

תּוֹרַת הַכְּנִסְיָה ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΟΛΟΓΙΑ



Ecclesiology

Matthew 16:16 – 19

¹⁶ Then Shimon Keipha answered and said, "You are Mashiach, the Son of the living El." ¹⁷ And Yeshua answered and said unto him, "Blessed are you Shimon bar Yonah, for flesh and blood did not teach you, but my father who is in the heavens. ¹⁸ And I say to you that you are Keipha and upon this stone I will build my assembly. And again, the doors of Gei-Hinnom will not have power against you, ¹⁹ for I will give you of the gates of the heavens. And all that you will bind in the earth will be bound in heaven, and all that you will loosen in the earth will be loosen in the heavens." Vat. Ebr. 100

1 Peter 2:7-8

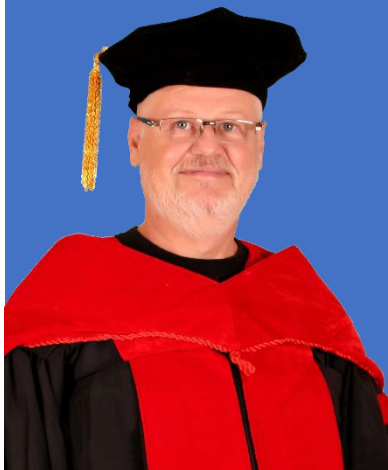
⁷ Unto you therefore which believe **he is precious**: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the **head** of the corner, ⁸ And a stone of stumbling, and a **rock** of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Ephesians 1:22-23

²² And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, ²³ Which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all.

Matthew 28:20

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of



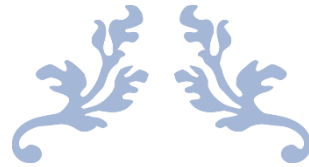
Quick Gospel



Graduation level
Higher Education

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ECCLESIOLOGY


Subdivisions of Theology

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Based on the diligent work of Paul Timblin and Joachim Klotz Germany
Accredited for Europe and the Commonwealth of Nations and the Philippines

DEDICATION

For all my students that I wish for them an easy and quick learning and to discover the great I AM and that HE deals with us still as HE did in the time of Adam, Noah or Abraham or David. Watch out and learn to listen to HIS voice because those who have an ear  should listen what the spirit says to the churches. Never over estimate yourself, because we are all servants, brothers the one big family of heaven. Learn to stay humble and to teach your tongue to say I don't know because any lie brings you closer to have the liar as your father so stay with the one who told you I am the truth. Love is the only character you need to bring the harvest in and in that is even an earthly reward.



For the Ministers Assembly Pastoral Institute and the Agape Christian College of Theology for my friends and supporters and all who love to discover Yeshua deeper a big thank you and may GOD bless you with peace and life and to cover all your needs and even more.



DEVOTION

Well, if not my wife Cristina would have been all around me, I had no chance of the work at all, so thanks also to her and her love and work in our mission. It is so lovely to feel the touch, hugs and kisses of someone you adore even you work late night. She had to suffer me a lot because much time goes in the work and often long. For Myself I gave my life to Yeshua all I do and all I am and it creates sometimes a distance to people that have not yet discovered the extraordinary and supernatural of Yeshua and that HE never breaks a promise. Of course, GOD hides from those that will use methods that "the fallen" have created to be rebellious but he reveals HIMself to those that honestly search for HIM. This can take some years of your faithfulness but HE keeps HIS promise to manifest HIMself to you as it is written in John 14:21 and as it was that Yeshua visited Abraham so HE can do it to you. HE wants to be your friend and waits for your positive answer. But the first step to come in contact with HIM is to put all disturbance away from yourself. All that what was not aiming towards HIM because it would bring you finally under the yoke of bondage. GOD wants people to freely decide so. do it now.



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I. Introduction

The doctrine of the church includes some of the few aspects of Christian theology that man can actually observe. The church is unique in this age. It is also very important to God. Paul writes in Ephesians that Jesus Christ loves the church and "gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). Paul further writes that Christ plans to glorify the church: "...that he may present before him a church glorious, having no spot or wrinkle or anything of the sort, but holy and blameless" (Eph 5:26b-27). Paul himself says that his greatest sin was to have persecuted the church: "For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I have persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor 15:9). The apostle goes on to say that he rejoices at being able to suffer for the Church: "Now I rejoice in the sufferings that I suffer for you, and in my flesh make up for what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for his body, this is the church" (Col. 1:24).

Two very important questions are, "What is the church?" and "What should the church do?". Unfortunately, many answers to these questions are incorrect, even among believers in Bible-believing churches. Especially here in Germany, this question has been hotly debated. Brunner even writes: "The church question is actually the unresolved question of Protestant theology". He also writes that the relationship between the Church of Jesus Christ and the institution of the national church is unclear.¹ Answering these questions is difficult because while God shows us the ideal in Scripture, he is building the church with born again but sinful people. Heinz Weber writes: "It seems almost impossible ever to build a church that meets the biblical standards from this unsatisfactory 'material'. However, the ideal image is not given to discourage us from building, but to encourage us! We need plans that we can follow".²

Precisely because this task is difficult, we want to cling to the Word of God, to His plans, and seek our answers there. Even though we are born again, we are sinful people. But here in Brake we have a kind of freedom that can help us. We're not a denomination, we're not closely related to just one denomination. Let's try to answer the questions about the church as neutrally as possible. There will be tension because we all come from a certain tradition. There is always tension when the "actual state" differs from the "target state". The Bible and tradition must not be equated. Where we realize that our tradition is wrong, we must be willing to give up our tradition. A church father is said to have said: "Tradition without truth is error that has grown old".

The Bible is a reliable source for answering questions about the church, and the Lord speaks plainly about His body. S. Lewis Johnson says: "The doctrine of the New Testament concerning the local church is clearer than the doctrine of justification by faith, and I believe that the doctrine of justification is most clearly taught in the New Testament".³ It is God's purpose in this age to build the church. She is the center of His actions. Because that is the case, it goes without saying that He tells us everything that is necessary in His Word to achieve this goal.

Lots of people talk about "their" church. It's not our church, it belongs to Jesus Christ. Jesus himself says: "And I also say to you: You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Because the church is not ours but Christ's, we can't just visit and nurture our relationship with it as we please. The well-known attitude: "I'm much better at worshiping the Lord alone in the woods on a Sunday morning than in church where there are only difficult people." is wrong! When we neglect

¹ Brunner, Emil, "Das Missverständnis der Kirche", Stuttgart: 1951, S. 7

² Weber, Heinz, "Notizen zum Theologie Unterricht - Ekklesiologie", Lemgo, Brake: 1993, S. 5

³ Johnson, S. Lewis, "Ecclesiology" - eine Predigt-Reihe in der Believer's Chapel, Dallas, Texas

the church, we neglect the body of Jesus Christ. His body is important and valuable and we must not take it lightly or even ignore it. It can be said without contradiction from Scripture that Jesus Christ is most interested in His church, in His body, in this age.

The Church is and remains a construction site. It won't be ready until the Lord comes and picks it up. Until then, we have a responsibility to be faithful stewards. God has equipped us well for this ministry. In Ephesians 4 we read: "I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, that you live worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and meekness, with patience be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... But grace is given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift Therefore it is said, 'He ascended on high, and took captives with him, and gave gifts' to men . . . that the saints might be prepared for the work of ministry, whereby the body of Christ might be built up .

. .

II. The nature of the church

1) What the church is not:

There are some misconceptions about church. We would like to briefly mention some of them here and give reasons why they are not to be equated with church. Afterwards we want to answer the question in the affirmative - what is the church in the New Testament.

1. The church is not to be equated with the kingdom of God.

God reigns. Scripture says so clearly. In 1 Chronicles 29:11 we read: "Yours, Lord, is majesty and power, glory, victory and majesty. For everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom and you are exalted to the head over all". And David writes in Ps. 103:19: "The Lord has set up his throne in heaven, and his kingdom reigns over all.". But we must hold a Scriptural distinction between the kingdom of God and the church.

God reigns or governs generally. He is the creator and ruler of this world. We humans, His creatures, are always the ruled. How God rules, or the form of His kingdom, is not always the same. God revealed himself to us humans at the very beginning of creation. Between Adam and Abraham, however, He dealt equally with all people.

With Abraham, God chose a man and through him He took out a people for Himself. In Exodus 19:4-6 we read, "You saw what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to me. If you then obey my voice and keep my covenant, so ye shall be mine above all peoples, for the whole earth is mine, and ye shall be my kingdom of priests, and a holy people." During this time God's revelation came to the world through His people Israel.

Israel lived with many advantages. Paul writes in Romans 9:4-5: "...to whom belongs the sonship, and the glory, and the covenant, and the law, and the worship, and the promises, to whom also the fathers belong, and of whom Christ come according to the flesh, who is God above all, blessed forever." . In the Old Testament God made many promises to Israel, including a promise of a visible kingdom (see e.g. the covenant with David - 2 Sam. 7 and Ps. 89). The people of Israel should have been ready for the coming of the Messiah. It wasn't you. John writes in John 1:11: "He came into his own, and his own did not receive him". Jesus offered the kingdom to His people. In Matthew 4:17 we read the words of His sermon: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". Instead of accepting Jesus, His people rejected Him and crucified Him. The consequence was that Jesus did not build up the

promised visible form of His kingdom at that time, but postponed it. He then took the responsibility of administering His kingdom from Israel and gave it to the church. We read in Matthew 21:43: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will bring forth its fruits". Jesus had already predicted this change in God's program and summarized the characteristics of the new form of the kingdom in Matthew 13. There He says to His disciples: "It has been granted to you to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to these it has not been granted" (Mt 13:11). Dr. Ryrie writes: "A mystery is something hitherto unknown; Christ revealed new things about the kingdom of God to his disciples. This conception of the kingdom began with the teaching of the Lord and will end at his return".⁴ However, Jesus only postponed the visible form of the kingdom and did not abolish it (see Acts 1:6-7). He will fulfill His promises to Israel in the future, in the millennium.

The church has a close relationship to the present form of the kingdom of God. She bears the main responsibility for the administration of the empire in the present time. But God's plan with the church is limited. He will take them to Him one day and then continue His promised visible form of kingdom with Israel.

2. The church is not to be equated with Israel.

Although there is a relationship between all believers of all ages (see John 10:16), there are also distinct differences between the people of Israel and the church. God's program for Israel is not the same as for the church. Although the church already exists, the New Testament shows a difference between Israel and other peoples and Israel and the church (see Acts 3:12; 4:8,10; 5:21,31,35; 21:19 and 1 Cor. 10, 32). As we shall mention later, the New Testament also shows that the Church is a mystery unknown in the Old Testament, beginning with our Lord. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus shows that the beginning of the church is yet to come: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it".

3. The church is not a denomination.

Wahrig defines "denomination" as a "religiously closed circle".⁵ We often speak of different churches as denominations, e.g., the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, etc., but the New Testament never speaks of churches in this sense. Some denominations even mean that they are the "true church" of Christ. Actually, the Apostle Paul warned against such divisions (see 1 Cor. 1:11-17). We must recognize that the Lord permitted these divisions, but whether they represent His ideal conception of church is another question.

4. The congregation is not a state's church.

In some countries, such as England, Scotland and Germany, there is a Landeskirche, a state church, which has a close relationship with the government of the country. But the New Testament never speaks of the church in this sense.

5. The church is not a building.

Although we often use phrases like "I go to the church" to mean the meetinghouse, the word "church" is never used in the New Testament for a building.

⁴ Ryrie, Charles C., *Die Bibel Verstehen*, Dillenburg: Christliche Verlagsgesellschaft, S. 440

⁵ Wahrig, Gerhard, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Gütersloh: Verlagsgruppe Bertelsmann, 1977, S. 893

2) What the church is:

1. Consideration of the Word ἐκκλησία:

ἐκκλησία **G1577** ek-klay-see'-ah From a compound of **G1537** ἐκ-κλησία **from, out of**, and a derivative of **G2564**; ἐκ-κλησία **a calling out**, that is, (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): - assembly, church. The word **ἐκκλησία** was not a New Testament invention. The Word is found in the Old Testament and also outside of Scripture. Regarding the Old Testament Word: "The Hebrew word קָהָל **H6951** "qâhâl" congregation means assembly and is mostly rendered as **ἐκκλησία** ecclesia in the LXX (Septuagint). It does not necessarily refer to a religious assembly, nor even to an assembly of people, although in most cases קָהָל עַדְת־יִשְׂרָאֵל kahal edat Israel = the assembly of the congregation of Israel which the LXX often translates also with συναγωγή **G4864** synagogue".⁶ Outside of the Bible, the word has the general meaning of "assembly" or "an assembly of called out people".⁷ עֵדָה **H5712** congregation, gathering = συναγωγή **G4864** 1) a bringing together, gathering (as of fruits), a contracting 2) in the NT, an assembling together of men, an assembly of men 3) a synagogue. The word כְּנֶסֶת kneset convention used for the Israeli Parliament e.g. is nowadays used for church but it is actually not used in the Tanakh⁸. Still when you translate "Ecclesiology" "Doctrine of the church" you need to use the word **Κνέσσετ** הכנסת **Torat HaKnessaih**.

The word **ἐκκλησία** occurs 114 times in the New Testament. Except in Matthew's Gospel, where it occurs three times also, we do not find it in the gospels. Nor does it appear in the books of 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 and 2 John, and Jude. Here are the New Testament passages: Matthew 16:18; 18:17(2); Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1.3; 9:31; 11:22,26; 12:1.5; 13.1; 14:23,27; 15:3.4.22.41; 16.5; 18.22; 19:32,39,40; 20:17,28; Roman 16.1.4.5.16.23; 1 Cor. 1.2; 4.17; 6.4; 7.17; 10.32; 11:16-18-22; 12.28; 14.4.5.12.19.23.28.33.34.35.; 15.9; 16:1.19(2); 2 Cor. 1.1; 8.1.18.19.23.24; 11:8,28; 12:13; Gal. 1:2.13.22; Eph. 1.22; 3:10,21; 5.23.24.25.27.29.32; Phil. 3:6; 4.15; Col. 1:18,24; 4:15,16; 1 Thess. 1.1; 2.14; 2 Thess. 1.1.4; 1 Tim. 3:5,15; 5.16; Philemon 2; Hebrew 2.12; 12.23; yak 5.14; 3 John 9/6/10; revelation 1.4.11.20 (2); 2.1.7.8.11.12.17.18.23.29; 3.1.6.7.13.14.22 and 22.16.

This word **ἐκκλησία** finds the following different uses in the New Testament:

It speaks of a **gathering of Gentiles** exercising a political privilege. In Acts 19:39-40 we read: "But if you want something more than that, it can be decided in a regular meeting. For we are in danger of being accused of today's outrage without there being any reason for the we could excuse this uproar. And when he had said this, he let the congregation go".

It speaks of a **congregation of Jews** who met in the wilderness to hear Moses. In Acts 7:37-38 we read: "This is Moses who said to the Israelites: 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers'. This is the one in the church in the desert stood between the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and our fathers. He received the words of life to pass them on to us".

It speaks of **the body of Jesus Christ**, of the universal church. Only believers are meant here. In Eph. 1:22-23 we read: "And he put everything under his feet and made him head

⁶ Ryrie, S. 435

⁷ Radmacher, Earl D., "What the Church is All About", Chicago: Moody Press, 1972, S. 116-120

⁸ Ta'na'kh is from the words Torah, Nebiim and Ketuvim

of the **church over everything**, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in everything" (see also Acts 20 :28; 1 Cor. 12:13 and Hebrews 12:23).

It speaks of **local churches** or house churches. In 1 Cor. 16:19 we read: "The congregations in the province of Asia greet you. Many greetings to you in the Lord Aquila and Prisca and the congregation in their house."
(see also Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15 and Philm. 2).

The single-number word "**municipality**" is also used for multiple communities in a region. In Acts 9:31 we read: "Then the church had peace in all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and was built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and multiplied by the help of the Holy Spirit" (see also 1 Cor. 15, 9).

2. Two important aspects of the church in the New Testament:

When the New Testament speaks of the church of Jesus Christ, it means - either the universal or the local church:

- **The universal church:** The church in this sense consists of all the people of this age who have been born again and baptized into the body of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Pet. 1:3 we read: "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy hath born us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"; and further in 1 Cor. 12:13: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, and were all made drink of one Spirit".

Notice the following New Testament examples that refer to the universal church:

♦ Matthew 16:18: "And I say to you: You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it".

♦ Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her".

♦ Ephesians 5:26-27: " . . . He (Christ) cleansed her by the bath of water in the Word, that he might present her before him as a church glorious, having no spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but the be holy and blameless".

♦ Colossians 1:18: "And he (Christ) is the head of the body, which is the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he may be first in everything".

♦ Corinthians 12:28: "And God appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracle workers, then gifts to heal, to help, to govern, and divers tongues".

♦ Ephesians 3:8-10: "Grace has been given to me, the least of all saints, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for all how God works out his secret purpose, which is from eternity was hidden in him who created all things; that now the manifold wisdom of God may be known to the authorities and authorities in heaven through the church".

♦ Hebrews 12:22-23: "But you came to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to thousands of angels, and to the congregation and congregation of the firstborn who are written in heaven".

The Local Church: The church in this sense speaks of a group of professing believers who come together in one place and worship and serve the Lord. This refers to the Church with which someone has a superficial and lasting relationship.

Notice the following examples of New Testament texts referring to the local church:

- ♦ Acts 8:1: ". . . Great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem that day; then all were scattered to the countries of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles".
- ♦ Acts 13:1: "Now there were in Antioch in the church prophets and teachers . . .".
- ♦ Romans 16:1: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is in the service of the church of Kenchrea".
- ♦ Corinthians 1:1-2: "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God at Corinth . . .".
- ♦ Thessalonians 1:1: "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church in Thessalonica in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ".

Local Churches: The word "church" is also used to refer to several churches in a region and to local churches in general. Let's pay attention to the following text examples:

- ♦ Acts 9:31: "So the church had peace in all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and was built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and multiplied under the help of the Holy Spirit".
- ♦ Corinthians 15:9: "For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (see also Gal. 1:13 and Phil. 3:6).

