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write;
Revelation 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write;

Revelation 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write;
Revelation 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write;
Revelation 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;
Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write;

At the end of each of these letters we find these words:

Revelation 2:7 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES”

Revelation 2:11 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES”

Revelation 2:17 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES”

Revelation 2:23 “And I will kill her children with death; and all the CHURCHES shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works”.

Revelation 2:29 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES”.

Revelation 3:6 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES”.

Revelation 3:13 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES”.

Revelation 3:22 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES”.

And finally in Revelation 22:16 we read, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the CHURCHES. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star”.

Everything Has A Beginning:

But now let’s move on to another aspect of this study. Everything but the Eternal Godhead has to have a beginning. Mankind did not evolve from non-organic matter into a life-form and then turn into a tadpole, then a frog, then a monkey, and finally a college professor. God created Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. But he could not procreate by himself, so God made Eve from one of his ribs. If Adam and Eve are in heaven, they will be the only ones there without a natural “belly button”, unless God put one on them for decorations. All other humans have been conceived in the womb of a woman and nourished through an umbilical cord attached to the placenta.

The Hebrew Nation got its beginning via Gentiles. Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives were ALL Gentiles and the ONLY souls to survive the great flood of 2390 BC. Eber, pronounced He’ber, from which comes Hebrew, was a descendent of Shem, a son of Noah (see Gen 10:21-31).

Terah was of the lineage of Eber, and Abram was of the lineage of Terah. Abram was a native of Ur of the Chaldees (a Chaldean) before God called him to go into the land of Canaan. The word HEBREW appears in Genesis 14:13, but the word JEWS does not appear in scripture until 2nd Kings 16:6. It was after 1787 BC when Jacob's name was changed to Israel and the "house of Jacob" became the "house of Israel".

When the fullness of time was at hand for believers in the coming of The Messiah to be "baptized with water" God sent John the Baptist, with heavenly authority, to start the process. As far as I know John himself was never "baptized with water", unless God himself did it, but there is no record of that. John baptized many "disciples", the number of which is unknown. Jesus was baptized by John in order to fulfill all righteousness (Matt 3:15), and the authority to baptize passed from John to Jesus. From the disciples John had baptized, some recognized Jesus as the Messiah and began to follow The Christ. Jesus called out others to follow him. They, having received authority to baptize from Christ, in turn baptized many more disciples, even more than John had baptized (John 4:1-3). It appears from Acts 1:21-23 that John baptized ALL of the disciples from which Jesus chose his first Apostles. According to Luke 6:13 the first twelve (12) apostles were chosen from among other disciples. "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles". So in the "First Church" there were born again believers who had been "baptized with water" called Disciples, and some disciples who were chosen to be Apostles, including Judas Iscariot, who was a devil.

According to Acts 6:1-6 it was the Apostles in "the church which was at Jerusalem" who ordained seven men to serve the widows who were being neglected in the daily administration. We assume these were the first Deacons, although the word "deacon" does not appear in this passage. The word deacons first appears in Paul's epistle to the Philippians. The qualification for deacons is set forth in Paul's first epistle to Timothy. No where in the Scriptures do we find where a "deacon" ever sat on a presbytery to ordain an Elder – as some Primitive Baptist churches allow them to do.

We do know that there were Elders in "the church which was at Jerusalem" and must assume that the Apostles ordained them as such. When "the church which was at Jerusalem" was in need, we read in Acts 11 that the church in Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians, sent relief to "the church which was at Jerusalem". The scripture says, "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul". These Elders took part in the first church council recorded in Acts 15.

When Paul's persecution came on "the church which was at Jerusalem", the Apostles remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), but these Elders were scattered abroad and "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Other Churches (plural) were established throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria. We know this to be true because after Paul's conversion we read in Acts 9:31 "Then had the CHURCHES (caps mine – ba) rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied".