3. The relationship between universal and local church:

Neither the one church (universal) nor the other church (local) exists independently of the other. Local churches are parts of the universal church, and the universal church is made up of people who were and are (should be!) in local churches. Heinz Weber sums up the relationship of these two well: "A local church is a group of believers who make a commitment to one another to illustrate the glory of the universal church in one place before the world." The New Testament does not report about someone that belongs to the universal church but is not integrated into a local church!

4. The New Testament church is a "mystery":

Μυστηριον **G3466** hidden thing, secret, mystery The word "mystery" (**μυστηριον**) occurs 28 times in the New Testament, once in each of the Synoptic Gospels, 21 times in the Apostle Paul and four times in Revelation. Here are the passages: Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Roman 11:25; 16.25; 1 Cor. 2.1.7; 4.1; 13.2; 14.2; 15.51; Eph. 1.9; 3.3.4.9; 5.32; 6.19; Col. 1:26,27; 2.2; 4.3; 2 Thess. 2.7; 1 Tim. 3:9,16; revelation 1.20; 10.7; 17:5 and 7. The word occurs in the Old Testament only in the book of Daniel (see Dan. 2:18-19,27-30,47 and 4:6). A biblical mystery is something that was hidden in the Old Testament and is now revealed for the first time in the New Testament. Something known from the Old Testament is not a secret. Dr. Ryrie writes of a secret: "A mystery, then, is something in

which only the initiated share. There is (a) a time when it was unknown, and a later time when it became known, as well as (b) deeper or higher wisdom revealed to initiates."⁹

a. The "mystery of the body of Christ" - Eph. 3:1-12

The background for this text is found in Eph. 2:11-22. Paul is a prisoner of Christ to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1). For a long time, the Gentiles did not enjoy the blessings because there was a partition (2:11-12). But the death of Jesus tore down that wall and brought the Gentiles near (2:13-15). Gentiles and Jews are now united into one body (2:16-18). That one body is the church. Gentiles are no longer strangers, but fellow citizens and members of the household of God (2:19). The basis of the building are the apostles and prophets and Jesus Christ is the cornerstone (2:20). It was Paul's job to bring this truth to the Gentiles (3:2). The apostle has a special and unique understanding of the mystery (3:3), feels compelled to share it (1 Cor. 2:1), and sees himself as a steward of that mystery (1 Cor. 4:1). He wanted to speak the mystery of the gospel with courage and was even willing to suffer physically for it (see Eph. 6:19-20 and Col. 4:2-4). The mystery was not known in the past, but has now been made known to the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit (3:5). The content of the mystery is that Jews and Gentiles together form one body (3:6). This is the new man in Eph. 2:15. It was no secret that Gentiles believed, it was already revealed in the Old Testament. But it was never announced that they would form one body with the Jews."¹⁰

b The "mystery – Christ in us" - Col. 1:24-29

Paul rejoices in his suffering for the recipients because he knows he is suffering for the sake of Jesus and the church (1:24). Through office (dispensation or administration) Paul became a servant (see Eph. 3:2 - the administration of grace and Eph. 3:9 - the administration of the mystery). The content of this ministry is to preach the Word of God (1:25). Paul reveals a mystery which was hidden from ages and generations, but is now revealed unto his saints" (1:26). Paul then shows the object and content of the mystery (1:27). God wants to make the mystery known to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are the focus, the Mystery has to do with them. The content of the Mystery is "**Christ in you**, the hope of glory" The fact that the Messiah dwells in every believer is the Mystery revealed in the Old Testament was not revealed. That God's Spirit dwells in man was no secret in the Old Testament (see 1 Sam. 16:13). This was known to believers then. But the Old Testament did not reveal that the Messiah would dwell in every believer (see John 14:20 - "I in you" and 14:23 - "we will come to him and dwell with him").

⁹ Ryrie, S. 442

¹⁰ Ryrie, S. 443

An important observation!

Why is the translation of Ephesians 3:5 bad in some Bible translations? "This was not made known to the children of men in former times, **as** it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Ephesians 3:5 ὁ ἐτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἀγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι.) By the word "**as**" one might think that this truth was revealed a little in the Old Testament, but not quite, "as" in the New Testament. Considering a parallel passage in Colossians helps us here. In Colossians 1:25-26 we read: I became your servant through the office which God gave me, that I should preach to you his word richly, even the mystery which **was hidden for ages** and generations, but **now it is revealed** to his saints, (Colossians 1:25-26 ²⁵ ἥς ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος, κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθείσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς, πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ²⁶ τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν· νυνὶ δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ,...). In the Colossians passage there is no doubt as to the meaning "**as**" in Ephesians 3:5 does not mean a comparison, but introduces **new information** (see Acts. 2:15 as another example - "For these are not drunk as you think, for it is only the third hour of the day".) The statement in Colossians helps us to understand what the statement in Ephesians means. Anyway we see that the prophets tried to search out the mysteries and we see in the scrolls of Qumran that this community knew about the Messiah and HIS suffering for the church. So, the mystery is only hidden for those who are far from God.

b. The "**mystery** - the church as **the bride of Christ**" -

Eph. 5:22-33

In Eph. 5:32 Paul mentions that marriage is a mystery in relation to the church: "Great is this mystery, but I point it to Christ and the church".

Paul makes some comparisons between marriage and the church:

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

For the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ is the head of the church, which he redeemed as his body."

"But just as the church submits to Christ, so wives should also submit to their husbands in everything."

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to sanctify her."

"In the same way men should love their wives as their own bodies."

"Therefore, you also: each one should love his wife as himself; but the wife should honor her husband."

Because Israel was already portrayed as Yahweh's bride in the Old Testament, that cannot be the secret. The mystery lies in the fact that the church (Jew and Gentile together) is the bride of Messiah, Jesus Christ. MacDonald writes in this regard: "When Paul says that 'this mystery is. . . 'Mystery' is the wondrous plan, kept hidden by God in ages past, but now revealed, to call out from among the nations a people to become the body and bride of His glorified Son.

The conjugal relationship, then, finds its perfect model in the relationship between 'Christ' and the 'church'.¹¹

d. The "**mystery** - the **seven stars** and the seven golden menorah (lampstand)" - Rev. 1.20

Jesus speaks of a "mystery" in Revelation and interprets this mystery. The seven stars are angels of the seven churches. The word "star" is sometimes used in Scripture for "angel" (see Rev. 9:1). The seven golden menorah represented seven "local churches" in Asia Minor. Compare to זְכַרְיָהוּ ד **Zechariah 4**

e. The "**mystery** - the **rapture**" - 1 Cor. 15:50-58

Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:51-52: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; and that suddenly, in a moment, at the time of the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed". Both the return of Jesus and the resurrection are already revealed in the Old Testament and are therefore not a "mystery". The "secret" is that there is a generation of believers (part of the church) that will not die but will go to eternity without having to experience death.

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum mentions three other "mysteries" mentioned in the New Testament: The mystery of the kingdom (see Mt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11 and Lk. 8:10), the mystery of the hardening of Israel (see Rom. 9:1 - 11:36) and the conflict between the satanic and the divine mystery (see Rev. 17).¹² The relationship between the church and these "mysteries" is also important.

5. New Testament symbols for the church:

There are several images in the New Testament that help us better understand the nature of the church. Below is a summary of the images. Later we will look at some in more detail. Let's look at the following examples:

The church as the bride of Christ: (Mt. 9:15; John 3:29; 2. Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:24-33; revelation 19:7-8; 21:9-11 and 22:17)

In the Old Testament, Israel was represented as the bride of Yahweh (see Isa. 49:18; 61:10; 62:5; Jer. 2:32; 13:11 and Ezek. 16). In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the bridegroom and the church is his bride. This image, which represents the most intimate human relationship, is an expression of the Lord's love and care for His church.

The church as God's building: (1 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21)

God is building the church with us as living stones. We are admonished to be careful how we build on it.

¹¹ MacDonald, William, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Bielefeld: Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung e.V., 1989, S. 266

¹² Fruchtenbaum, Arnold, Unterrichtsnotizen - Bibelschule Brake, Januar, 1996, S. 14.36 und 50

The church as God's field: (1 Cor. 3:9) The word "field" only occurs here in the New Testament. It either means "field" or it speaks of the "process of cultivation". The word "construction" can also be understood in this way, either as "construction" or as "process of building".

The church as God's temple: (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21) In the New Testament the image of the temple is used for the individual believer and for the Church needed. The temple in the Old Testament was where God dwelt. In this age, God dwells in us and in His church.

The church as the body of Christ: (1 Cor. 12:12-20.2225,27; Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,30; Col. 1:18,24; 2:19; 3.15)

The image of the church as the body of Christ is used only by Paul in the New Testament. In a sense it is that the Church as the body of Jesus Christ is an extension of the incarnation. Through His body, the reality of Jesus' existence becomes visible. MacDonald writes, "Once a believer has understood this great truth, he will never again regard the church as of secondary importance, but will work wholeheartedly for the interests of the body of Christ."¹³

The church as a new man: (Eph. 2:15)

In the church the difference between Jews and Gentiles is abolished. God made a new man out of the two.

The church as a flock: (John 10:16; 21:15-17; Acts. 20:28-29; 1. Pet 5.2-3 5.4; Hebrew 13:20)

In John 10:16 we read the words of Jesus: "And I have other sheep that are not of this stable; I must also bring them here, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd". That one flock is the church. As a flock we live under the loving care of our Good Shepherd Jesus Christ.

The church as a dwelling place (dwelling) of God:
(Ephesians 2:22)

The word "dwelling" occurs only here and in Rev. 18:2 in the New Testament. "In the Septuagint the word is often used to represent the resting place of God, either on earth or in heaven."¹⁴

The church as the house of God: (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pt. 2:5; 4:17)

Paul calls the church the "House of God" in 1 Tim. 3:15, and Peter uses the same metaphor and writes that we are "living stones," built up for the spiritual house. He also uses the image when speaking of God's judgment.

¹³ MacDonald, William, Christus und die Gemeinde, Dillenburg: Christliche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1985, S. 11

¹⁴ Gaebelin, Frank E., The Expositors's Bible Commentary Vol. 11, Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1978, S. 42

The church as a pillar and a foundation of Truth: (1 Tim. 3:15)

God sees the church as the steward of the truth He has entrusted. Every church has the opportunity to testify and live the truth through its members.

The church as branches that belong to the true vine: (John 15:1-8)

In this age, we believers are viewed as branches with the responsibility to "abide" in Christ and bear fruit. Both abiding in Him and not abiding in Him have serious consequences for the believer.

The Church as Priesthood: (1 Pet. 2:5-9)

We only find this image for the church in 1st Pet. 2:5-9. Unlike Israel in the Old Testament, every believer in church time is a priest and together we form a holy and royal priesthood.

The church as God's people: (Tit. 2:14; 1. Pet. 2:9-19) Paul and Peter call the church the people of God. Paul writes in Titus that Jesus cleansed "a people for his own possession". Peter writes that we were "once 'not one people' but now are 'God's people'".

III. The formation of the Church

It is claimed by some theologians that Jesus never intended to plant his church. Gosta Lindeskog quotes Rudolf Bultmann in this regard: "Bultmann thinks that even if Jesus considered himself Son of Man and Messiah, one cannot conclude from this fact that Jesus thought he had to set up the church. Bultmann wonders whether Jesus was like that what intended. For him this question is crucial, and he gives a negative answer to it."¹⁵ We disagree with Bultmann and other theologians who think so. God included the church in His plan of salvation before the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 3:8-9 we read, "To me, the least of all saints, was grace given to declare to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for all how God works out his secret purpose which is was hidden from eternity in him who created all things . . .

It wasn't men, it was God who invented the church. It has always been part of God's sovereign plan, but remained a mystery until New Testament times.

A. The timing of the birth of the church:

Only after Matthew 16:18:

Here Jesus tells Peter that He will build His church. That's still in the future. As shown above, the Church was not known in the Old Testament, it was a mystery revealed first in the New Testament through Jesus and then through Paul.

Only after the death of Yeshua.

¹⁵ Radmacher, S. 195

(that is the Erev Pesach the preparation day before Passover which also was the Fast of the firstborn and that is a Wednesday. "Good Friday" is the worst possible day for the death of Yeshua it does not even exist in the bible and is a poor tradition rooted in paganism brought in by the Roman Church claiming authority to change dates)

Although some aspects of Jesus' teaching foreshadow or anticipate the emergence of the church, His redemptive work was a necessary prerequisite for its establishment. Mauerhofer writes: "Jesus Christ's work of salvation - his suffering, death, resurrection and ascension - forms the basis for the fact that church could come into existence at all."¹⁶ The establishment of the body of Christ depends on the shedding of His blood. This is the only way that sin can be forgiven. Paul tells this to the elders in Ephesians in Acts. 20:28: "Take heed, then, of yourselves, and of all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to shepherd the church of God, which he hath acquired through his own blood." Chafer writes in this regard: "There could not be a church in this world - established as it is and distinctive in all its characters - until the death of Christ; because its relation to His death is not merely a simple foresight, but wholly upon based on his finished work, and it had first to be cleansed by his precious blood".¹⁷

Only after His resurrection:

Besides the death of Jesus, His resurrection also plays a very important role. Paul writes in Eph. 1:22-23: "And he put everything under his feet and made him head of the church over everything that is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in everything". But a few verses earlier Paul shows an important prerequisite for Jesus being able to become the head. In verses 19 and 20 we read, "... and how exceedingly great his power is in us who believe, because the power of his might has worked in us, with which he worked in Christ. By it he hath brought him from raised from the dead and installed at his right hand in heaven".

Only after the Ascension:

At the Ascension, God exalted Jesus Christ and placed him in a place of honor - at His right hand. Thus, the church has the necessary head. Chafer again: "There could be no church until He (Christ) ascended to be its head; because it (the church) is a new creation with a new covenant head in the person of the risen Christ".¹⁸

In Ephesians 4:8-11 Paul shows that Jesus' ascension was also very important in relation to the gifts of the church. Christ first had to ascend to heaven in order to be able to give gifts to the church: "Therefore it is said, 'He ascended on high and took captives with him and gave gifts to men.' "But that he ascended, what does that mean, but that he also descended into the depths of the earth? The one who descended is the same who ascended over all heaven to fulfill all things. And he appointed some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as shepherds and teachers".

Only after Pentecost:

¹⁶ Mauerhofer, Armin, Gemeindebau nach biblischen Vorbild, Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler-Verlag, 1998, S. 21

¹⁷ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, Systematic Theology Vol. IV, Binghamton, NY: The Vail-Ballou Press, 1948, S. 45

¹⁸ Chafer, S. 45

The beginning of the church and the coming of the Holy Spirit are closely related. Brunner agrees: "The outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the existence of the 'ecclesia' are so intimately connected that they are actually one".¹⁹

Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that we are installed into the body of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, and are all impregnated with one spirit".

In John 7:38 and 39 we see that this event has not yet taken place: "Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures say, streams of living water will flow from out of his body. But he said this of the Spirit which they were to receive who believed on him, for the Spirit was not yet; for Jesus was not yet glorified."

In John 14:16 and 17 Jesus promises that there will be a new relationship between believers and the Holy Spirit:

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter to be with you forever: the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you and will be in you".

In Acts 1:4-5, Jesus tells His disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the fulfillment of this promise (of the Holy Spirit): "And while he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

In Acts 11:15 we see that this happened "in the beginning": "But when I (Peter) began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as it did on us at the beginning". The fulfillment of the promise of Jesus therefore took place between Acts. 1:4-5 and 11:15. The only possibility here is Acts 2 and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Digression: "Baptism with the Holy Spirit"

Some problems:

- Some identify water baptism with Spirit baptism.
- Some say that the baptism of the Spirit is a second experience.
- Some say that speaking in tongues is the necessary sign of be baptized in the Spirit.
- Some confuse Spirit baptism with being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Bible passages:

These passages speak directly of the baptism of the Spirit: Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1.5; 11:16 and 1 Cor. 12:13.

These passages are related to the baptism of the Spirit: John 7:37-39; 16:7-15 and Acts. 2:33 and 38.

A definition of Spirit baptism: "The Spirit baptism is an act of God in regeneration, by which He makes us members of His body".

¹⁹ Brunner, Emil, The Misunderstanding of the Church, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953, S. 161

Characteristics of the baptism of the Spirit:

- The baptism of the Spirit is limited to this age.
- The baptism of the Spirit is the experience of all believers.
- While Spirit baptism is an experience, it is not the basis of baptism.
- The baptism in the Spirit is unique and takes place at the time of rebirth.
- The baptism of the Spirit is a work of God.
- The result of the baptism in the Spirit:
- We have become partakers of the body of Christ.
- The baptism of the Spirit clarifies our union with Christ and His death
- The baptism of the Spirit puts us in a position where we can receive power, but it is no guarantee that we will experience that power.

B. The place of origin of the Church:

The place of origin of the church was Jerusalem. With the above truths in mind, let's look for some important statements in Acts 2:

Acts 2:2: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting".

After Peter's sermon we read in Acts. 2:41-42: "Those who accepted his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand people were added. But they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer".

Acts 2:46-47: "And they were daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread here and there in the houses, eating with joy and with a pure heart, praising God, and finding favor with all the people. But the Lord added daily church that were saved" (although the word "Ecclesia" is not in the text - in the Elberfeld translation it says - "But the Lord daily added those who should be saved").

Acts 1:8 shows us God's plan for the expansion of the church: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto that end of the earth". We know that after the church came into being in Jerusalem, other churches came into being in Judea, although these are not mentioned in Acts (see Gal. 1:22 and 1 Thess. 2:14). In Acts 8:14 to 24 we find a church that was founded in Samaria (according to Acts 8:25 it seems as if other churches were also founded in the villages of the Samaritans).

Soon thereafter there was a church in Antioch in Syria (see Acts 11:20-30 and 13:1). This church became the sending out place for the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul. Churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Spain and other countries were then established through the missionary work of Paul and others. In a sense, the early church evangelized the world of its day.