"When the apostles, Barnabas and Paul" (Acts 14:14), went on their first "missionary journey" they not only established more CHURCHES (plural) but they "ordained them elders in EVERY church" (Acts 14:23). If there was such a creature as a "catholic (universal) church" it seems to me they would have just "ordained elders in THE church. But the Holy Spirit of God inspired the writer to say they "ordained them elders in EVERY church". There are some who claim there must be a plurality of Elders in every church in order for it to be a New Testament Church – but I will not get into that here and now.

Finally let's consider the Elders of the church at Ephesus. When Paul was returning to Jerusalem from his third "missionary journey" with Silas, they stopped in Miletus, and he "sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church". He did not call for ALL the Elders which had been ordained in EVERY church, but the Elders of the Church at Ephesus. In Acts 20:28 Paul said unto THEM – "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood". The flock THEY were to take heed over was the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made THEM overseers. They had no ecclesiastical control or duty to take heed over every other church in that region or around the world. Granted, every elect child of God, and every New Testament Church, has been "purchased with the blood of Christ (God)", but the church under consideration is the Church at Ephesus, and not some "catholic (universal) church".

It seems that now days, in most religious denominations, and especially in some Baptist Associations (which is another subject in itself) there are some who want to "Lord it over" all the churches, as though the Holy Spirit has made them overseers like unto the Roman Catholic Pope. Peter had some advice along this line, so I will let him speak in my behalf. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth

not away”.

Part 5 of a study

Let's take a closer look at some complex passages with dual applications to the church (assembly) and the kingdom. I have proposed that the sovereign dominion of God over his creation, including the human race and the universe, encompasses that which is called in the New Testament the “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven”, and this “kingdom” is synonymous with “the kingdom of God's dear Son” and encompasses the New Testament Church (Assembly). If I am right in this proposition, and I know of nothing to make me think that I am wrong, then it stands to reason that some passages of Scripture dealing with the local, visible New Testament Church (assembly) could or will also apply to the kingdom or God or the assembly to be gathered in glory. And likewise some passages dealing with the church (assembly) or kingdom in glory could or will apply to the local, visible New Testament Church (assembly). In my last post I used a passage which proves this point.

In Acts 20:28 Paul said to the Elders of the church (assembly) AT Ephesus, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”. Clearly the context of this statement deals primarily with the FLOCK of God's people at Ephesus over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. This FLOCK is called “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”.

None would deny that ALL the elect of God, whom God foreknew, predestinated, called and justified, and will be assembled in glory (whom he glorified), have been purchased with the blood of Christ. None would deny that ALL who are IN the “kingdom of God”, who have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, have been purchased with the blood of Christ. None would deny that every child of God who is IN every local, visible New Testament “Church of God” have been purchased with the blood of Christ. Therefore, while this passage has a primary application to the Church at Ephesus, a portion of it has a secondary application to “the whole family (of God) in heaven and on earth” (see Eph. 3:14-19).

Some other complex passages are those that speak of “the church” as being “the body of Christ”. The phrase “the body of Christ” appears four (4) times in the New Testament and three (3) times has a primary reference to the local, visible assembly, and a secondary reference to either other assemblies or the whole family of God. The phrase “his body” appears eight times and three (3) or four (4) of those seem to have a primary reference to the whole

family of God, or “church (assembly) that will be gathered in glory. We must remember when considering the word Church or Churches in the New Testament, using a contextual method of interpretation, IMO, the primary application should always be FIRST to the local, visible church or churches to which the words are written. In only a few cases does the context of the scripture allow for a SECOND application to the invisible body of Christ, referred to as the Bride in the Revelation, to be assembled in eternal glory. The term “the church” appears in seventy (70) verses of scripture in the New Testament. However, in almost all of those verses the reference is to a particular church (assembly) in a particular location. We should never take the position that the phrase “the church (assembly)” is never used to speak of the assembly of the whole family of God on earth and in heaven.

Paul taught the Corinthian Church (assembly) that communion (i.e. The Lord’s Supper – the cup and the bread) was “the blood of Christ” and “the body of Christ”. He wrote, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). He then went on to say in the same epistle, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor 12:27). Certainly no one would claim that ONLY those in the Corinthian Church (assembly) made up “the body of Christ”. Therefore this statement must first be applied to the Corinthian Church, but secondarily it must be applied to all other local, visible New Testament Churches (assemblies) and to ALL who are “baptized into Jesus Christ” by one Spirit. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”.

As I understand it ALL of God’s elect are “heirs according to the promise” of eternal life and are “baptized INTO Jesus Christ” or into “his body”. Paul wrote, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:26-29). Again in Romans 6:3 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Therefore it must be understood that the phrase “the body of Christ” has dual application to not only the local, visible New Testament Church (assembly) but to ALL local visible NT Churches (assemblies) and to ALL of God’s redeemed IN Christ.

I think this precept is seen in other passages such as Ephesians 1:15-23 and especially verses 22-23 which says, “And 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 fulness of him that filleth all in all”. This precept is also seen in Ephesians

5:25-31 where Paul speaks of Husbands loving their wives and compares marriage to being JOINED to Christ. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband”. While, IMO, the primary application is to the Church at Ephesus, the secondary application is to ALL other churches and to ALL of God’s elect IN Christ who make up the “Bride”.

It has been pointed out that the Greek word “Ekklesia” was translated Church or Churches 115 times in the KJV; 36 times as church (singular), and 79 times as churches (plural). The word "KINGDOM" appears in the New Testament 158 times in 150 verses, including the times it appears in the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God". To examine each of these passages would extend this study beyond reason and perhaps beyond my life time. But I will try to examine some in order to provide proof for the premises presented herein.

There are many Parables describing what takes place in “the kingdom of God” and “the kingdom of heaven”, but to the best of my knowledge there are only TWO passages that explicitly DEFINE or EXPLAIN “the kingdom” for us. In other words in these two passages GOD TELLS WHAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS! Jesus said "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation -- for behold the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). The word "observation" comes from a Greek that means "inspection or ocular evidence". Jesus teaches us that the KINGDOM OF GOD cannot be seen with the physical eye. Therefore we must conclude that there is a difference between “the kingdom of God” and the local, visible New Testament Church (assembly) which can be seen. Paul, who certainly understood the kingdom better than we do today, confirmed this precept by saying “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy IN the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:7). Again this teaches me that “the kingdom of God” cannot be seen, touched or consumed in a physical sense, but IS experienced IN the Holy Ghost.

I believe the “kingdom of God” is the realm in which the will of God is done through the power of the Holy Spirit. While Jesus was here on this earth, HE

accomplished that by doing the “will of his Father”. He said “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). Jesus did the will of His Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, for it says in John 3:34 “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him”. When Jesus ascended back to glory, He promised to send another Comforter, as He said, “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth WITH YOU, and shall be IN YOU (caps mine – ba)” (John 14:17). THIS appears to be “the kingdom” under consideration when Jesus said, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). IMO, this little passage teaches that the “little flock” and “the kingdom” must be different in some ways.

Previously I used Acts 20:28 to show how the term ”the church of God” could have a dual application to not only a local visible assembly, but to other assemblies and to all of God elect. The parable of the “wheat and the tares” has similar dual applications. In Matthew 13:24-30 we read, “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn”.

There is no need for me to explain this parable because the disciples said to Jesus “Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field” and He explained it in verses 37-43. “He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear”.

It seems to me that this parable is speaking of God's elect which are "the good seed" sown by the Son of God. It also seems obvious that "the end of the world" is under consideration, when "the children of the wicked one" shall be separated from "the kingdom" of heaven and cast into a furnace of fire. IF "the children of the kingdom" is the "visible NT church" then Jesus says the Devil is busy sowing "tares" within the local NT church. The fact that he says "Let both grow together until the harvest" would contradict his teachings on church discipline in Matthew 18:15-17. If "the kingdom" in this parable is the local visible NT church, that means that "the righteous" cannot enjoy this kingdom until the tares are separated "in the end of the world". While there can be applications made to "tares" (wolves in sheep's clothing) getting into the local, visible NT church, it seems clear to me that in this parable "the kingdom of heaven" deals primarily with all of the elect of God – at least in the New Testament era.