C. The foundation of the Church:

1. Jesus Christ:

Jesus Christ is the founder of the church. The church is His: "I will build **my** church" (Mt 16:18). Paul also writes that Jesus Himself is the foundation of the church: "No one can lay any other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Jesus Christ and His work of redemption for us are the foundation of the church. Peter writes in his first epistle: "Come to him as a living stone, rejected by men, but chosen and precious by God. And you, too, living stones, are building up a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, to sacrifice spiritual ones Sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Therefore, it is written, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a chosen cornerstone, precious, and whoever believes in him shall not be put to shame.'" So then, for you who believe, it is precious; but to those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected and which has become the cornerstone is a stumbling block and a rock of offense; they stumble against it, because they do not believe in the word, whatever they are destined for" (1 Pet. 2:4-8).

Dr. Charles Ryrie reveals four important truths about Jesus as the Founder:

He chose His disciples, who also have a place as the foundation of the church: "Builded up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, since **Jesus Christ is the cornerstone**" (Eph. 2:20).

He instructed His disciples on matters that would have to do with the birth of the church: (see John 13 to 17).

Jesus Christ became the cornerstone of the church through His death and resurrection: "This is the stone that you builders rejected, but has become the cornerstone" (Acts 4:11). Jesus bought the church with His blood: "Take care therefore of yourselves and of all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to shepherd the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28); and through His resurrection and ascension He became the head of the church: "...with whom he worked in Christ. Through them he raised him from the dead and installed him at his right hand in heaven over all kingdoms, authority, power, dominion and everything else that has a name, not only in this world but also in the world to come, and he put everything under his feet and made him head of the church over everything that is his body, the fullness of it who fulfills all things" (Eph. 1:20-23).

He gave us the Holy Spirit so that we might become a functioning unit: "Being lifted up by the right hand of God and having received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, he poured it out, as you see and hear here" (Acts .2.33).²⁰

2. The Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit and the body of Jesus Christ belong closely together.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus shows the need for His departure: "It is good for you that I am going. For if I do not go, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you" (Jn. 6:7). Earlier John wrote: "Whoever believes in me (Jesus), as the Scriptures say, streams of living water will flow from within him. He said this of the Spirit, which those who believed in him should receive, for the Spirit was not yet come, for Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:38-39).

It is the Holy Spirit by whom we are baptized into the body of Jesus: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, and were all made drink with one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). The verse clearly shows that every believer is baptized by the Spirit and belongs to the body of Christ.

²⁰ Ryrie, S. 443-444

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the only work of the Spirit. He also dwells in every believer: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19). The Holy Spirit plays an important role in the church of Jesus Christ. He dwells in us, leads us, gives us strength, enables us and has the task of glorifying Jesus Christ: "He (the Holy Spirit) will glorify me (Jesus Christ): for of what is mine he will take and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said, 'He will take what is mine and declare it to you' (John 16:14-15).

Anyone who wants to belong to the church of Jesus Christ must believe in him and in his finished work of redemption. This is true for the universal church, but also for the local church. When someone believes in Jesus, they are brought into the body of Jesus (the church) baptized, and the Spirit lives in him. It is then the will of the Father that this person is willing to obey God and His Word. Whoever does this will experience a close fellowship with the triune God: "Whoever loves me will keep my word; and my father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

IV. The position of the church

Each person of the deity is related to the church. Here we briefly summarize some aspects of these relationships.

A. The church's attitude toward God the Father:

1. The church is called "the house" of God:

Paul writes in 1 Tim. 3:15: "But if I come later, you should know how to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and a foundation of the truth". As mentioned earlier, the church is also referred to as the "dwelling place" or "dwelling place" of God (see Eph. 2:22).

2. As church members we are "God's household members":

In Eph. 2:19 we read: "You are no longer strangers and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God".

3. As church members, we belong to God, we are His property:

Peter writes: "But you are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy people, the people of possession, that you should proclaim the blessings of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light".

God bought us, and the price was high: "For ye know that ye were redeemed not with perishable silver or gold from your futile conduct in the manner of the fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of an innocent and spotless lamb" (cf also 1 Cor 6:19-20; Acts 20:28 and Rev 5:9).

God wants us to do good works as His own: "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all unrighteousness, and cleansed for his own people a people eager to do good works".

4. As church members we belong to the family of God:

John writes that we are God's children: "See, what love the Father has shown us, that we should be called God's children - and we are too!" (1 John 3:1). We are "born" of God!: "Praise be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy hath born us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (see also James 1:18 and John 1:13).

As His children, we also partake in His divine nature:

"Through her (God's power) the dearest and greatest promises have been given to us, that you may thereby partake of the divine nature, having escaped the corrupting lusts of the world" (2 Peter 1:4).

As His children, we can also call Him "Dear Father" or "Daddy": "Because you are now children, God has sent the spirit of His Son into our hearts, which calls out: Abba, dear Father!" (Gal. 4:6).

As His children, we too will one day inherit: "You are no longer a servant but a child; and if you are a child, then also an heir through God" (Gal. 4:7; see also Rom. 8:17).

This relationship that we as church members have with God brings both privilege and responsibility. Heinz Weber writes: "There must be a balance between privileges and responsibilities. If we emphasize only one we become indifferent, if we only see the other we become depressed and live on our own".²¹

B. The position of the church to Jesus Christ:

Many images in Scripture show us the church's attitude toward Jesus Christ. Of the ones we mentioned on pages 14-16, we'll look at some in a bit more detail here.

1. Shepherd - flock:

The picture of the shepherd-flock relationship is appropriate for Christ and His church. This image is also used in the Old Testament for Israel (see Jer. 13:17 and Zech. 10:3). The helplessness of the sheep is a true representation for us humans. Notice the following thoughts about this image:

The Gospel of John clearly shows that Christ is the true shepherd, coming through the door and calling His sheep. His sheep hear His voice and He leads them out (John 10:1-4). The text says that He is even the door (John 10:9).

The Gospel of John shows that Christ our Shepherd has sheep from two different stalls: He calls sheep from Judaism and also from Gentiles. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The doorkeeper opens for him and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his sheep by name and brings them out... And I have other sheep that are not from this fold; I must bring them here too, and they will hear my voice, and it will become one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:1-3 and 16).

Jesus, as our Shepherd, gave His life for us, His sheep: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

²¹ Weber, S. 37

Jesus, as our Shepherd, gives us life and preserves us: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall save them from mine hand" (John 10:27-28).

Jesus, as Shepherd, entrusts the task of tending the sheep to other sub-shepherds as well. Peter writes, "Feed the flock of God which is under your charge; tend them, not under compulsion, but willingly, as it pleases God; not for nefarious gain, but from the bottom of your heart" (1 Pet. 5:2). In Acts 20:28, Paul told the elders in Ephesus, "Take heed of yourselves, and of all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to shepherd the church of God, which he acquired by his own blood Has". (See also Jesus' challenge to Peter in John 21!). This responsibility of the shepherd is also a gift in the New Testament: "And he appointed some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as shepherds and teachers" (Eph. 4:11).

One day the "Archshepherd" will come again, and then His sub-shepherds will have to give an account: "So when the Archshepherd appears, you will receive the undying crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:4).

2. Groom - Bride:

Chafer writes, "The symbolism of the bridegroom and bride in relation to Christ and His relationship to the church speaks of His eternal surpassing love, the unity between Him and the church, and the authority and position that the church will have in the future The bridal relationship reveals truths that otherwise could not be presented in any other way".²² Notice the following thoughts about this image:

Although there are not many biblical statements here, the few passages paint a clear picture for us:

- Ephesians 5:25-33 is one of the most well-known passages. Paul writes in verse 32: "Great is this mystery, but I apply it to Christ and the church".
- In 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 Paul says that we as a church have been betrothed to Jesus Christ: "For I am jealous for you with divine jealousy; for I have betrothed you to one man, that I might be a pure virgin to Christ But I fear that, just as the serpent deceived Eve with her cunning, so your thoughts will also be turned away from the simplicity and integrity of Christ."
- John points to this image in his gospel. Regarding John the Baptist he writes: "You yourselves are my witnesses that I said: I am not the Christ, but sent before him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom is the stands by and listens to him, is very pleased with the voice of the bridegroom".
- In Revelation, John even writes about the marriage itself: "Let us be glad and joyful and give him honor: for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has prepared herself".

The image of the congregation as a bride emphasizes the aspect of the love relationship. Twice in Ephesians Paul mentions Christ's incomprehensible sacrifice on the cross as an expression of His

Love. In Eph. 5:2 we read: "And live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us as a gift and a sacrifice to God for a sweet savor". Later in the same chapter he writes, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her to sanctify her" (Eph. 5:25-26a).

²² Chafer, S. 142

No other human relationship could represent the love relationship between Christ and His church like that between a man and a woman. Spilman writes, "Love grows from some relationships, but that relationship grows from love. The mother loves her child because it is her child; a brother loves his sister because she is his sister. But the bride and groom go one lifelong bond through a love that is not based on a natural relationship, it is free and unconstrained".²³ Already in the third chapter

Ephesians tried to make Paul clear about this deep love of Christ

do: "In this way you can understand with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth, and also know the love of Christ, which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may be filled with the whole fulness of God" (Eph. 3:18-19).

This love of Jesus for His church becomes even more incomprehensible when we consider the distance between Him and His church (us). Radmacher writes: "There has never been love so fixated on an object so far inferior to the lover. Nor has there ever been an example of love where the loved ones have been so unable to give the lover any to bring advantage".²⁴

The image of the congregation as bride emphasizes the exalted position of the bride. A comparison with the oriental wedding customs is helpful here. First, the couple got engaged, thus forming a legal contract. The wedding itself began with the handing over of the bride to the groom. Maclean writes: "This ceremony, which was usually a night procession, was the main part of the wedding".²⁵ After this second step, which also included the wedding ceremony, there was the wedding party, to which the bride accompanied the groom.

Christ the Bridegroom bought the church with His blood: "Take care therefore of yourselves and of all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to shepherd the church of God, which he hath given through his own blood acquired" (Acts 20:28). The church is betrothed to the bridegroom: "For I am jealous for you with a divine jealousy; for I betrothed you to one man, that I might bring unto Christ a pure virgin" (2 Cor. 11:2). In the present time the groom is preparing a place for the bride. The bride has the promise that one day the bridegroom will come to take her: "Do not be afraid of your heart! Believe in God and believe in Me! In my Father's house there are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have then said to you, 'I am going to prepare the place for you? And when I go to prepare the place for you, I will come again and take you with me, so that you may be where I am'" (John 14:1 -3) - see also 1 Thess. 4:16-17. In Ephesians, Paul shows how the bridegroom will present the bride to him: "He cleansed her by the bath of water in the word, that he might present her before him as a church glorious, having no spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:26b-27).

After the groom takes the bride to his home, the wedding itself will take place. We read of this in Revelation 19:7-8: "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself. And it was given her to clothe herself with clean things beautiful Linen. Linen is the righteousness of the saints".

After the wedding ceremony comes the wedding feast. The apostle John also reports on this in Revelation: "And he said to me: Write: Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9).

²³ Spilman, T. E., "Scripture Emblems of God's People", Butler, IL: Messenger Print, 1879, S.149-150

²⁴ Radmacher, S. 255

²⁵ Maclean, A. J., "Marriage", Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, edited by James Hastings, 2:11-17, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926, 2:13

These truths show us what a wonderful future the church has as the bride of Christ. We will spend eternity in glory with our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself prayed in John 17:24, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory, which you have given me, because you have loved me "before the foundation of the world was laid".

It was on the basis of these wonderful truths that A.B. Simpson wrote: "Beloved, Christ has betrothed you to Him. You are to spend eternity in His palaces and on His throne. You are to be the companion and partner in His greatest undertakings of the eons to come. Perhaps thou shalt co-colonize with Him a constellation of the universe, and rule the infinite universe of God. Do you know that He is now in the process of preparing you so that you may be a fit partner for such a kingdom? Will you allow Him Love you as He wills, while preparing you for such a destiny that one day will fill you with everlasting admiration and adoring love?".²⁶

3. Main body:

The image of the church as the body of Christ is the most used of the images in the New Testament (see Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:12-27; Eph. 1:23; 2:16 4:4-12-16; 5:23-30; Col. 1:18-24; 2:19 and 3:15). Let us consider two aspects of the picture: the relation of the limbs to the head and the relation of the limbs to one another.

a. The relation of the limbs to the head:

Paul uses this image "Christ as head of the body of the church" clearly in Ephesians and Colossians. In Ephesians 1:22-23 we read, "He put everything under his feet and made him head of the church over everything that is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in everything." Paul writes further in Colossians 1:18a: "And he is the head of the body, which is the church". This image emphasizes the relationship between the members, the believers in the church and Jesus Christ. Let's pay attention to the following thoughts:

The body depends on the head:

Every body has only one head, one head. The whole body depends on the head and all directions come from him. It's the same in the church. Jesus says in John 15:5b: "For apart from me you can do nothing".

The Head, Jesus Christ, is supreme. Paul emphasizes this truth in Colossians 1:15-18a: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whatever they may be Thrones or dominions or powers or authorities; everything was created through him and for him. And he is before everything and everything is in him. And he is the head of the body, which is the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in everything he may be first".

Jesus Christ as Head has authority, He is to rule, lead and nurture. Everything is coordinated from him. Paul writes about him in this regard in Colossians 2:19: "... the head from which the whole body is supported and held together by joints and ligaments and grows by the work of God"; and in Ephesians 4:15-16a: "But let us be true in love and grow in every way toward Christ who is the head, from whom the whole body is joined together . . .". Lightfoot writes: "The head is both the source of sustenance by which the body lives and the source of the unity by which the body becomes an organic whole ".²⁷

²⁶ Simpson, A. B., "The Highest Christian Life: Exposition of the Epistle to the Ephesians", South Nyack, NY: Christian Alliance, 1898, S.150-151

²⁷ Lightfoot, J. B., "Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon", Reprint,

Jesus as the head controls His church from heaven. He who can direct the universe is also able to direct the church and our lives. Heinz Weber writes: "In a body - when it functions normally - only one will governs, namely the will of the head. How many "clashes" among the members could be avoided if we all had this one will, the will of the head, How great is the cooperation among the members when they joyfully submit to the one will".²⁸

The head depends on the body:

The image of Jesus Christ as the head and His church as the body shows us: Christ also makes himself dependent on us, the members of his body, in a certain sense, although he is omnipotent. We see this fact in the missionary command in Matthew 28:18-19: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go (you) and make disciples of all nations . . .'. It is God's will and plan to accomplish His purposes in this age through us, the members of His body.

The members of the body are interdependent:

A healthy body forms a unit, all parts work together. A body is only properly functional when all members fulfill their specific task. Paul writes in this regard: "For as the body is one, and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12); and "We, many, are one body in Christ, but among ourselves are members of one another" (Rom. 12:5).

The members of the body are interdependent. Paul expresses this truth very clearly in Ephesians 4:15-16: "But let us be true in love and grow in every way towards the Head, Christ, of whom the whole body was joined together and incorporated Member of the other hangs through all the joints, whereby each member supports the other according to its strength and makes the body grow and build itself up in love" (see also 1 Cor. 12:14-27!). When we care for one another, we care for the whole body and for ourselves at the same time.

Paul shows us in Romans that there is both unity and diversity in the body of Christ. Although we are one as a body, we are different as members, so that no two members are alike. The members have different functions, with each member having a gift and task in the body. Paul writes in Romans 12:3-6a, "For by the grace that was given me I say to each of you, that no one think of himself more than is due to think, but that he think of himself in moderation, every one as God hath distributed the measure of faith: for as in one body we have many members, but not all members have the same office, so we many are one body in Christ, but are members of one another, and have different gifts the grace given to us". The welfare of the church depends on the cooperation of the various members. In God's eyes no one is more important than another.

It is also God himself who decides who gets which gift. In 1 Cor. 12:18 we read: "But now God set the members in place, each one of them in the body, just as he wished".

4. Construction - building blocks

The whole Church is represented as a large structure. It is meant to clarify some spiritual truths. Two main passages using this image are in Ephesians 2:19-22:

"So you are no longer strangers and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, since Jesus Christ is the cornerstone upon which the whole structure grows together into a holy temple in the Lord. Through him you too will be built together into a dwelling place for

God in the Spirit."; and 1 Peter 2:4-7: "Come to him as a living stone, rejected by men, but chosen and precious by God. And you also, as living stones, are building up a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is written, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a chosen cornerstone of great price, and whoever believes in him shall not be put to shame.' For you, then, who believe, it is precious; but for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, and which has become the cornerstone, is a stumbling block and a rock of offense; they stumble at it, because they do not believe in the Word, which is what they are meant to believe". Notice the following thoughts about this image:

Both Paul and Peter call Jesus "the cornerstone" of this structure (see Eph. 2:20 and 1 Pet. 2:6). Radmacher sums up the importance of this truth well: "In Christ Jew and Gentile are united as a cornerstone unites two parts of a building. In Christ the building has cohesion and stability in its structure. In Christ the rest of the building finds inner harmony, unity, agreement and intention".²⁹

Jesus, the apostles and the prophets are called the foundation or ground. The apostle Paul writes in 1 Cor. 3:11: "No one can lay any other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ". Later in Eph. 2:20 he writes: "... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, since Jesus Christ is the cornerstone".

We believers are also called "stones": "And you too, as living stones, build yourselves into a spiritual house . . ."

(1st Pet. 2:5). Everyone has their own place and contributes to the progress and to the unity of the whole house. Peter also says that we are "living" stones. We get our life from "the living stone" - Jesus Christ. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:45: "As it is written: The first man, Adam, 'became alive', and the last Adam, the spirit that gives life".

Compared to other buildings, which are simply dead matter, this structure lives and grows: "... Jesus Christ being the cornerstone upon which the whole structure grows together into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:20b21). God gives every living stone what is necessary to bring its contribution: "To each of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4:7).

Paul shows that the building is a temple and becomes a dwelling place for God: "...since Jesus Christ is the cornerstone upon which the whole building grows together into a holy temple in the Lord. Through him you also are being built together into one God's dwelling place in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20b22). Chafer writes, "Israel had a edifice in which God dwelt with joy; the church is a edifice in which God dwelt with joy".³⁰

C. The position of the church to the holy spirit:

The Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body - the church:

Dr. Ryrie writes: "By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the church came into being as a functioning body".³¹ In the only passage in the epistles that speaks of the baptism of the Spirit, Paul shows this truth: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, and were all made drink with one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13). It appears equal to the creation of Adam when God breathed HIS breath into him so, the church was made alive at Pentecost by HIS Spirit.

²⁹ Radmacher, S. 272

³⁰ Chafer, 4: S. 64

³¹ Ryrie, S. 444

The Holy Spirit dwells in us:

The indwelling Holy Spirit in every church member is a unique phenomenon in this age. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 6:19-20: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body". Jesus foretold this new and clear relationship with the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John: "...the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive, for it neither sees nor knows. You know him, for he abides with you and will be in you" (John 14:17).

The Holy Spirit seals:

Three times in the New Testament the text speaks of church members being sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (see 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13 and 4:30). In Eph. 4:30 Paul writes: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit, with whom you are sealed for the day of redemption".

The Holy Spirit gives gifts:

These gifts to church members are necessary to minister to the body of Jesus Christ: Paul speaks of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. He writes in verse 11: "All these things the same one Spirit works, and allocates to each his own as he wills".

V. The leadership of the church

It is sometimes asserted that the early church had little or no organization. But the New Testament gives us clear indications that the church was organized early on and that there was leadership and leaders in the church. We have already emphasized that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Ultimately, all instructions are to come from Him. But Jesus builds His church by using people. At the beginning of the church time the apostles played a very important role. The New Testament teaches us that after the apostolic period other leaders have responsibility in the church, namely elders and deacons. Let us summarize what the New Testament says about leadership and leaders:

1. The Apostles:

Jesus himself is called "apostle" in Hebrews: "Therefore, holy brethren, who share in the heavenly calling, look unto the apostle and high priest whom we confess, Jesus" (Heb. 3:1).

An apostle is a "messenger," a "messenger," or a "ambassador." At the beginning of the church time, Jesus chose and trained 12 apostles.

Matthew 10:1-4

ויזעק שנים עשר תלמידיו ויתן להם
ממשלה על רוחות טמאות להוציא
אתהן ולרפא את כל חלי ומכאוב
ושמות השנים עשר שליחים אלה הם הראשון
שמעון שנקרא כיפא ואנדריאה אחיו פיליפוס
וברטולומיאו יעקב זבדי ויוחנן אחיו תומאס
ומטיאו שהיה בעל עבירה ויעקב אלפי ותדיאו

שמעון הכנעני ויהודה איסכריאטו אשר מסר
אותו למיתה וישלח ישו את אלה השנים עשר

Translation

And when he had called unto him his twelve **Talmidio** (Disciples),
he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out,
and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Now the names of the twelve **Shelichim** (Apostles) are these;

The first, **Simeon**, who is called **Kipha**, and **Andriah** his brother; **Philipus**,
and **Bartolomaeo**; **Yakob** (James) the son of Zeb'dee, and **Jochanan** (John) his brother; **Tomaso**,
and **Matthaeo** the publican; **Yakob** (James) the son of Alfi, and **Thaddaeo**;
Shimon the Cana'ai, and Yehuda Iskariot, who also betrayed him.

They had the ability to speak with authority in the area of faith because they were sent and commissioned by God. The apostles were unique in this sense. Let's note the following observations:

The church is built on the foundation of the apostles: "You are no longer strangers and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone" (Eph. 2, 19-20).

The apostles must have been eyewitnesses of the risen Christ: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen our Lord Jesus? Aren't you my work in the Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1; see also Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:7-8; Gal. 1:1 and 2:6-9).

The apostles were chosen by the Lord: "Now it came to pass that he went up a mountain to pray, and he remained the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples, and chose twelve of them, whom he also called apostles: . . ." (Luke 6:12-16; see also Matthew 10:1-4).

The apostles were confirmed by signs: "I have become a fool! You forced me to do this. For I should be praised by you, since I am no less than the super-apostles, although I am nothing. For these are the signs of one apostles among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and works" (2 Cor. 12:11-12; see also Acts 3:3-11; 5:15-16; 9:36-42; 20:6-12 and 28:1-6).

The apostles had absolute authority: ". . . for he who was at work in Peter for the apostleship among the Jews was also at work in me among the Gentiles . . ." (Ga. 2:8; see also 1 Cor. 4:17-21; 14:29-33 and Jud. 17).

The apostles have eternal honor / recognition: "Jesus said to them: Truly I say to you, you who have followed me, in the new birth, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you will also sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28; see also Rev. 21:14).

The apostles of Jesus seem to have had a special role and task. In the New Testament they installed elders in churches: "And they installed elders in every church, and they prayed and fasted and commended them to the Lord on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23; see also Tit. 1:5); and in regard to doctrine they have said with authority: "We (apostles) are of God, and he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6; see also 1 John 2:18-19).

2. Church leaders:

1 The need for church leaders:

See here Dr. Charles C. Ryrie, Understanding the Bible, 455.

2 Elders:

The word " Acts 1:20 **ἐπισκοπή** G1984 episkopi", which is translated "oversight" or "bishop's office", occurs four times in the New Testament (see Lk 19:44; Acts 1:20; 1 Tim. 3:1 and 1 Pet. 2:12). The word "**ἐπίσκοπος** G1985 episkopos", which is translated "overseer" or "bishop", occurs 5 times in the New Testament (see Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1,7 and 1 Pet. 2:25). The word "overseer" means "one who has the oversight of a work". The terms "overseer" ("bishop") and "elder" are interchangeable in the New Testament. A good example of this is Titus 1:5-7. In Titus 1:5 Paul writes to Titus: "Therefore I left you in Crete, that you should complete what is still missing and set up elders everywhere in the cities, as I commanded you:". Then, without any explanation or transition, Paul continues in verse 7, "For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God . . .". We see a similar situation in Acts 20. In verse 17 Paul calls the elders: "But he sent from Miletus to Ephesus and called the elders of the church". Later, in verse 28, Paul calls these elders "bishops": "Take heed therefore of yourselves, and of all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to shepherd the church of God, which he bought by his own blood hat" (see also Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3). The New Testament recognizes no superiority of bishops as a special class of leaders. MacDonald writes: "The New Testament is utterly alien to the notion of hierarchy or ministerial office in the spiritual realm. Instead of lofty office with impressive titles, we are directed to humble service among God's people".³²

"To become an elder" means to assume office. Scripture distinguishes between office and talent. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, many have more than one gift. The office of elder or deacon is not a spiritual gift. However, elders and deacons should have certain gifts. For example, an elder should be able to lead and teach (see 1 Tim. 3 and 5), and a deacon should serve (see 1 Tim. 3). Not every spiritually gifted person in the church will have a ministry in the church.

The words "overseer" and "bishop" emphasize the function of these men - their ministry. The word "elder" emphasizes the dignity of his ministry, his role as shepherd.³³ In the New Testament we never find just one pastor or one elder in the church. The word is always given in the plural. The New Testament always speaks of church leadership in four numbers. What are the

Requirements to become an elder?

a. The qualifications of the elders of the church:

"be blameless"

ανεπίληπτος G423 anepíliptos) not apprehended, that cannot be laid hold of 2) that cannot be reprehended, not open to censure, irreproachable, unattainable, inviolable (1 Tim. 3:2;

³² MacDonald, S. 91

³³ Perdue, Cary M., "1. Timothy Explained", Manila: O.M.F. Publishers, 1975, S. 43-44

5:7 and 6:12): The word means "not being able to keep".³⁴ The overseer must be someone who is generally blameless. He must have a good reputation, suspicion against him must not be tenable. There should be nothing in his life that can be used against him (by his enemies). An elder is to have a deserved good reputation (see Acts 6:3 and 16:2). It takes time to build a good reputation, but that should be the goal for all of us - especially when you hold the office of elders want to reach. "a woman's man" (**μίας γυναίκος άνδρα** *mias gunaikos andra*): This expression is difficult. It does not mean that an elder must be married, although that might be a good thing. He does not speak of polygamy because Rome had forbidden it anyway. Some feel that the phrase means a "**one woman attitude**," i.e., it must have a pure morality. In the light of 1 Tim. 5:9 it seems better to say that an overseer can only be married once. Cf.: "Only a widow is entered in the list who is not less than sixty years old, who was a man's wife . . .". Although Scripture permits a second marriage after the death of a mate (see 1 Cor. 7:39), this would mean that the man could no longer be an elder. Many early church fathers followed this interpretation.³⁵ A second marriage would not be a sin, but would be considered a certain weakness.

"vigilant"

νηφάλεος **G3524** *nifálios* 1) sober, temperate 1a) abstaining from wine, either entirely or at least from its immoderate use

"sober"

σώφρων **G4998** *sōphrōn* so'-frone From the base of G4982 and that of G5424; safe (sound) in mind, that is, self controlled (moderate as to opinion or passion): - discreet, sober, temperate. (1 Tim. 3:2,11 and Tit. 2:2): The word means "moderate" or "moderate". An elder should be in control of all situations - keep a level head. Getz writes: "A man who is sober does not lose his physical, psychological and spiritual orientation".³⁶

"prudent"

Σωφρων **G4998** 1) of a sound mind, sane, in one's senses (*sw,frwvn* - 1 Tim. 2:3; Tit. 1:8; 2:2,5): The word means "self-governing".³⁹ The overseer should have a serious attitude and take his work seriously. That doesn't mean he can't take a joke, but he keeps it within healthy limits. Perhaps Rom. 12:3 a good commentary on the word: "For I say to each of you by the grace given to me, that no one think of himself more than is due to think, but that he think of himself in moderation, everyone, as God has distributed the measure of faith".

"respectable"

κόσμιος *kosmios* **G2887** (1 Tim. 2:9 and 3:2): The word means "neat".³⁷ It speaks of a life that is well ordered. This applies to external behavior. The appearance and conduct of an overseer should be dignified. Dignity corresponds to the gospel he represents. Paul uses the same word in chapter 2:9 when he speaks of the woman's clothing.

"Hospitable"

φιλόξενος *filóxenos* **G5382** hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8 and 1 Pt. 4:9): The commandment of hospitality is not new. In the Old Testament, God gave Israel precise instructions: "If a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. He shall dwell with you as a native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were also strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34). The Lord

³⁴ Rienecker, S. 276

³⁵ Johnson, S. Lewis, "Botschaften in Believer's Chapel - persönliche Notizen", Dallas, TX., S. 30

³⁶ Getz, Gene, "The Measure of a Man", Ventura, CA: Regal Books Division, 1974. S. 38 ³⁹ Rienecker, S. 276

³⁷ Rienecker, S. 276

confirms this responsibility in the New Testament. Of all people, Christians in particular should be hospitable. It is a sign of maturity and a requirement for an elder.

"qualified to teach"

διδακτικός didaktikós **G1317** (1 Tim. 3:2 and 2 Tim. 2:24):

Although the word means "able to teach", it is not related to the equate to the gift of teaching. But the elder must have an ability to handle the Word of God. He needs the willingness and ability to pass on practical help and application from the word. Getz sums up this word well: "Teachable means that a man possesses some personal qualities that enable him to communicate in a non-threatening and objective manner. He is not a person who seeks out or causes arguments. He is outspoken with others sensitive, even to those who are confused, willful, and bitter."³⁸

"not a drinker"

πάροινος pároinos **G3943** (1 Tim. 3:3 and Tit. 1:7): The word means "one who sits long over his wine" or "one who is a slave of wine".³⁹ This was a problem in Paul's day and, unfortunately, it is too often in our society. Scripture does not forbid the consumption of alcohol, but it is very clear that no believer should be controlled by alcohol!

"not a ruffian"

πλήκτης pliktis **G4131** (1 Tim. 3:3 and Tit. 1:7): This

Word is closely related to the last expression "not a drinker". Drinking bouts and brawls often go hand in hand. An overseer must not be someone who is always looking for a fight, who is always ready to strike.

"but gently"

ἐπιεικής epieikís **G1933** (Phil. 4:5; 1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 3:2;

yak 3:17 and 1st pt. 2:18): The word is not easy to define but means something like "fine" (gentile), "friendly" or "patient".⁴⁰ Someone with this trait reflects an attitude that is the exact opposite of the words above. This person is not retaliatory, but rather mild, kind, and patient.

"not contentious"

ἄμαχος ámachos **G269** (1 Tim. 3:3 and Tit. 3:2):

That word means someone refuses to argue. An elder should be someone who neither seeks nor wants quarrels. He withdraws from the argument. This does not mean that he accepts every compromise, but that he holds his beliefs without having to argue.

"not greedy"

ἀφιλάργυρος afilárgyros **G866** (1 Tim. 3:3 and Heb. 13:5):

The phrase literally means "not one who loves silver (Money)".⁴¹ Money itself is not bad, it is the love of money that is wrong. Someone who loves money collects treasures on earth. MacDonald writes: "Covetousness is wanting to possess something that is not God's will for us. Therefore, greed is idolatry because it puts our own will above the will of God".⁴² Although some elders have to manage the finances in the church, Paul probably means a general attitude.

³⁸ Getz, S. 76

³⁹ Rienecker, S. 276

⁴⁰ Bible Works, Computer Program, Friberg Lexicon, 1996

⁴¹ Perdue, S. 45

⁴² MacDonald, S. 95

"one who rules his own house well",

and raises obedient children in all honesty. For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how shall he care for the church of God?" (4 τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος 5 εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προσῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται - 1 Tim. 3:4-5): The last three qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 are somewhat more detailed than the previous ones. The overseer's life must be consistent both at home and in the church. This truth is often neglected today. He must be one who "manages" his family well. It does not mean that he is very strict, but that he is a positive one who offers leadership. His children are to be obedient and considerate. The phrase does not necessarily mean that they must be believers, but they are to conform, show loyalty, and be under the father's control. Perdue writes, "One should not think that Paul has two standards for home life, higher for the overseer and lower for the common man than the same, but the overseer must be someone whose life is consistent with it".⁴³ The expression "in all honesty" refers to the father and his way of running the house well and not to the children. "He should not be a newly baptized (newcomer), lest he puff himself up and fall under the judgment of the devil" (1 Tim 3:6 **μὴ νεόφυτον ἵνα μὴ τυφωθείς εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέσῃ τοῦ διαβόλου**): The word "newbie" occurs only here in the New Testament and means "newly planted".⁴⁴ The statement does not mean one who is young in age, but one who is new in the faith. A new believer should not take on this responsibility. Paul gives the reason for this in the second half of the verse: "so that he does not become puffed up and fall under the judgment of the devil". The word "puffed up" comes only here and in 1 Tim. 6:4 and 2 Tim. 3:4 before. It literally means "wrapped in smoke"⁴⁵, but has the meaning "puffed up with pride" in the New Testament. When that happens, he falls under the devil's judgment. This means either judgment by the devil or the same judgment that awaits the devil. No matter how zealous, how able, or how sincere, no man who is new to the faith has enough time to bring the maturity and experience necessary for that office.

"Must have a good testimony"

from those outside (the church), lest he fall into blasphemy and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7 **δεῖ δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν εἶναι ἀπο τῶν ἐξωθεν ἵνα μὴ εἰς ονειδισμόν ἐμπέσῃ καὶ παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου**): An elder must have a good reputation in his area. If this is not the case, the church can suffer greatly as a result. The devil is active - not passive. Peter writes: "Be sober and watch, for your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour". The devil is active - the world is watching - so the overseer must be wise to keep the good testimony outside of the church! There are several places in the New Testament, admonishing Christians to have a good reputation: "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not offend either the Jews or the Greeks or the church of God, just as I also live to please everyone in everything, seeking not what is good for me but what is good for many" (1 Cor. 10:31-33; see also Col. 4:5-6; 1 Cor. Thessalonians 4:11-12 and 1 Peter 2:12).

"who has believing children"

who have no reputation for being slovenly or disobedient" (Titus 1:6b **τέκνα ἔχων πιστά μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα**): The word "believing" can also be translated as "faithful." This would mean that the children do not necessarily have to be believing, but have to be faithful.

Believer or not, they must have certain ethical qualities that meet prerequisites. They must not be wild, rampant or be wasteful. When they refuse to recognize parental authority, it puts the father's ability to lead the church into serious question. Paul means, among other things,

⁴³ Perdue, S. 45

⁴⁴ Rienecker, S. 277

⁴⁵ Perdue, S. 46

adult children who squander money and material things in order to live luxuriously and thereby spoil themselves.

"For a bishop should be more blameless"

than a steward of God" (Titus 1:7a **δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον**): Here the word "blameless" is repeated, but now with regard to responsibility as "God's steward". A steward does not own, but manages another's property. He must give account to the owner. Joseph in the Old Testament is an example of a good steward; he had complete dominion over Potiphar's house. As God's steward must the elder again to be "blameless," "blank," and "blameless." He has a special responsibility before God on Judgment Day.

"not headstrong"

αυθαδης afthadis **G829**

1) self-pleasing, self-willed, arrogant (Tit. 1:7 and 2 Pet. 2:10): This word means that one is arrogant or sticks to one's own opinion.⁴⁶ Such a person thinks only of himself and does not care about the rights, feelings and interests of others. Management does not mean dictatorship!

"not hot-tempered"

οργιλος orgilos **G3711**

1) prone to anger, irascible (Tit. 1,7): This word only occurs here in the New Testament and means that someone gets angry quickly or tends to get angry.⁴⁷ The service of the elder requires patience, and this word describes the opposite of that. Getz writes: "Anger is a sin when it comes too soon, when it lasts too long, and when it tries to take the law into our own hands, when it wants to return evil for evil. This kind of anger reflects a lifestyle, usually connected with other selfish displays of wrath, malice, resentment, slander, and scolding."⁴⁸

"kind"

φιλαγαθος filagathos **G5358**

1) loving goodness (Tit. 1,8): This word only occurs here in the New Testament and means "someone who loves what is good".⁴⁹ The good includes people, ideas, deeds and things. He cares about and supports the good. We find this attitude in Romans 12:21 where Paul writes: "Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good".