Jesus said in Matthew 8:11 "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven". In Luke 13:29 we read, "And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God". Obviously the Old Testament Saints under consideration here were not IN the local, visible NT church – but are IN the "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God".

Part 6 of a study

What is the "INHERITANCE among all them which are sanctified by faith" IN Christ? Do God's elect inherit membership in a New Testament Gospel Church or do they inherit an eternal home in the Kingdom of God?

The word "inheritance" appears in 203 verses in both the Old and New Testament. It appears in 18 verses in the New. The word "inherit" appears 14 or 15 times in 13 verses in the New Testament. The words "heir" and "heirs" appear about 20 times in 18 verses. In almost ALL cases, the words "inheritance, inherit, heir and heirs" are translated from the same Greek word, so the meaning of these words is uniform.

The word inheritance means:

- 1) an inheritance, property received (or to be received) by inheritance
- 2) what is given to one as a possession
 - 2a) the eternal blessedness of the consummated kingdom of God which is to be expected after the visible return of Christ
 - 2b) the share which an individual will have in that eternal blessedness

To "inherit" means:

- 1) to receive a lot, receive by lot
- 1a) esp. to receive a part of an inheritance, receive as an inheritance, obtain by right of inheritance
- 1b) to be an heir, to inherit
- 2) to receive the portion assigned to one, receive an allotted portion, receive as one's own or as a possession
- 3) to become partaker of, to obtain

These definitions seem to agree with all dictionary definitions which are:

1. To receive (property or a title, for example) from an ancestor by legal succession or will. To receive by bequest or as a legacy. 2. To receive or take over from a predecessor: The new administration inherited the economic problems of the last four years. 3. Biology. To receive (a characteristic) from one's parents by genetic transmission. 4. To gain (something) as one's right or portion.

As a verb, the word "inherit" means "To hold or take possession of an inheritance". As a noun, an "heir" is one who receives an inheritance one who has obtained the portion allotted to him.

The land of Canaan was GIVEN to the Israelites by God as an inheritance. According to Numbers 26:53-43 God said, "Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To many thou shalt GIVE the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt GIVE the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be GIVEN according to those that were numbered of him" (caps mine – ba). This land was promised to Abraham, but according to Stephen in Acts 7:5 "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would GIVE it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child". This "inheritance" was not GIVEN due to obedience, but by PROMISE. Paul says in Gal. 3:18 "18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise". Earthly inheritances, coupled with duties and obligations, as was the land of Canaan, can be taken from the "heirs" by the BENEFACTOR.

AS I understand the scriptures, the elect of God, both Jews and Gentiles have "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you". As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:3-5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time".

If this inheritance is IN the local, visible NT church (assembly) then we must conclude that the local, visible NT church is incorruptible and fades not away. How many local, visible NT churches have “faded away”? How many have become corrupt? But Peter tells us this inheritance is reserved in heaven.

When Paul spoke to the Elders of the Church (assembly) at Ephesus in Acts 20:28, a passage I have already discussed, he used the expression “the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood”. I have pointed out how this statement applies not only to the true visible church at Ephesus, but to ALL true NT churches and to ALL of God’s redeemed. Paul concluded his remarks to these Elders in Acts 20:32 with these words, “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified”. Notice the inheritance is “among ALL them which are sanctified” which would include ALL of God’s elect, not just those in the church or churches. In Hebrews 10:14 we read, “For by one offering he (Christ) hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”.

In Acts 26 Paul is rehearsing before Agrippa how the Lord called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. After seeing the Lord and falling to the ground, according to Paul, the Lord said to him, “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:16-18). PLEASE NOTICE that the Lord said the “inheritance” under consideration is the “inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”. This is the same eternal inheritance that is under consideration in 1 Peter 1:3-5 and Acts 20:32.

In the epistle to the church at Ephesus Paul talks about the “inheritance” of the elect. In Ephesians 1:11 he says, “In whom (Christ) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him (God) who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will”. In Ephesians 1:14 he speaks of the Holy Spirit, “Which is the earnest (security deposit) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory”. In Ephesians 1:18 Paul said he prayed that “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”. And in Ephesians 5:5 he said “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”.

I think evidence has been submitted that shows the “the kingdom of Christ and of God” is the kingdom into which ALL of God’s elect are born or translated as Paul wrote in Col. 1:12-14, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”. Surely all of God’s elect who have been quickened by God have been made “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” and have been “delivered us from the power of darkness”.

In Col. 3:24 Paul wrote, “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ”. As I understand this, the “the reward of the inheritance” is not something earned but rather the eternal inheritance. Paul is encouraging the servants of the Lord and using language suitable for a servant who received little or no reward from his earth masters. The context of the passage deals not with the local visible NT church as a reward, but with servants serving their masters. Verses 22-24 read, “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ”.

Finally in Hebrews 9:15 I read, “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance”. With all honesty, I have yet to find any scripture that teaches me the local, visible NT church (assembly) is an inheritance for the saints. I am still searching. IMHO, the NT church is a blessing from the Lord, and a refuge for God’s people who have been blessed to hear and understand the gospel of Christ. More of God’s elect are in the “kingdom of Christ” than in the visible NT church (assembly) of Christ.

Therefore I conclude that it is WRONG to use passages that speak of inheriting the kingdom of God to refer to the local visible NT church. When Paul said to the Corinthians “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” he was referring to the eternal kingdom of God and not the local church. Otherwise, we must conclude that regeneration, sanctification and justification comes by church membership, for he added, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Later in chapter 15 Paul said,

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption”. If the “kingdom of God” in chapter 6 is the local visible NT church, then so is the “kingdom of God” in chapter 15 the local visible NT church. But how then would we reconcile the words “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”. To make the “kingdom of God” to be “the gospel church” would not only be bad interpretation, it would be laughable.

Part 7 of a study

Precepts versus Concepts – Principles of Truth versus ideas and philosophy of men.

In Isaiah 28:9-11 we read, “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.” There are two questions here by Isaiah, and both ask the same thing. Whom shall the Lord teach knowledge and make to understand doctrine (i.e. his teachings)? Isaiah answers the two questions with one answer, “them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts”. Paul spoke of this when he wrote to the Hebrews and said, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”.

If I understand this correctly, Godly knowledge and sound doctrine is taught to God’s people, precept by precept, by the Holy Spirit using the inspired Scriptures as given by God. This is why Isaiah says, “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little –“. This is why Paul said, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). One of the most shameful things I know of is for a minister NOT to rightly divide the word of truth. Solomon in his God given wisdom wrote, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Proverbs 18:13). This teaches me that it is “folly and shame” for a person to pass judgment on a matter or form a conclusion about a matter before hearing all the evidence or knowing all the facts. And it is even more so a “folly and shame” when such a judgment or conclusion is based on a concept contrary to the “Precepts of God’s word”.

A PRECEPT is a principle of truth. A CONCEPT is only a general idea derived or inferred from some specific instance or occurrence. A Precept is a rule or principle prescribing a particular course of action or conduct, or doctrine. A Concept is merely some thought or notion formed in the mind, usually by a pretext of the scriptures. This is why Paul warned the church at Colosse, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”.