"fair"

δικαιος dikaios **G1342**

1) righteous, observing divine laws (Tit. 1,8 and otherwise 76 X in the NT): The word means that the conduct of the overseer is to conform to the righteous standard of God. He should be a man of integrity, someone who keeps his promises and puts his own preaching into practice.

"pious"

οσιος osios **G3741**

1) undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure holy, pious (Acts 2:27; 13:34; 1 Tim. 2:8; Tit. 1:8; Hebr. 7:26; Rev. 15:4 and 16:5): The Word means "holy" or "pure".⁵⁰ It is an attitude that desires to please God. The writer of Hebrews uses the same word in 7:26 regarding Jesus. Notice the other words in the verse

⁴⁶ Perdue, Cary M., "2. Timothy and Titus Explained", Manila: O.M.F. Publishers, 1975, S. 76

⁴⁷ Perdue, S. 76

⁴⁸ Getz, S. 104

⁴⁹ Rienecker, S. 306

⁵⁰ Rienecker, S. 306

that complement the word "holy": "For we must also have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and higher than heaven."

b. The ministry of the elders of the church:

In the church it is often the case that everything stands or falls with the leadership. Perdue writes, "(leadership) is a good work, and where people's values are biblical they will appreciate that ministry (the elders)."⁵¹ Paul regards the office and ministry of the elder as a precious thing: "It is certainly true that if anyone desires the office of bishop, he desires a high task" (1 Tim. 3:1). Let us look for the following ministries of the overseers:

Teaching: An elder has a great and important responsibility to preserve apostolic doctrine. He must hold fast: "... let him hold fast to the word of doctrine which is sure, that he may have power to admonish with sound doctrine, and to correct those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). The word "hold" speaks of a strenuous activity. We find the same idea in Jude 3, where Jude tells his recipients to "...fight for the faith." The expressions "Word of Teaching" and "Wholesome Teaching" presuppose an objective and authoritative system of teaching - DOCTRINE! The elder must be "fit" in the content and doctrine of Scripture. This was for the situation in Crete, but it is also essential for us in our communities. This teaching is certain, is trustworthy. If the elder heeds this, he will be able to do two things:

- to admonish other people. He will be able to give them practical help in their spiritual life
- to correct the opponents. He will be able to show them where they are wrong. An effective presentation of truth is a good defense against error!

Teaching is also a gift of the Spirit. The New Testament does not mean that every elder must have this gift of the Spirit. Paul shows a difference among the elders: "The elders who lead the church well should be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and in doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17).

Lead: All elders lead, some lead well. In the above verse (1 Tim. 5:17) Paul speaks of the elders who preside over or lead well. The statement need not imply that some are bad leaders, but others obviously have a special ability and seem to have the support of the congregation as well. An important aspect of leadership is the responsibility to direct or lead others. The author of Hebrews shows us this truth. Although he speaks of teachers, the principle is the same: "Obey your teachers and follow them, for they watch over your souls - and for this they must give an account - so that they do so with joy and not with sighs; for that would not be good for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

Shepherding: The Archshepherd Jesus Christ gave the elders (the undershepherds) of the church an important task. Paul said this to the elders in Ephesus: "Take heed of yourselves, and of all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to shepherd the church of God, which he hath bought by his own blood" (Acts .20,28).

Peter goes further in his first letter, showing us in detail how and why this should be done: "I exhort the elders among you, fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed: Pasture the flock of God, which is under your command; attend to them, not under compulsion, but willingly, as pleases God, not for nefarious gain, but from the bottom of your heart, not as lords over the church, but as examples to the flock. So shall you become when the Archshepherd appears, he will receive the immortal crown of glory" (1 Pt. 5:1-4). Let's pay attention to the following thoughts:

⁵¹ Perdue, S. 44

- The undershepherd has the responsibility to feed, he should do what a shepherd does with his sheep. He is to guide, protect, feed, guard and discipline his flock.
- The undershepherd must not be lazy. He should do his service voluntarily and not forced. God wants overseers who will serve with conviction and enthusiasm.

- The undershepherd should not serve out of greed.

Earning money or other benefits must not be the motivation for His commitment. The word "heart's reason" expresses enthusiasm and eager devotion.⁵²

- The under-shepherd must not be a dictator. He should not try to get total domination over his flock. Instead, he should set the example. A good shepherd will not drive his sheep, but lead them. Jesus Christ, our Arch Shepherd, is an example for us in this regard: "Then Jesus called them (His disciples) to himself and said to them: You know, those who are rulers oppress their people, and their mighty ones do violence to them But it is not so among you, but whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be slave of all, for even the Son of Man did not come to serve himself leave, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45).

- The undershepherd will be richly rewarded for his successful ministry. The Arch Shepherd Jesus Christ will come one day and reward His faithful Under Shepherds with an immortal crown. Although it may be a bit difficult to envision this kind of reward, the crown will be something unspeakably beautiful and precious. Prayer over the sick: James names a ministry of elders, which is somewhat controversial. In Jak. 5:14-15 we read: "If any of you are sick, call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will lift him up; and if he has sinned, he will be forgiven". This verse is interpreted in different ways. Ron Blue gives the following Design options:

- "Some exegetes see in this passage proof that health simply has to be prayed for.
- Others use them to justify the practice of extreme rites (a sacrament in use since the 8th century).
- Still others have associated the procedure that James describes here with the practice of praying for health ('pray over him'), which can complement medical treatment ('anoint him with oil'), i.e. the combination of prayer and medical measure ".⁵³

God heals today too. He can do that directly, through a doctor or medicine, or through prayer as here. It is important that we do not think that God has to heal in this situation. Whether the oil has medicinal significance or represents the presence of God is not clear from the text. Some interpreters hold that the word "sick" is a key to the meaning. In her opinion, what is meant is not a physically ill person, but someone who is spiritually ill or weak: "James is not speaking here of the bedridden or the sick, but of all those who have grown morally and spiritually tired in the midst of suffering. It is they that the elders of the church should call to help".⁵⁷

Another possibility is that the statement "the Lord will lift him up" has an effect on inner healing. It is about mental recovery from physical illness.

Church discipline: Church discipline is a neglected act in many churches today. The Bible speaks in many places of the subject of church discipline (see Matthew 18; Rom. 16; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2; Gal. 6; 1 Thess. 5; 2 Thess. 3; 1. Tim 5; Tits 1 and 3; Heb 13; 2 John and 3

⁵² Rienecker, S 419

⁵³ Blue, J. Ronald, "Das Neue Testament erklärt und ausgelegt" / hrsg. von John F.

Walvoord und Roy B. Zuck, Neuhausen - Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1992, S. 439-440 ⁵⁷ Blue, S. 440

John). The elders have a great deal of responsibility in conducting them. We shall consider the details of church discipline later in the Notes.

Managing Finances: Apparently the elders in the New Testament also managed finances. We read in Acts. 11:29-30: "But each of the disciples determined to send a gift according to his ability to the brothers who dwelt in Judea. This they did and sent them to the elders through Barnabas and Saul".

c. Selection of Elders:

1) How are elders chosen or appointed?

In the New Testament we see that the apostles appointed the elders: "And they appointed elders in every church, and prayed and fasted, and commended them unto the Lord on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23); and "Therefore I left you in Crete, that you should complete what is lacking, and appoint elders everywhere in the cities, as I commanded you" (Titus 1:5). Scripture does not tell us how the elders were later to be chosen. Today, elders are elected according to the structure of each church. Dr. Ryrie summarizes: "In a hierarchically organized church they are appointed. In federally structured congregations the elders themselves appoint their respective successors. Congregational Christian congregations elect elders by voting. Many communities combine several methods; e.g. B. The elders nominate their successors, and the congregation confirms them by voting".⁵⁴

MacDonald says, "The scriptural order seems to be that God makes men overseers; and then while they do their work the church recognizes them as God-appointed overseers".⁵⁵ The teacher's opinion is that the elders themselves should nominate their successors, with confirmation from the congregation certainly desirable.

In the New Testament, the "laying on of hands" seems to have played a part in the installation of the elders. Paul writes to Timothy: "Don't lay your hands on anyone too soon; do not share in the sins of others! Keep yourself clean!" (1 Tim. 5:22 - see also Acts 6:6; 13:3; and 1 Tim. 4:14).

2) How long should elders remain in office?

The New Testament does not answer this question. There is no biblical support for a specific term of office. Dr. S. Lewis Johnson asserts that "the rotation system (e.g. every four years) in church history arose to get rid of the unfaithful elders. The other elders failed to fulfill their responsibility of disciplining".⁵⁶

If an elder falls into sin or no longer meets the requirements, he is to resign. It is also not easy to decide when an elder becomes too "old". Kuen believes that "as a rule, an elder should only serve until retirement age, because older people are often no longer able to cope with the problems in a Church".⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ryrie, S. 461

⁵⁵ MacDonald, S. 92

⁵⁶ Johnson, Predigtreihe

⁵⁷ Kuen, A., "Die Dienste in der Gemeinde", in: Fundamentum, Zeitschrift der Freien Evangelisch-Theologischen Akademie Basel, Riehen Nr. 2/1982, S. 55-56

Perhaps it is best to say that an elder should serve as long as he is able to fulfill it heartily and effectively before the Lord.

d. The relationship of the church to the elders

The members of the local church have a biblical responsibility to their elders. Notice the following statements in the New Testament:

1) Dignity:

In 1 Thess. Paul writes in 5:12-13: "But we ask you, brothers, acknowledge those who work in you and are in charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; love them the more for their work's sake. Keep peace with one another". In 1 Tim. 5:17 he shows that elders deserve honor: "The elders who lead the church well should be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who strive in word and in doctrine" (see also Hebr. 13:17). An elder has qualifications and qualities that not all people have. In addition, there is the great responsibility given by God. They carry a great burden and deserve respect and honor.

2) Protection:

Because of their position, elders are often attacked. The members of the church must be careful that their elders are not wrongly accused: "Against an elder do not accept a complaint without two or three witnesses" (1 Cor. Tim. 5:19).

3) Supply:

The work of an elder is not easy. Not all elders can work full-time and properly fulfill their role in the church. The church should be ready to support some elders financially: "Let the one who is being taught the word give a portion of every good thing to him who is teaching him" (Gal. 6:6); and "The elders who are good leaders of the congregation should be given double honor, especially those who make an effort in word and doctrine. For the Scripture says: 'You shall not bandage the muzzle of the ox that is threshing it' ; and 'A laborer is worth his wages'" (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

4) Obedience:

The writer of Hebrews shows that teachers (I would include elders here because they are often the teachers!)

Have responsibility for the souls of men: "Obey your teachers and follow them, for they watch over your souls - and for this they must give an account - so that they do so with joy and not with sighs; for that would not be good for you" (Hebrews 13:7).

5) Prayer:

Those who bear responsibility need prayer support! The author of Hebrews exhorts the recipients to pray: "Pray for us. Our consolation is that we have a good conscience, and that in all things we will live uprightly" (Hebrews 13:18).

In one article, Robert Timblin summarizes the church's responsibility to its pastor with the following thoughts (the points can also be applied to elders): "The church should love its pastor, pray for him, keep his reputation, be honest with him, with cooperate with him, pay him, think of his need for Church and with him

little things help".⁵⁸

e. Church discipline against an elder

"Against an elder do not accept a complaint without two or three witnesses. Let those who sin be rebuked before all, so that the others may also fear." Because the elders have a position of leadership in the public sphere, they are often attacked, including by people in their own church. The church is not to accept a complaint against an elder unless there are at least two or three witnesses (see Deuteronomy 19:15). But if the complaint is confirmed as proven, then the rebuke should be done "in front of everyone". It is not entirely clear whether the expression "before all" means the other elders or the congregation. Perhaps the passage in Matthew 18:15-17 supports the second possibility. The goal of this correction is that others will have a holy fear of God and His Word.

3. Deacons

Although it is not possible to pinpoint the precise origin of this office, Acts. 6:1-6 seen the beginning of the ministry:

"But in those days, as the number of the disciples increased,

There was a murmuring among the Greek Jews in the church against the Hebrews, because their widows were being neglected in the daily sustenance. Then the twelve called the multitude of disciples together and said, It is not right that we take care of the meals and thereby neglect the word of God. Therefore, dear brothers, look around for seven men in your midst who have a good reputation and are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we want to appoint to this ministry. But we want to stay with prayer and the ministry of the Word. And the speech pleased the whole crowd; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a fellow Jew from Antioch. These men placed them before the apostles; they prayed and laid their hands on them". In Phil. 1:1 it was mentioned for the first time: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi, together with the bishops and

Deacons". The word "diakonos" means "ministers" and is often used in this sense in the Gospels. The word originally comes from a word meaning "dust" - "one who makes dust".⁵⁹ The function, not the position, is important. In the pastoral epistles, the two offices "elders" and "deacons" are described. The difference seems to be this:

- Elders have primary responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the Church
- Deacons have more responsibility for the temporal (worldly) welfare of the church. Apparently they had neither teaching nor managerial duties.

The deacons are under the authority of the elders. It seems as if the deacons are a kind of "junior elders".

a. The Qualifications of the Deacons of the Church:

⁵⁸ Timblin, Robert W., "What a Church Should do for It's Pastor", die Zeitschrift 'Voice', Okt., 1957, S. 3 und 17-18

⁵⁹ Johnson, Predigtreihe

"be honorable" (semno,j - Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 3:8,11 and Tit. 2:2): This word means "serious" or "dignified".⁶⁰ The deacon should take his responsibilities seriously and live in a way that others will gladly imitate.

"not double-dealing" (mh. dilo,gouj - 1 Tim. 3,8): The word only occurs here in the New Testament and also contains the idea of "sincerity".⁶¹ The deacon is not to be a gossip, not to mean anything other than what he says, not to pass on different information.⁶⁶ Deacons often have to go from house to house, and that involves danger. Honesty and straightforwardness are important virtues for this important ministry.

"no drunkards" (mh. oi;nw| pollw|/ prose,contaj): The expression here is a bit longer and stronger than that of the elders. The word "prose,cw" means "to deal with" or "to pay attention to something".⁶² Paul does not say that the deacon should abstain entirely, but he should not be drunk. "Experience teaches that drunkenness and the lack of stability it brings are the enemies of accuracy and reliability".⁶³

"do not seek shameful gain" (mh. aivscrokerdei/j - 1 Tim. 3,8 and Tit. 1,7): This word means "do not like dishonest gain". This means not only not loving profit, but also not acquiring it dishonestly.⁶⁴ The deacons often had to handle money. They were thus tempted to selfishly abuse their responsibilities. MacDonald writes: "When a man's heart is set on accumulating wealth, he can become so possessed by that passion that every other activity in his life must be subordinated to that end. The kingdom of God and its righteousness no longer take first place in his life, and the work for God becomes sloppy and useless".⁶⁵

"Let them purify the mystery of the faith

Keep conscience" (e;contaj to. musth,rion th/j pi,stewj evn kaqara/| suneidh,sei): This secret is a hidden but now revealed truth. Previously this truth was known only to God, but He has it revealed to us humans. Faith has an objective meaning here - it is the content of truth. The word "conscience" was already mentioned by Paul in 1 Tim 1:5 and 19. The deacons are to be men with a spiritual conviction; life and doctrine must agree.

"And they should be tested beforehand, and if they are blameless, they should serve" (kai. ou-toi de. dokimaze,sqwsan prw/ton(ei=ta diakonei,twsan avne,gklhtoi o;ntej): Das The word "to test" has the meaning "to test and to recognize after the test" - it expects a positive result of the test.⁷¹ The exam itself is likely to relate to the above qualifications. The expression "be blameless" is used only by Paul (see 1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1.22; 1 Tim. 3,10 and Tit. 1,6-7) and means "without ⁷¹ Beschuldigung", "tadelos" oder "einwandfrei".⁷² The exam itself is likely to relate to the above qualifications. The expression "be blameless" is used only by Paul (see 1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1.22; 1 Tim. 3,10 and Tit. 1,6-7) and means „without“ Here we see how careful the church should be about those in charge. They are to take men who have good testimonies regarding their life and experience (see Acts 6:1-6).

"Likewise their wives should be honorable" (gunai/kaj w`sau,twj semna,j - semna,j Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 3,8.11 and Tit. 2,2): A question here at the beginning of the 11th verse is whether Paul speaks of the wives of the deacons or of an office of the deaconesses. In the original text the same word is used for women in general and for wives. The following speaks for the fact that an office of women deacons is meant:

⁶⁰ Rienecker, S. 277

⁶¹ Bible Works

⁶² Rienecker, S. 277

⁶³ MacDonald, S. 101

⁶⁴ Perdue, S. 48

⁶⁵ MacDonald, S. 102

- Verses 8 and 11 both begin with the Word "equally".
- There is no pronoun before the word "women"; it doesn't say "their" wives.
- In verse 12 Paul speaks again of the deacons - as if something else had been interposed.
- Nothing is said about the wives of the elders. Why should only the wives of deacons be emphasized?
- In Romans 16:1, Phoebe is used as an example of a deaconess.

But the following speaks for the fact that the wives of the deacons are meant:

- It is clear from verses 8 to 10 and 12 that Paul is speaking of the deacons. It would be very unlikely if he mentioned another group/office in the middle of this section.
- If a particular group or other office were meant, one would normally expect the article before the word "women" - which is not the case here.
- It is possible that Paul is addressing the wives of the deacons (as opposed to the wives of the elders) because the wives of the deacons had more personal contact with other church members through the work of their husbands; e.g. B. They often went on home visits with their husbands.
- Another special group of women will be in this Letter mentioned - namely those of the widows in chapter 5. The

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seems to be the only officially mentioned group of women in the Church.

- Phoebe could be a good example of a servant without holding a specific office.

We like the second option better. The general context seems to indicate that Paul is speaking of the deacons and their wives. These wives, who often serve with their husbands, must also be qualified.

The wives of deacons, like their husbands, should take their responsibilities seriously and live in ways that others would be eager to imitate.