In Luke 20:20-21 we read, “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come” -- our Lord Jesus Christ made the statement “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you”. Jesus, not Bob Allgood, laid down a PRECEPT concerning the Kingdom of God – and that is “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation - the kingdom of God is within you”. I have already shown that the words “cometh not with observation” mean “without ocular inspection or eyesight”. So in this PRECEPT, Jesus, not Bob Allgood, said, the Kingdom of God cannot be seen with the eye. Paul the apostle, not Bob Allgood, confirms this PRECEPT in Romans 14:17 “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

It seems obvious to me that the “kingdom of God” under consideration had not yet come, but was nigh or at hand, for this was the message of both John the Baptist and Jesus (see Matthew 3:1-2 and 4:17). Jesus had said earlier to his disciples, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). If the “little flock” represents the visible church in this time world, then what is “the kingdom” the Father was going to give to them if it is not The Holy Spirit of God to abide with them until the end of the ages. Jesus confirmed this in John 14:16-17 when he said, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it SEETH HIM NOT, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”. Jesus went on to say in verse 18, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you”. As I understand it, this is “the kingdom of God – Christ in you the hope of glory”.

How then do some deny the very words of our Lord and Saviour and the apostle Paul and say the “kingdom of God” (i.e. the realm of God in which his will is being done through the power of the Holy Spirit) is the local, visible NT church (assembly) which can be seen. Would it not be true to say that EACH individual that makes up a local visible NT church (assembly) is IN Christ (i.e. IN the Holy Spirit) and Christ IN him (i.e. the Holy Spirit IN him) and therefore the church is IN the kingdom of God. But not all who are

born of God and in the spiritual kingdom of God (i.e. in the Holy Ghost) are in the NT church. This does mean the evidence of “the kingdom of God” cannot be seen with the eye, but none have ever seen the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus said, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit”.

Matthew 8:11 has been quoted by me to show the “kingdom of heaven” is not the local visible NT church (assembly) and by another to prove that it is. Let’s look at it and see what is taught there. The context includes verse 5 – 13. Verse 5-10 read, “And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”.

We should notice that this Centurion had faith. He was a child of God. When Jesus heard his words, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”. Was not this Centurion in the family of God? Was he not born of God by the Spirit of God? Was he not in the spiritual Kingdom of God? I believe he was, for Jesus adds to this comment in verse 11, “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven”.

Had not this Centurion who was NOT in the local visible NT church come to sit down in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Notice Jesus did not say that “Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob” will come to sit down in the local visible NT church, but that “Many shall come from the east and west” – to sit down with them -- “in the kingdom of heaven”.

THEN Jesus said in verse 12, “But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”. Notice that Jesus DOES NOT SAY, “The children of the kingdom of heaven” shall be cast out of heaven – but the children of “the kingdom” shall be “cast out into outer darkness”. What children and what kingdom are under consideration in verse 12. Are they the same as those who “shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven”. I think not, for there is no basis to cast out one whom Jesus just praised for his great faith. There is no basis to cast out

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or those who are sitting down with them in the “kingdom of heaven”. Besides – NO WHERE can we find that the Jews were cast out of the New Testament Churches – certainly not the church which was at Jerusalem which was made up of Jewish believers.

Jesus talked to many Jews who claimed to be “children of God”, but they were not. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not”. It seems to me that those to be cast out into outer darkness is in the eternal sense, and they are the “children of the wicked one”.

Walking in LIGHT versus Walking in DARKNESS

The word LIGHT appears in the scriptures in 235 verses; 159 verses in the Old and 76 verses in the New Testament. The word DARKNESS appears in 142 verses; 97 in the Old and 45 in the New Testament. To the best of my understanding the word LIGHT is mostly used to speak of understanding the TRUTH. If one has LIGHT, he has some degree of Godly knowledge and spiritual understanding of the truth as it is taught in the Scriptures. I say “some degree” of understanding because none of us understand all things. Paul said, “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. -- For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”. For the person who claims to KNOW IT ALL and have all the answers to everything, Paul said, “And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him”. DARKNESS is used to speak of a lack of understanding of truth and/or total spiritual blindness to the truth. It will be impossible to consider ALL these verses, but the Lord being my helper, I would like to try and consider the general subject matter, at least to the extent of this precept.

There seems to be, among some, a “concept” (not a biblical precept) that the saints of God who are not in the true local visible NT church (assembly) have NO LIGHT and are “saints in darkness”. While they may be in “darkness” on some points of doctrine, the Scriptures do not use the term “saints in darkness”. Those who have the Spirit of God dwelling IN them have LIGHT as to the “fear of God” which is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding”. I can give three (3) biblical proofs to this precept.

Apollos was a man who “was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord” but knew “only the baptism of John”. Aquila and Priscilla “took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” – and then he “mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ”. The purpose of teaching the word of God is enlighten (illuminate) them who have LIGHT with more LIGHT. Cornelius was a centurion of the band called the Italian band, (perhaps similar to the Centurion in Matthew 8:5-12). He was a child of God, “A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always”. He was in the kingdom of God but had never heard the gospel and was not in the local visible NT church, because he had never been baptized with water. God sent Peter to remedy this matter and Cornelius was baptized into the church which was at Jerusalem. The Ethiopian Eunuch was a child of God in the kingdom of God who had been to Jerusalem to worship God. He was in the desert of Gaza reading from the book of Isaiah, but he lacked understanding of what he was reading. God sent Philip to remedy this matter and the Eunuch was baptized into the church which was at Jerusalem.

The precept that Light is some degree of “understanding of the truth” is taught in the Old Testament as well as the New. In Isaiah 8:20 we read, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”. Again in Isaiah 50:10 we read, “Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God”. Jesus, who is “The Light of the world”, made many comments about the LIGHT. He said in John 8:12 “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”. John confirms this precept in 1 John 1:5-8, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”. These statements teach me that the child of God that “follows Christ - shall not walk in darkness” or as John puts it, should “walk in the light, as he is in the light”. But we also know that a child of God may “walk in darkness” and not enjoy the fellowship one has when walking “in the light”.

Paul also confirms this precept in his first epistle to “the church of God which was at Corinth”. Paul wrote in 2 Cor 2:11-14 “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not

the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned". The truth of God – the LIGHT of His word, is spiritually discerned.

Part 8 of a study

The purpose of the Scriptures is to provide doctrine (teaching), reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. "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, throughly furnished unto all good works". Just because one is a child of God and/or even a member of a local visible NT church (assembly) does not mean they are perfect in understanding of all truth and/or without sin or error. There is NO perfect local visible NT church assembly because they are all made up of sinners. Those born of God's Spirit are perfect and righteous in the sight of God because He has made us to be the "righteousness of God" IN Christ (i.e. IN the Holy Spirit, i.e. in the kingdom of God" – but in the visible church there is and always will be our imperfections and corruptions.

The "church of God which was at Corinth" had many imperfections and problems understanding the truth and was, as a church (assembly) in darkness on many points of doctrine. Among the problems this church had was (1) carnality and walking in the flesh, as babes in Christ (2) divisions (3) fornication being tolerated (4) drunkenness at the communion of the saints (5) speaking in unknown tongues (ecstatic utterances) (6) women teaching in the church, and (7) sins which had not been repented of – as Paul said in 2 Cor. 12:20-21, "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed". Surely one would not claim that these conditions in "the church of God" – i.e. a local visible NT church (assembly), can be considered the "kingdom of God, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" according to Paul's definition in Romans 14:17. Paul went on to say, "For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

What the Saints do in and out of the local assembly in this time world reflects on the testimony of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In Luke 11:33-36 Jesus said, “No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light”.

Paul admonished the church at Ephesus, saying, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light, (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret”.

Walking in the LIGHT and walking in DARKNESS

Understanding the TRUTH about who will be “cast out” of His Kingdom

The words “Light” and “Darkness” first appear in the New Testament in the same passage conveying the precept set forth in part 14 of this study. In Matthew 4:13-17 we are told that when Jesus began his earthly ministry he left Nazareth and “came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. Most of our Lord’s early ministry was done in “Galilee of the Gentiles” where “The people which sat in darkness saw great light”.