"not slanderous" (mh. diabo,louj): This word has the same root as the word "devil" (see verses 6 and 7 in this chapter). It means "to falsely accuse" or "throw words to hurt someone".⁶⁶ This warning was necessary in Paul's day, but has an equally important application for us today.

"sober" (nhfali,oj - 1 Tim. 3:2,11 and Tit. 2:2): The word also found in verse 2 means "moderate" or "moderate". Women, like their husbands, should be able to keep themselves under control in all situations.

"faithful in all things" (pista.j evn pa/sin): This expression is quite comprehensive. These women are said to be reliable and trustworthy.

⁶⁶ Perdue, S. 49

Paul continues his consideration of the qualifications of deacons:

"The deacons shall each man the husband of one
To be a woman" (dia,konoi e;stwsan mia/j gunaiko.j a;ndrej): In relation to marriage, deacons have the same responsibilities as elders (see page 36 in the Notes).

"and their children and their own house well
preside" (te,knwn kalw/j proi?sta,menoi kai. tw/n ivdi,wn oi;kwn): Here the responsibility of the deacons is the same as that of the elders (see page 38 in the Notes).

b. *The Ministry of the Deacons of the Church:*

The exact duties of the deacons are not detailed anywhere in the New Testament. The deacons, or ministers, in Acts were primarily intended to relieve the apostles so that they could go about their ministry unconcerned. Deriving from this passage, Mauerhofer says: "The deacons should be concerned about the physical and spiritual well-being of the individual members of the congregation. . .".⁶⁷

The best example of a servant is given by our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark writes in 10:45 of his Gospel: "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many". The second chapter of Philippians also gives us clear examples of servants through the lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus. Maybe Dr. Ryrie sums it up best: "'Diakonia' is service in the broadest sense, both official and unofficial".⁶⁸

c. *The servant's wages:*

"But those who do their ministry well acquire for themselves a good reputation and great confidence in the faith of Christ Jesus." The deacons who serve well deserve "a good standing" or "a fair degree." This word occurs only here in the New Testament. The exact meaning is somewhat controversial: Some believe that these faithful deacons "move up in rank," that is, become elders. Others find they gain respect and influence in the Church. Others think they have respect in the eyes of God. Perhaps a combination of the last two suggestions is the best explanation. The boldness can relate to the relationship to people or to God - perhaps both are meant here as well. Diligent fulfillment of duties results in a deacon's life of confidence and boldness in serving men and God. Serving God in the church is a serious matter. Each should examine his own heart and try by God's grace to obey and serve Him.

d. *Election of deacons:*

In Acts 6 the apostles appointed the first ministers or deacons. Except here, the New Testament tells us nothing about how deacons are appointed or elected. The teacher's opinion is that the elders have a responsibility to look for young men of ability and then appoint such as deacons. Here, too, confirmation from the municipality would be desirable.

VI. The symbolic acts of the Church

Thiessen summarizes three different words used for the symbolic acts of the Church:

⁶⁷ Mauerhofer, S. 126

⁶⁸ Ryrie, S. 462

Symbol:

"A sign or visible representation of an invisible one truth or idea."

Rite:

"A rite is a symbol performed regularly and with divine project is used."

Ordinance:

"A symbolic rite presenting the chief truths of the Christian faith which is universal and encourages personal responsibility".

Sometimes the word "sacrament" is also used. This word means "made holy," consecrated to a god for holy use.⁶⁹ The Roman Catholic Church uses this term and sees seven "sacraments": ordination, confirmation, marriage, last ointment, confession, baptism and communion. The Evangelical Church knows two "sacraments": baptism and communion.

Heinz Weber's definition

of the symbolic action is apt: "An external rite - instituted by Christ - through which Christ's work of salvation and its acceptance in faith is symbolically represented. A sign through which the spiritual truth is vividly presented to the believer and reaffirmed".⁷⁰

Bancroft sums up the purpose of symbolic actions well with three statements:

"By vivid action they represent decisive Christian truth; they express, by outwardly performed rite, an inwardly accepted and fundamental Christian truth".

"They are to be celebrated as ordinances for the sake of Jesus Christ; as a simple expression of our obedience to His positive commands, and in grateful acknowledgment of His claims upon our love and duty".

"They are therefore strictly Christian ceremonies. They mark those who rightly perform them as genuine followers of Jesus Christ".⁷¹

A. The Baptism

All Christian communities/churches practice a rite of baptism. A main reason for this is the statement of Jesus in Matthew 28:18b-20: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy One spirit and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the world." Although everyone agrees that baptism is important, there is much disagreement on the subject! Let us pay attention to the following remarks:

1. What is the meaning of baptism?**a. What baptism is not!**

1. Baptism is not "necessary for salvation"

or "effective for salvation"!

⁶⁹ Ryrie, S. 465

⁷⁰ Weber, S. 113

⁷¹ Bancroft, Emery H., "Christian Theology", Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961, S. 274-275

The Catholic Church, but also some Lutherans, teach that baptism brings about transformation, i.e. bringing a person from death to life. These people see a "grace-giving power" in baptism. Thereby sins are forgiven and salvation is given. Romans 6:1-11 is a very important passage for this position. They feel that the text is more than just a picture of our union with Christ through His death, burial, and resurrection. They teach that baptism does indeed unite us to Christ.⁷² Two other passages that are often used are **Mark 16:16** and **Acts. 2:38**.

Mark 16:16: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned". But let's pay attention to the second half of the verse! When the verse speaks of water baptism, the condemnation is "not believing" and not lack of baptism. Some think that the baptism of the Spirit is meant here.

Acts 2:38: "Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Forgiveness of sins comes through faith and not through baptism. The word "for" here can also be translated as "because of" or "on the basis of". The word "eivj" can mean "purpose" or "consequence"/"Result" mean (see Mt. 12:41: "The people of Nineveh will stand up at the Last Judgment with this generation and will condemn them; for they repented after the preaching of Jonah. And behold, here is more than Jonah".).

No man is made righteous before God by baptism. If baptism were necessary for salvation, then the thief on the cross could not have been saved: "And Jesus said unto him, Truly I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

2. Baptism is not the sign or seal of the covenant

It is not comparable to circumcision in the Old Testament.

Reformed and Presbyterian theologians hold that baptism is a sign or seal of God's grace. Baptism, like circumcision in the Old Testament, would make God's promises certain. The covenant, God's promise of grace, is the basis or source of justification, and baptism is the act of faith by which we enter into the covenant and experience the blessings of the covenant. For adults, these blessings are absolute, with children's salvation dependent on their future obedience.⁷³

This position is amillennialist, it equates Israel and the church. Because Israel failed, the church took on the promises of Israel (spiritually). Baptism replaces circumcision. But the New Testament goes more in the direction that circumcision is indeed replaced, but not by another external thing (baptism), but by an inward attitude (circumcision of the heart). An inferior circumcision (physical - external) is replaced by a better one (spiritual - internal). Furthermore, we believe that Israel has a future (God will fulfill His promises to His people), and that the program for the church is very different from the program for Israel. Even the New Testament does not establish this relationship between circumcision and baptism!

3. Baptism is not acceptance into the church.

In the New Testament, conversion and baptism are very closely related. People who came to faith got baptized (an exception would be the thief on the cross, but it was impossible for him). The baptism of the Spirit means acceptance into the body of Christ, but water baptism does not mean acceptance into the church of Christ. As Heinz Weber writes, "A local church

⁷² Erickson, Millard J., "Christian Theology", Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985, S. 1090

⁷³ Erickson, S. 1093

may in its charter associate induction with baptism, but it cannot give baptism that meaning".⁷⁴

b. What is baptism.

The word "baptism" (bapti,zw) occurs 77 times in the New Testament (see Mt. 3:6,11,13,14,16; 28:19; Mk. 1:4,5,8,9; 6:14,24; 7:4; 10:38,39; 16:16; Lk. 3:7,12,16,21; 7, 29:30, 11:38, 12:50, John 1:25,26,28,31,33, 3:22,23,26, 4:1,2, 10:40, Acts 1:5, 2:38,41, 8:12,13,16,36. 38, 9:18, 10:47,48, 11:16, 16:15,33, 18:8, 19:3,4,5, 22:16, Romans 6:3, 1 Cor 1:13,14,15,16,17; 10:2; 12:13; 15:29 and Gal. 3:27). One finds in the word the idea of devotion and identification.⁷⁵ Dr. Ryrie writes: "Theologically, baptism can be defined as an act of connection or identification with someone, a group, a message, or an event".⁷⁶

Baptism is an outward sign

of an inward one a Change. It is a pictorial or symbolic act.

Through baptism, a believer testifies to his identification with Jesus Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is a public testimony that someone believes in Jesus Christ. It's a powerful sermon. Erickson calls

Let us note the following characteristics of Christian baptism:

Baptism happens because of faith in Jesus Christ: Let's pay attention to three Bible passages in the book of Acts:

"Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

"Philippus opened his mouth and began to read this word of the Scriptures and preached to him the gospel of Jesus. And as they were going along the road, they came to water. The eunuch said, Behold, there is water; that I be baptized?" Philip said, "If you are whole believe in your heart, it can happen. But he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:35-37).

"But Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians who were listening believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

1. Baptism is an act of obedience:

Jesus and His apostles commanded baptism. In Matthew 28:18-20 we see that baptism is part of the missionary command: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations: baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The above quoted passage in Acts. 2:38 supports this truth.

2. Baptism is both a symbolic act and a confession of faith:

in Rom. 6:3-4 we read: "Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized in his death? So we were buried with him through baptism into death,

⁷⁴ Weber, S. 123

⁷⁵ Bible Works, Frieberg Lexikon

⁷⁶ Ryrie, S. 466

thus, like Christ raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too are walking in new life". When Jesus died, He took all of our sins upon Himself. He died on behalf of us humans (see 2 Cor. 5:21). By His death, He settled the whole question of sin once and for all (see Hebrews 9:26). Sin no longer has a claim on our lives. God now sees us as dead with Christ. Baptism is a picture of what has happened to us internally. MacDonald writes, "But when the Lord Jesus died, I died too. My old man, my old self, was crucified with Him. When the Lord Jesus was buried, I was buried too, and I confess now that my old self was too in daily practice is to disappear forever from God's sight. And just as the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, so the believer then rises from the waters of baptism intention to now also walk in newness of life".⁷⁷

In the New Testament there is a relationship between baptism and some important truths. Notice the following relationships: In Acts. 22:16 a relationship between baptism and the forgiveness of sins; in John 3:5 and Titus 3:5 between baptism and new (re)birth; in Rom. 6:3-6 between baptism and union with Christ and in Gal. 3:27 between baptism and a new relationship with God.

2. Why is baptism important?

Let's look at the following Bible passages that show us how important baptism is in the New Testament:

Jesus Christ was baptized. In Matthew 3:13 and 16 we read: "At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him . . . And when Jesus was baptized, he immediately went up out of the water. And behold, heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him." The baptism of Jesus was not comparable to the baptism of John or to Christian baptism because Jesus never sinned. But through His baptism, He "identified" with us humans. And the fact that Jesus was baptized shows that it was important to Him.

Jesus also allowed His disciples to baptize. In John 4:1-2 we read: "Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was making disciples and baptizing more than John - although Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples . . .". Apparently, Jesus' disciples were baptizing new disciples in His name.

Jesus commanded in the Great Commission that people in this age should be baptized. See Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:16).

The apostles and the people in the early church placed a great deal of value on baptism. Baptism was a natural consequence of conversion. The New Testament knows no believers in Christ who are not baptized (see Acts 2:38,41; 8-12-13,36,38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15,33; 18:8 and 19:5).

The New Testament writers used baptism to represent important spiritual truths. In Gal. 3:26-27 we read: "For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (see also Rom. 6:1-10 and 1 Cor. Pt. 3:21).

3. What is the correct form of baptism?

Throughout church history there has been much controversy as to the proper form of baptism, whether by sprinkling, by pouring over, or by immersion. BeVier writes: "In the

⁷⁷ MacDonald, S. 75-76

area of baptism, the lack of objectivity among historians is alarming".⁷⁸ From the New Testament, baptism by immersion seems to be the norm. Here is a comparison of the different options with their arguments:

Arguments for sprinkling: Dr. Ryrie sums this up well: They claim that several Old Testament cleansing regulations include a sprinkling (see Exodus 24:6-7; Leviticus 14:7 and Numbers 19:4 and 18). They mean that the sprinkling is the cleansing by the Spirit as in Hes. 36:25 best typifies. They further say that the word "bapti,zw" can also mean "to bring under an influence" - which can also be done by sprinkling. Another argument is that in some New Testament situations immersion would have been difficult or even impossible (see Acts 2:41 - too many people; 8:38 - too little water and 16:33 - too little water). They also point out that much of the church today does not practice immersion.⁷⁹

Arguments for dousing: It is claimed that dousing (or "infusion") best symbolizes the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (see Joel 3:1-2 and Acts 2:17-18). They also use the prepositions to support their argument. For example, the phrases "into the water" and "out of the water" in Acts. 8:38-39 can also be translated "towards the water" and "away from the water".⁸⁰ Another reason are images from the first centuries in catacombs, where those to be baptized stand waist-deep in water while the baptizer pours water over their heads.⁸¹

- Arguments for Immersion: There are many arguments for baptism by immersion in the New Testament. Erickson writes: "There is no doubt that the form of baptism practiced in New Testament times was immersion".⁹⁰ Let's look for the following evidence:

- "Submersion" is the primary meaning of the word βαπτίζω G907 1) to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk).

The word originally means "immerse", "submerge", "wash" or "dye".⁹¹ There are also other words in the Greek language for "sprinkle" and "pour over". If "immersion" was not meant, then why should the authors have used this very word?

- In Matthew 3:16 we read: "And when Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up out of the water . . .". This indicates that He was in the water.

- John 3:23 is often used as support. The text says that there was much water there: "John was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim, for there was much water there; and they came and were baptized".

- The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch supports immersion. In Acts 8:38-39 we read: "And he stopped the chariot, and both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. But when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip. . .".

⁷⁸ BeVier, William A., "Water Baptism in the Ancient Church", in Bibliotheca Sacra, Theological Quarterly, Dallas, TX, Vol. 116, April-June, 1959, S. 136

⁷⁹ Ryrie, S. 468

⁸⁰ Chafer, Band VII, S. 40

⁸¹ BeVier, William A., "Modes of Water Baptism in the Ancient Church", in Bibliotheca Sacra, Theological Quarterly, Dallas: TX, Vol.116, July-Sept., 1959, S.237-238 ⁹⁰ Erickson, S. 1104 ⁹¹ MacDonald, S. 76

- The immersion symbolizes the spiritual truths of Rom. 6.1-4 best. Baptism is a symbol of death, burial and resurrection: "Or do you not know that all who are baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into his death? We are buried with him through baptism into death, that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in new life" (Rom. 6:3-4).
- Proselyte baptism was also done by immersion. Warns writes: "Even pre-Christian Judaism knew baptismal baths in the form of immersion, the Levitical cleansing baths (e.g. Leviticus 14:8.9) and the baptism of Gentiles converting to Judaism, the so-called proselyte baptism . . . the entry of a Gentile into Judaism took place after previous instruction by circumcision and baptism."⁸²
- "The first exception to submersion was granted to the sick, in which case dousing, not sprinkling, was practiced. This was the so-called 'clinical baptism'. . . Even theologians who do not advocate immersion describe immersion as a common form of baptism in the apostolic church".⁹³

Warns sums it up like this: "Thus a thorough grammatical examination of the relevant passages confirms the fact, which is also historically indisputable, that the correct form of baptism is that of immersion."⁸³

4. What about infant baptism?

Infant baptism is practiced in many Christian communities. Here are some reasons given for infant baptism:

Some believe that infant baptism brings salvation to children in some form. "Baptism is the sacrament that frees people from original and personal guilt, which incorporates them into Christ and his Church. It is therefore the gateway to new, supernatural life. Baptism is necessary for salvation, baptism brings about the remission of original sin , all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sins, furthermore the communication of sanctifying grace, incorporation into Christ, belonging to the church".⁸⁴

Many believe that there is a close relationship between the circumcision of male children in the Old Testament and the baptism of children in the New Testament. "Because infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant, they should be baptized in the New Covenant. This argument draws on covenant theology, which advocates a single covenant of God's grace with believers, using circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New Testament as the rite of initiation into serve this covenant".⁸⁵

Some believe that because five out of seven baptisms mentioned in the New Testament were home baptisms (see, e.g., Acts 11:14, 16:15,31 and 18:8), small children had to be

⁸² Warns, Johannes, "Die Taufe - Gedanken über die christliche Taufe, ihre Geschichte und ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart", Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1992, S. 6 ⁹³ Ryrie, S. 469

⁸³ Warns, S. 207

⁸⁴ Neuner-Roos - "Der Glaube der Kirche in den Urkunden der Lehrverkündigung", 11. Auflage, S. 362. (Aus "Was hindert mich, getauft zu werden?" - Biblischer GemeindeDienst, Mannheim)

⁸⁵ Ryrie, S. 467

present as well. They feel that it would be unusual if some of these homes did not have small children present - hence infant baptism must have existed in New Testament times.

Sometimes the promise in 1 Cor. 7:14 applied to infant baptism: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through the believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy".

The above reasons are all weak at some point. First, the New Testament is clear in saying that salvation is possible only through faith in Jesus Christ and His saving work (see Eph. 2:8-9). Also, the biblical order is always faith and then baptism (see Acts 2:37-38; 16:14-15 and 34). Regarding the relationship between circumcision and baptism, Dr. Ryrie: "Baptism is the rite of entry into the Church of believers, the church; therefore, it should be reserved for believers alone. The circumcision on the other hand signified the entry (of children too) into a theocracy in which there were also unbelievers". Regarding house baptisms in the New Testament, Warns writes: "But apart from this, there is not even a hint to be found in any of these passages that small children were there. Rather, we read expressly that those concerned listened to the word and believed or even dedicated themselves to the service. A comparison of the five reports makes the matter immediately clear".⁸⁶ If in 1Cor. 7:14 an infant baptism is mentioned, shouldn't the unbelieving partner be baptized at the same time?