The Oracles of God, the Law and the Prophets, had been given to the Hebrews, the house of Israel (Jacob), known as the Jews or “of Judah”. Until about 1533 BC when Moses started to write the first five books of the Bible, there was NO written Scripture. The Gentiles, starting with the creation of man, righteous Abel, Enoch and Noah, etc., had not been given the law, but those who were the elect of God, had done by nature the things contained in

the law. This is what Paul taught in Romans 2:14-15, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, etc. --- “. The Law was given to the Jews because of their transgression. The Law never made anyone righteous, nor did obedience to the Law add anyone to the spiritual family of God.

ALL natural Jews are NOT “children of God” any more than **ALL** Gentiles are children of God. This is made clear from the teachings of Christ in John 8:42-45, where Jesus said to **SOME JEWS**, “If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”

Paul also makes it clear in his writings that **ALL** Jews are NOT “children of promise”. In Romans 2:28-29 we read, “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God”. In Romans 9:6-8 we read, “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed”. **ONLY GOD KNOWS** his elect people. Man cannot and should not try to make any judgment concerning the eternal destiny of any Jew or Gentile. Paul told Timothy “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”. This **PRECEPT** tells me that “The Lord knoweth” – not Bob Allgood or any other minister or person – but **ONLY** the Lord knows “them that are his”. **IMO**, it borders on blasphemy for one to assume that by ones “good works or evil deeds” he is destined to heaven or hell.

The **BIBLICAL** precept of God’s eternal purpose **IN** Christ according to the principles of election and predestination is clearly set forth for any child of God to understand **IF** they will but follow the Spirit of Truth who guides into all truth. Three little words “**As Many As**” sum up this precept which applies to both Gentiles and Jews. **IN** Christ and **IN** the spiritual kingdom of God there is neither Jew nor Gentile. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is

neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise". ALL whom God chose in Christ, for God is no respecter of persons, have been made accepted in the beloved.

When Christ came to this low ground of sin and sorrow to do the will of His Father who sent Him, "he came unto his own", i.e. he came first to the natural nation of the Hebrews, known as the Jews. In John 1:11 we read, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not". This statement cannot be taken to mean that ALL Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah. That would be utterly ridiculous! This must be understood that those Jews which were not of the elect, or those who had no light, or those who had not yet been born from above "received him not". Simeon was a Jew, and according to the scriptures "was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:25-32).

In John 1:12-13 we read, "But AS MANY AS (caps mine – ba) received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". The "as many as" who received Jesus were ALREADY born of God and in the spiritual kingdom of God. The "as many as" who first received Jesus were Jews. Jews made up the first disciples of our Lord. Jews made up the First NT Church which was at Jerusalem, which was the mother church of many other NT churches. Jews made up the majority of many churches "throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria". From the time Christ began to build His Church, the believing Jews were "added to the church". Three thousand were added on the day of Pentecost, and five thousand later according to Acts 4:4. I have never read anywhere in the scriptures where "The Jews were cast out of the New Testament Church". I do read of where the Jewish kingdom was to be made "desolate". In Matt 23:37-38 I read where Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate". Surely this is talking about the Jewish kingdom (economy) and not about the New Testament Church or the Kingdom of God or the family of God in heaven and on earth.

One may be disqualified from being part of a local visible NT church (assembly) because of his conduct, but those who are born of God and blessed to experience “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” can never be disqualified from their inheritance in the “kingdom of God”. Those born of God will spend eternity in the Kingdom of God and none can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Romans 8:33).

There is a concept (not a biblical precept) that everyone who says Lord, Lord, is a child of God. But I find this to be a false concept. According to Jesus, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:21-23).

Those who are ‘false professors’ and ‘hypocrites’ will be cast out of His kingdom “in that day”. As Jesus said in Matthew “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear”.