BeVier summarizes the development of church history: "In the beginning, in the apostolic and post-apostolic times, only believing adults were baptized. Although the form is not entirely clear, immersion was certainly practiced. Until 115 AD (Justin) there was confusion between the symbol and the meaning of the symbol, and baptism was equated with conversion. Then the idea of salvation and forgiveness of sins through baptism arose. Thereafter it was logically argued that if sin is universal (Origen) and baptism is the If sins are forgiven (Tertullian), then all need baptism, including children... Augustine systematized this theology and made a strong statement regarding the total depravity of unbaptized children. After that, infant baptism was universal".⁸⁷

Warns quotes some Bible scholars regarding infant baptism. Prof. D. Fr. Schleiermacher writes: "All traces of infant baptism that one wanted to find in the New Testament must first be entered". Next Prof. Dr. Drews: "There is no reliable evidence that children were also baptized in the apostolic period. If one has tried to produce scriptural evidence for the baptism of children, it has always been wasted effort". D. Berth writes: "The commandment of infant baptism is found neither in the mouth of Jesus nor anywhere else in the New Testament; it only appeared in the second and third centuries". And finally Prof. D. Aug. Hahn: "Neither in the Holy Scriptures nor in the first 150 years of the Christian Church is there a reliable example of infant baptism, and we have to admit that the numerous opponents of it are not refuted from the evangelical point of view be able".⁸⁸

5. What baptisms are there in the New Testament?

John the Baptist Baptized: This is the first baptism we encounter in the New Testament. In Matthew 3:1-2 and 5-6 we read: "At that time John the Baptist came and preached in the wilderness of Judea and said: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... So went out to him the city of Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the countries around the Jordan, and were baptized by him in the Jordan, and confessed their sins." As a precursor of the coming Messiah, John called all Israel to repentance. The people who were baptized wanted to

⁸⁶ Warns, S. 24

⁸⁷ BeVier, S. 320

⁸⁸ Warns, S. 22-23 und 29

prepare themselves for the Messiah and His kingdom. John's baptism linked his followers to the message of righteousness.

Jesus was baptized: "In those days Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan to John to be baptized by him" (Mt 3:13). Although John baptized Jesus, that baptism did not have the same meaning as it did for the Jews. As a sinless man, Jesus did not need to repent. With His baptism, Jesus identified himself with us humans. Jesus also says: "For thus it is our due to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15).

The Baptism of Moses: In 1 Cor. 10:1-2 we read: "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all went through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses through the cloud and through Ocean". At this baptism, the Jews identified with Moses and his leadership and authority in leading them out of Egypt.

John and James were willing to accept baptism: In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus speaks of a baptism related to His passion: "Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?' They said to him, 'Yes, we can.'" But Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with that." Baptism with which I am baptized . . ." (Mark 10:38-39).

Baptism for the dead: In 1 Corinthians 15:29, Paul speaks of baptism for the dead: "Otherwise, why should some be baptized for the dead? If the dead do not rise at all, what are they then? they baptize?". Probably this difficult passage means: "Identification with the Christian Church, with the newly baptized taking the place of a deceased believer".⁸⁹

The baptism of the Spirit: In 1 Corinthians 13:12 Paul shows that all believers have been baptized with the Holy Spirit: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, and we are all imbued with a spirit". This baptism places the believer into the body of Jesus. Every Christian becomes a member of the universal church through the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism of Faith: This is the baptism we are considering and emphasizing here. It is commanded by our Lord and expected of every believer as a step of obedience.

6. Who should be baptized?

The answer to this question seems clear from Scripture. Baptism is closely related to conversion. Everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior should be baptized. The New Testament knows no believing, unbaptized Christians.

Over the years I have noticed that for many people baptism has been a struggle - that it often took a great deal of inner effort before they were ready to take that step. My personal conviction is that it shouldn't be like that! Being baptized is a great privilege. In doing so, I can publicly confess that I identify with Jesus Christ, His vicarious death for me and His resurrection. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, the Almighty Creator of the Universe, became flesh to help me save myself. He redeemed me, I belong to Him. What a great privilege to profess Him publicly by baptism!!

Baptism may lead to persecution and suffering. There have been many people in church history, even at the beginning of the church period, who lost their lives because of their testimony. MacDonald writes: "Even today in some parts of the world baptism is the signal

⁸⁹ Ryrie, S. 466

for the beginning of terrible persecution. In many countries a believer is tolerated so long as he only confesses Christ with his lips. But whenever he publicly confesses Christ in baptism confesses and cuts his connection with the past, the enemies of the cross take up arms against him ".⁹⁰

7. When should a person be baptized?

Again, the New Testament seems clear. There are scriptures that show a very close relationship between conversion and baptism. Let's look at the following examples:

"Or do you not know that all of us who are baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3).

"For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27).

"You were buried with him in baptism; you were also raised with him through faith by the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And he made you alive with him, dead in sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, and has forgiven us all our sins!" (Col. 2:11-12).

Consider also the following passages that describe baptism immediately after conversion: Acts. 2:38-41; 8:35-38; 10:44-48 and 16:31-33.

The biblical practice appears to be baptism immediately after a person becomes a believer. There is no passage in the New Testament that suggests otherwise. Regarding the probationary period, BeVier writes: "In the first century most converts were Jewish, and baptism took place immediately after the profession of faith. Until the third and fourth centuries most converts were Gentiles, and between conversion and Baptism was given a period of instruction, usually three years but sometimes less ".⁹¹ Although many churches to this day make time for some sort of probation and instruction, there is no biblical support for it. The teacher's personal opinion is that nothing should stand in the way of a new convert's desire to be baptized as soon as he is converted. Even children old enough to understand their conversion are old enough to be baptized.

Warns summarizes: "But in the holy documents of early Christianity, in the writings of the New Testament, we find the clear testimonies about the will of the Lord, about the meaning of his ordinances and about the original conception and observance of his will. Contrary to all human opinions and It is our duty to institutions to return to the simple truth of God's Word".⁹²

B. Communion

It was Jesus Himself who instituted the Lord's Supper on the night He was betrayed: "When they were eating, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, gave it to them and said: Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt. 26:26-28 - see also Mk. 14 22:22-24; Luke 22:17-20 and 1 Cor 11:23-25). Obviously, the Lord's Supper has a relation to the Passover feast in the Old Testament. Jesus Himself was the Passover Lamb: "Behold the Lamb of God, which

⁹⁰ MacDonald, S. 78

⁹¹ BeVier, S. 137

⁹² Warns, S. 22

takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). S. Lewis Johnson holds that the sacrament is the only act of worship for which Jesus gave specific instructions.⁹³

Bread and wine are the symbols or elements used in the meal. It was probably unleavened bread and real wine that were used—although the New Testament mention of the Lord's Supper does not use the word "wine" at all. The text speaks of the "cup" or "the fruit of the vine" (see Luke 22:18). The bread represents the body of Jesus: "The Lord Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and said: This is my body which is given for you; do this in memory of me" (1 Cor. 11:23b-24). The wine or cup represents the blood of Jesus: "In the same way he also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this as often as you drink of it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor 11:25).

1. What is the significance of the sacrament?

a. What the LORD's supper is not

1) Transubstantiation

"This official Roman Catholic position regarding the Lord's Supper was elaborated at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Although many Catholics, especially in Western countries, now reject many aspects of this position, it is still the basis of many people's beliefs".⁹⁴ This teaching states that the bread and wine are transformed into the flesh and blood of Jesus under the blessing hand of the priest. In the dictionary of theology, transubstantiation is explained as follows: "The Catholic doctrine of the transformation of the substances of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, which takes place in the Eucharist, while retaining their external form, i.e. the appearance, smell, taste of bread and wine, although they have essentially become something else. . .".⁹⁵

"A second important aspect of the Catholic position is that the Lord's Supper involves a real sacrifice. In the Mass, a real sacrifice is made by Christ for the offerers. It is a sacrifice in the same sense as Jesus' crucifixion."⁹⁶

A third aspect of the Catholic position is the idea that an ordained priest must be present to consecrate the bread and wine. If such a priest is not present, the elements remain simply bread and wine. But if the priest is present and speaks the right words, the two elements will be transformed wholly and forever into the body and blood of Jesus.⁹⁷

Traditionally, the priests only passed out the bread and kept the chalice for themselves. The main reason was the danger that some of the blood might spill. If someone accidentally trampled on the blood of Jesus, it would be profaned.⁹⁸

This teaching of the Catholic Church denies Jesus' unique sacrifice for us: "For Christ did not enter the sanctuary made with hands, which is only a type of the true sanctuary, but into heaven itself, now to appear for us in the presence of God appear; not even to sacrifice himself often, as the high priest goes into the sanctuary every year with strange blood;

⁹³ Johnson, Botschaften - Believer's Chapel

⁹⁴ Erickson, S. 1115

⁹⁵ Hanselmann, Johannes, Rothenberg, Samuel, Swarat, Uwe, "Fachwörterbuch Theologie", Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1987, S. 173

⁹⁶ Pohle, Joseph, "The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise", ed. Arthur Preuss, St. Louis: B. Herder, 1942, Vol. 2, S. 99

⁹⁷ Pohle, S. 256-260

⁹⁸ Pohle, S. 252

otherwise, he would have had to suffer often from the beginning of the world. But now, at the end of the world, he has appeared once for all to take away sin by his own sacrifice" (Hebrews 9:24-26).

2) Consubstantiation

Martin Luther taught this position. He asserted that the body and blood of Christ are present "in, with, and under the bread and wine."⁹⁹ The Theology Dictionary explains it as: "Luther's teaching that in the Lord's Supper the body and blood of Christ are combined with the bread and wine without changing their substance, so that they coexist with the substances of bread and wine"..¹⁰⁰

Luther, as well as the High Church, maintained that the objective presence of the glorified body and blood of Christ is related to the bread and wine, so that in some mysterious way the body and blood is actually possessed by the participant, whether he believes or not. Participation brought blessings to believers and curses to non-believers.¹⁰¹

Scripture does not teach this position. Thiessen concludes that if we interpret the omnipresence of the Lord as we do here, then we eat the Lord at every meal. It seems clear from the Word of God that the believer who partakes the Lord's Supper gets a blessing that he otherwise would not get, but not in the sense of the consubstantiation.

b. What The Lord's Supper is

Achten wir auf folgende biblische Aussagen in bezug auf das Abendmahl:

The Lord's Supper (communion) is both a symbolic and a proclamation: we have defined a symbol as "a sign or visible representation of an invisible truth or idea". So is the evening meal. The bread and wine are signs of the body and blood of Jesus, and when we partake of the meal we proclaim the death of Jesus. It's a kind of sermon: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you **proclaim** the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Warns writes: "It is of course not a question of proclaiming the historical fact of Christ's death in general, but rather the proclamation of the immeasurable salvific value of this death. His death, the giving of his body and blood, i.e., his life, appears according to all reports as a Sacrificial death for us, as a death for our sake".¹⁰²

The Lord's Supper is a memorial: "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you; do this in memory of me'" (Luke 22:19). When we take part in the Lord's Supper, we should consciously think of Jesus' act of redemption on the cross of Golgotha. We remember that Jesus died in our place. "Every gift is a reminder of the giver, every endowment of the founder".¹⁰³ The Passover feast in the Old Testament looked forward to Christ's death on the cross, the Last Supper looks back to the same event. We must not forget, however, that this is a memorial and not some kind of mediation of grace.

The supper is a supper of the Lord: It was Jesus himself who instituted this supper ("When you come together, the Lord's supper is not eaten" - 1 Cor. 11:20). Scripture even speaks

⁹⁹ Erickson, S. 1117

¹⁰⁰ Fachwörterbuch Theologie, S. 92

¹⁰¹ Thiessen, S. 429

¹⁰² Warns, Johannes, "Gedanken über eine Schriftgemäße Abendmahlsfeier", Bern: Fr. haggenmacher, 1917, S. 6

¹⁰³ Weber, S. 125

of His table: "You cannot drink both the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Cor. 10:21). .

The Lord's Supper is a Fellowship: Fellowship is a very important aspect of a Christian's life. An important goal of God is that we have fellowship with Him and also with one another as believing brothers and sisters (see John 14:23 and 1 John 1:3). Paul shows us that communion means communion with the body and blood of Jesus:

"The blessed cup that we bless, is that not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is not that the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). Warns writes: "Participation at the table of the Lord is fellowship (Greek koinonia) with the Lord himself, whose death is our death and whose life is our life. By eating and drinking we bring communion in death with him who died in this world, expressed symbolically".¹⁰⁴

The sacrament is a self-examination meal: In this sense, the sacrament is a very healthy and valuable experience. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup" (1 Cor. 11:28). This is about questioning ourselves and not others. One consequence of self-examination is that we value Jesus' substitutionary death for us even more. Heinz Weber writes: "The deeper this self-examination is, the more we need Jesus Christ's work of salvation."¹⁰⁵

The Lord's Supper is a judgment meal: the purpose of self-examination is to put sin in our lives in order. As we examine ourselves, we must be willing to confess our sins and purify ourselves. If not, then we partake of the Lord's Supper for judgment: "For whoever eats and drinks without respecting the body of the Lord is eating and drinking for judgment" (1 Cor. 11:29). The church in Corinth is a good example of how misuse of the sacrament can lead to judgment. Apparently, some believers in the Church were sick, others even died because they ignored the meal: "Therefore there are many weak and sick among you, and not a few have fallen asleep. If we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. If we but when judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, lest we be condemned along with the world" (1 Cor. 11:30-32).

The sacrament is a supper of thanksgiving: if the meaning of the sacrament is to remember our salvation, we are to partake of it with grateful hearts. Warns again: "We recall the fact that we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son and that **we received forgiveness of sins because of this one for always valid perfect sacrifice**. Nothing separates us from God: guilt is eliminated, conscience is cleansed, Church is made possible, inheritance is secured - all because of the work of redemption accomplished on the cross".¹⁰⁶ Early Christians often referred to the celebration of the Lord's Supper as "worship," and rightly so. The Lord's Supper is a celebration of praise and thanksgiving. After the first supper we read: "And when they had sung the hymn of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Mt 26:30).

The Lord's Supper is a meal of hope: The Lord's Supper also has prospects for the future. It looks back to the cross, but also forward to the return of the Lord: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). We can look forward to the time when we celebrate the meal together with the Lord in His kingdom. Jesus even says that until that time He will drink no more of the fruit of the vine: "I tell you, I will drink no more of this fruit of the vine from now on, until the day when I drink of it again with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29).

¹⁰⁴ Warns, S. 10

¹⁰⁵ Weber, S. 126

¹⁰⁶ Warns, S. 8

2. Who may partake of the sacrament?

Not everyone is allowed to partake of the Lord's supper. The Lord's Supper is a privilege for God's children, who should also fulfill their responsibility in obedience to the Lord.

A) The Born from above

(born again, born new) Only believing hearts are able to understand and commemorate the Lord's death and His work of redemption for us. When Jesus introduced the meal, only believers were present. Judas, who was not a believer (see John 13:10), was already gone. Warns writes: "From what has just been said it is evident that those who partake of the Lord's Supper must have the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which makes every believer certain of his sonship in God (Rom. 8:16).¹⁰⁷ Let's also pay attention to the following two Bible passages: "For there is one bread, **so we many are one body**, because we all partake of one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17); and "The Lord Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, saying, This is my body **which is given for you**; do this in memory of me" (1 Cor. 11, 23b-24).

a) Believers who are not under church discipline

There is strong evidence that believers who were under church discipline were not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. Let's pay attention to these two scriptures:

"Rather, I wrote to you: You shall not associate with anyone who is called a brother and is a fornicator, or a miser, or an idolater, or a blasphemer, or a drunkard, or a thief; **neither shall you eat with such a one**. For what do I care about those outside that I should judge them? Have you not to judge those inside? But God will judge those outside. Cast out the wicked one from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).

"But we command you, dear brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you **withdraw** from every brother who lives disorderly and not according to the teaching which you received from us . . . For we hear that some of you live disorderly lives and work nothing, but engage in vain things. But such as we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and eat their own bread. But you, brethren, do not be weary of doing good. But if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, take note of him and have nothing to do with him, lest he be blushed. But do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3.6 and 11-15).

B) Believers who purify themselves before communion

Anyone who wishes to partake of the Lord's Supper is challenged to examine and judge himself: "Let a man examine himself, and eat of this bread and drink of this cup" (1 Cor. 11:28) and "If we judged ourselves, we would not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31). "But if a believer takes the Lord's Supper, although he knows that there are unresolved sins in his life - e.g., unforgiveness or a certain addiction that he does not want to give up - he takes it unworthily. This unworthy enjoyment brings the judgment of God with it. This judgment shows himself in the life of the unworthy eater in 'weakness, sickness, and untimely death' (1 Cor. 11:30) It is through this judgment that God seeks to bring that believer to repentance. . .".¹⁰⁸ We must not take the sacrament lightly. It is a serious matter to have

¹⁰⁷ Warns, S. 12

¹⁰⁸ Mauerhofer, S. 170

such intimate fellowship with our Lord, and He expects obedient and purified hearts from those who want it.

3 When should we celebrate communion?

In this regard, too, we find no regulations in the New Testament. In Acts 20:7 we read that the congregation in Troas celebrated communion in the service on the first day of the week: Acts 20:7 ἐν δὲ τῇ **μια τῶν σαββάτων** συνηγμένων τῶν μαθητῶν κλάσαι ἄρτον ὁ παῦλος διελεγέτο αὐτοῖς μέλλων ἐξίεναι τῇ ἐπταυρίῳ παρέτεινεν τε τὸν λόγον μέχρι μεσονυκτίου Dr. Martin Luther translated in 1545 rightfully in Apostelgeschichte 20:7 **Auf einen Sabbat** aber, ... Since we find no evidence for a switch from Shabbat to the venerable day of the sun also called the day of Apollo or "ἡμερα ἡλίου" "Hemera Helios" in early time and we see that in Troas was a synagogue so, we need to ask the question what is a right translation? or did the translator miss an understanding of the Feasts of the LORD? We see different translations and even the KJV translates: On the first day of the week in many cases from the word **σαββάτων** shabbaton which actually is a **holyday** and it is in Matthew 28:1 the **high Shabbat** of **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** and **not a weekly Shabbat**. If this word **σαββάτων** shabbaton is an idiom how can it be that the word "**week**" is not in there neither "**day**" nor "**first**". Indeed if we translate this phrase first day of the week into Greek it would be **πρώτη μέρα τῆς εβδομάδας**.

A sabbatical year that is a week or שמיטה shemita can easily be traced in the manuscripts LXX **εβδομω σαββata** and Aleppo codex **שַׁבַּת שְׁבִיטָה** e.g. but the KJV does not make a difference here between **שַׁבַּת** H7676 Shabbat and **שַׁבְּתוֹן** H7677 shabbaton. Daniel uses the word **שבוע** H7620 Shavua for week which Israelis still use. The word for "week" in Greek is "**εβδομάδα**" but funny it has no Strongs number although it is used 5 times in the LXX but not in the NT even though it is still used nowadays. That means if the Greek translator wanted to express "the first day of the week" he would not do it with specific Hebrew expressions that have actually a different meaning. When this text in Greek is given to native Greek people they translate "once upon a Sabbath" So, we need to get into the specific Hebrew meaning.

First let us see that in the Greek Gospel of Matthew in Chapter 26, Yeshua celebrates the Passover as the LORD's Supper **before** he is arrested and dies but, in John 19:14 it is clear that **Yeshua died on the Preparation day of Passover**. So, there is a different calculation of time showing **two passovers**. In John 11:55 the Apostle makes a remark that creates a difference from the native expression Feast of the LORD to Feast of the Jews. It seems likely that Yeshua was teaching of different days, one for the disciples and the other for the Jews. Also, the time mentioned in Matthew 26:17 "the first day of the feast of unleavened bread" is not found in Hebrew manuscripts that are copies from originals like "*Manuscript - Vat.ebr.100*" and not retranslated from Greek. Here it says: And **a former day** of Pesach... which may have been misinterpreted in Greek as "a day before" instead of "a former day".

The Pharisees had endorsed a few hundred years before a calendar that was based on the Babylonian system from the time of their exile so, they got away from the calendar that was in place before which was received from the patriarchs. You could call this Adam's or Enoch's calendar and that is also available in the scrolls of Qumran. In that calendar a **Feast of the YAHWEH** would always appear at the full moon and it would always be on a Wednesday (with the exception of the Feast of trumpeting and Pentecost). The prophecy of Jona that Yeshua needs to be in the belly of the earth for 3 nights and 3 days cannot simply be ignored. When Yeshua died on a Wednesday then the resurrection is definitely on a Shabbat. The Passover that Yeshua celebrated with the disciples is difficult to follow or find the origin but, it can possibly be **a former day** of Pesach.

At the other hand it seems that at that year 32 A.D. both calendars (of the **Patriarchs** and of the **Pharisees**) aligned with Passover. One thing is sure that Yeshua died at the very right time when the Passover lamb needed to be slaughtered at Erev Pesach the 14th of Aviv.

To clarify the difference between a **Shabbath** and a **Shabbaton** is difficult in the Greek because of the genitive form which makes the **Shabbath** to a "των σαββατων 'ton Shabbaton'" Still, we know that the Passover in both Calendars is a **holy-day** which is in Hebrew is a **שַׁבָּתוֹן Shabbaton** see Exodus 16:23 And he said unto them, This is which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the **shabbaton (Holyday/rest)** of the **holy sabbath** unto the LORD **שַׁבָּתוֹן שַׁבַּת-קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה**

More light in the Gospel of Mark Chapter 16:1-5 (translated from Vat. Ebr. 100): "16:1 And when the Shabbath¹⁰⁹ had passed over, Miryam Magdalith and Miryam the mother of Ya'akov and Shelomi brought precious ointment in order to anoint Yeshua.

2 And they came to the grave in the morning of the day after the *weekly Shabbath*¹¹⁰ and the sun was already coming up. 3 Now they were speaking to themselves. 'Who will throw off the stone for us from the opening which is in the grave?' 4 Then they looked and saw the stone overthrown! 5 And when they entered into the grave, they saw, sitting at the right side a young man clothed with a white garment, and they feared. 6 But he said to them, 'Do not fear, you are seeking Yeshua Notsri who was hanged – he is not here! See this is the place where they laid him. 7 Go immediately to the talmidim, and to Keipha, and say to them that he will be before them in Gelilah – there you will see him, like [he] said to you.'"

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
יום שישי	יום שבת	יום ראשון	יום שני	יום שלישי	יום רביעי	יום חמישי	יום שישי	יום שבת	יום ראשון
Month of Aviv		11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
									→ 21
	שַׁבָּת				שַׁבָּתוֹן	שַׁבָּתוֹן	שַׁבָּתוֹן	שַׁבָּת	שַׁבָּתוֹן
LORD's Supper					Erev Pesach	Pesach	Un-leavend Bread		Firstfruits
Evening before Shabbath					ערב פסח	פֶּסַח	High Shabbath	weekly Shabbath	The Day After
						3 nights and 3 days			

Summary: Yeshua was already resurrected when the two Miryam's came to the grave on that morning of the Feast of Firstfruits. From the scriptures it is evident that Yeshua rose from the dead on the weekly Sabbath at the same time HE died on Erev Pesach.

4 How often should we celebrate communion?

To this matter Mauerhofer writes: "A careful study of the scriptures that tells about the celebration of the Lord's Supper makes it clear that the Lord's Supper was integrated into the congregational meetings".¹¹¹ Many interpreters of the Bible think from the Scriptures that the congregations in the New Testament celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly.

¹⁰⁹ This was The High Sabbath of The Feast of Unleavend Bread, not the weekly Sabbath.

¹¹⁰ "The day after" – this was the morning of the Feast of First Fruits, which was always "the day after" the weekly Sabbath (see Leviticus 23:11). Matthew 28:1 makes it clear that this was the first "day one," i.e. the day after the weekly Sabbath.

¹¹¹ Mauerhofer, S. 171

The Lord's Supper reminds us Christians of an important truth of the New Testament - salvation through the vicarious death of Jesus. We need this reminder constantly, otherwise Jesus would not have introduced the Lord's Supper. Because of this, we should celebrate the meal more often. The teacher's personal opinion is that once a week is not too much to celebrate communion. This gives members of the Church ample opportunity to participate. The text does not tell us clearly at what hour the meal is to be celebrated. Some think it belongs in the main service, others see the possibility that the congregation met in the evening and that this hour is the best. It is important that enough time be allowed to celebrate the Lord's Supper often and in detail.

5 The Love Feasts

Some passages in the New Testament indicate that there was even a full meal in the church. Let's pay attention to these places:

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . 46 So continuing day by day with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their meals with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. " (Acts 2:42 + 46-47).

Regarding the ungodly false teachers in Jude, he writes: "They are blots upon your love feasts, feasting without fear, feeding themselves; they are clouds without water, blown about by the wind, bare, barren trees, twice dead and uprooted . . ." (Judas 12 - see also 2Pet. 2:13 in 95% of manuscripts).

"When you come together, the Lord's supper is not observed. For each one eats his own meal beforehand, and one is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Cor. 11:20-21).

Such love feasts have also been celebrated throughout church history. The important thing to note is that they were abused in the church at Corinth, and that led to judgment. Dr. Ryrie writes: "In the fourth century the Love Feasts was fading away popularity and is rarely practiced today. Because Paul advises a congregation not to practice the love supper, this habit is certainly not to be put on the same level as baptism and communion".¹¹²

6. The Washing of Feet

Some churches practice foot washing in connection with the Lord's Supper. John 13:1-20 is seen as the basis for this. Others think that Jesus is emphasizing an attitude that is more important than action. MacDonald writes: "Was he here introducing a church ceremony? No, the meaning of his action was spiritual. He was telling them to keep one another pure by maintaining constant spiritual fellowship ".¹¹³ Dr. Ryrie adds: "The admonition in verses 14 and 15 to follow the example of Christ certainly refers to forgiving one another in humility and not to the forgiveness of our transgressions by God."¹¹⁴

VII. The church services

What is the church for? In his book "The Triumph of the Crucified", Erich Sauer wrote the following in relation to the goal of time in general: "But we worship this great eon plan of God. From the gate of eternity before all time to the gate of eternity after this time has We are guided by the Bible's history of salvation. 'The last is the glorified and eternally new

¹¹² Ryrie, S. 472

¹¹³ MacDonald, William, "Kommentar zum Neuen Testament - Band 1 Matthäus - Römer", Bielefeld: Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung e.V., 1989, S. 434

¹¹⁴ Ryrie, S. 472

first'. The goal, just like the beginning (Psalm 90:2), is God himself. 'That God may be all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28)".¹¹⁵ With these words one could also summarize the goal of the church and the church time. Paul calls us in Eph. 5:25b-27 Christ's goal for His church: "... just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to sanctify her. He cleansed her with the bath of water in the Word, that he might present itself as a church that is glorious and has no spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but is holy and blameless". The activities of the Church should always have the above goals in mind. The following are some observations regarding important church services.

A. Worship

Worship is an important aspect of service. Jesus says in John 4:24: "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth". An attitude of prostrating in awe of God is absolutely necessary if we are to truly worship Him. Worship is now, in a sense, a lost art. Modern man is so often only concerned with himself. Dr. Ryrie sums up worship in the spirit with three thoughts: "(1) Worship can take place anywhere and anytime because the spirit is unlimited in space and time. (2) Worship comes from the spirit of man (Hebrews 4:12). It is not an outward act. (3) True worship is a person-to-person relationship, where at all times and places we honor God revealed in Jesus Christ".¹¹⁶ Worshiping in truth means that our worship is closely related to the Word of God. Jesus says in John 17:17 that "His word is truth". Any worship that is not in accordance with Scripture is wrong.

B. Doctrine

The church is a place where truth is preached. The proclamation of the word was already emphasized at the beginning of the church time: "But they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer" (Acts 2:42). Paul and Barnabas also emphasized the teaching in their ministry: "But Barnabas went out to Tarsus to look for Saul. And when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. And they stayed with the church a whole year and taught many. In Antioch the disciples were first called Christians" (Acts 11:25-26).

The church is also the place where the truth is kept. In 2 Timothy, Paul admonished young Timothy in this regard: "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, command faithful people who are able to teach others also . . . but you continue in what you what you have learned and what has been entrusted to you; you know from whom you learned and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which can instruct you to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:2 and 3:14-15). Very often in the pastoral epistles Paul emphasizes "sound doctrine" and the church is the place where people are to be taught it. In Titus Paul speaks of the fact that the older women should also teach the younger women (see Tit. 2:4).

C. The Priesthood of believers

Peter writes in 1st Pt. 2:9: "But you are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy people, the people of your possession, that you should proclaim the blessings of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light . . .". The church is where we are to exercise this priesthood. Priests offer sacrifices, and the writer to the Hebrews shows us the kind of sacrifice God expects of us: "Let us therefore through him always offer up the sacrifice of praise to God, which is the fruit of the lips that confess his name. To do good and do not forget to share with others, for such sacrifices please God" (Hebrews 13:15-16).

¹¹⁵ Sauer, Erich, "Der Triumph des Gekreuzigten", Detmold: Druck Tölle & Co., 1948, S. 232

¹¹⁶ Ryrie, S. 474

Paul also speaks of giving as a sacrifice: "But I have received all things and have plenty. I have in abundance, having received through Epaphroditus what came from you: a sweet savor, a pleasant offering, O God pleasing" (Phil. 4:18 - see also 1 Cor. 16:1-2 and 2 Cor. 8:1-15).

D. Common prayer

We often find the subject of prayer in the New Testament and it is also said to play an important role in the church. We find both private and public prayer. "But they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer" (Acts 2:42). This text speaks of the prayers - before the word "prayer" comes the article. The Jews knew three prayer times a day (see Acts 10:9). The Apostles emphasized the importance of prayer: "But let us remain in prayer and in the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4 and 13:3). When Peter was in prison, the church prayed for him (Acts 12:5 and 12). The New Testament writers sometimes ended their letters with an exhortation or challenge to prayer. Let's look at the following examples:

"Pray always with entreaties and supplications in the Spirit, keeping watch with all perseverance in prayer for all the saints and for me, that the word may be given me, when I open my mouth, boldly preaching the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6: 18-19).

"Pray without ceasing . . ." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

"Pray for us . . ." (Hebrews 13:18).

"If any of you suffer, pray . . ." (James 5:13).

E. Performance of symbolic actions

The church is the place where the symbolic actions are to be performed. For a detailed consideration see above (biblical examples: Acts 2:41-42; 20:7 and 1 Cor. 11:23-29).

E. Employing the gifts of the Spirit

Dr. Ryrie defines a spiritual gift as a God-given ability to serve the body of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁷ Four chapters in the New Testament emphasize the importance of spiritual gifts (see Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4 and 1 Pet. 4). The New Testament clearly shows us that every believer has at least one gift, sometimes more than one. In Romans 12 Paul mentions the right attitude towards the gifts: "For I say to each of you by the grace that has been given me, that no one think of himself more than is due to think, but that he should think moderately, everyone according to the measure of faith God has given" (Rom. 12:3). The apostle goes on to show a twofold emphasis on unity and diversity: "For just as we have many members in one body, but not all members have the same office, so we are many one body in Christ, but one another is a member of one another, and have different gifts according to the grace given to us" (Rom. 12:4-6a).

In 1 Corinthians 12-14 we find the most detailed scripture in the New Testament about the gifts of the Spirit. Here Paul again compares the gifts to the members of a body; shows that God is sovereign in the distribution of gifts and emphasizes the importance of love in the use of gifts.

¹¹⁷ Ryrie, S. 424

Interpreters disagree as to the number of gifts in the New Testament. This teacher says there are 19. A consideration of the passages also shows that the gifts are always to be used for the edification of the church and not for self-edification. See the notes in Pneumatology for a detailed consideration of this topic.

G. Practice of Church discipline

Church discipline is a neglected truth in the church of Jesus Christ that has often led to low standards. Where the church is unwilling to correct error or sin, both will proliferate. The Bible speaks often and clearly on this subject. Let's pay attention to the following thoughts:

1. Three basic principles for church discipline:

Mt. 18:15-20 gives us some important basic principles for church discipline: "But if your brother sins against you, go and correct him between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. Listen If he doesn't listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that every thing can be confirmed by the mouth of two or three witnesses. If he doesn't listen to them, tell the congregation. If he doesn't listen to the congregation either, be it he for you like a heathen and tax collector . . .". Jesus shows three clear steps: First, the innocent believer must be willing to address and correct the guilty believer. Second, if the culprit is not willing to listen to him, he should take a witness or two with him. Only after all this hasn't worked should the matter be brought before the congregation. How often do we fail as Christians in relation to these three steps. If we did this more often, there would likely be fewer problems in our communities.

2. Goals of Church Discipline:

The New Testament gives us some clear goals for church discipline.

a. Church discipline has a cleansing effect:

"Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little leaven leaves all the dough? Therefore put away the old leaven, that you may be new dough, just as you are unleavened. For we also have a Passover lamb, who is Christ who was sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the festival, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of wickedness and wickedness, but with the unleavened dough of purity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

b. Discipline should serve as an example for other Christians:

"Brethren, if a man falls into any trespass, restore him with a gentle spirit, ye that are spiritual, and see to thyself lest thou be tempted also" (Gal. 6:1- see also 1 Tim. 5:20),

c. Church discipline helps to stay healthy in the faith:

"...for this reason rebuke them sharply, that they may be made whole in the faith" (Titus 1:13).

d. Through church discipline the sinful believer is to be helped back in the right direction:

"But if someone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but partly - so that I do not say too much - all of you. But it is enough that he is punished by most, so that you now forgive him all the more and comfort him so that he does not sink into too much sadness. Therefore I exhort you to show him love . . ." (2 Cor. 2:5-8, see also verses 9-11).

e. Church discipline is to shame the brother for his behavior and force him to correct his behavior.

"But if anyone does not obey our word in this letter, take note of him and do not deal with him, lest he be blushed. Do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 5:14-15).

MacDonald sums up this point well: It is about "depriving the erring believer of the rights of fellowship so that the loss is felt, there is repentance, and there is finally his restoration to fellowship with the Lord and the local church Discipline for Christians is never an end in itself, it must always be a means of spiritual restoration".¹¹⁸

2. The Right Attitude in Church Discipline:

It is very important "how" we exercise church discipline. Paul writes in Gal. 6:1 that we should correct an erring brother with a "meek spirit", and in 1 Thess. 5:14-15 that we should do it with an attitude of love: "But if anyone does not obey our word in this letter, take notice of him and do not deal with him, lest he become ashamed. But do not obey him for an enemy, but corrects him as a brother". In 2 Cor. 2:5-11 Paul shows that we must forgive and accept a repentant brother. But in 1 Cor. 5 we also see the need for an uncompromising attitude towards sin.

3. Various biblical occasions for church discipline:

A sinful brother: We have already considered this case of Matthew 18:15-20 above.

An elder who sins: Paul speaks of this case in 1 Tim. 5:19-20: "Accept no complaint against an elder without two or three witnesses. Let those who sin be rebuked before all, so that others may also fear".

Dominance: Perhaps Diotrephes in 3 John is not only an example of this, but also of an elder against whom there is a complaint. We read about him in 3 John 9-10: "I wrote to the congregation briefly, but Diotrephes, who wants to be the first among them, does not accept us. Therefore, when I come, I will remind him of his works, which he does, for he badens us with evil words and is not content with that: he himself does not receive the brethren, and also hinders those who want to do so, and casts them out of the church".

A disorderly brother: Paul is speaking here of a brother who lives disorderly by not acting according to the teaching (of the apostles). In this context, some have stopped working because they felt that it would no longer be worthwhile in view of the return of Jesus: "But we command you, dear brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who untidy lives, and not according to the teaching which you received from us... For we hear that some of you live untidy lives, not working, but doing idle things" (2 Thessalonians 3:6 and 11).

Fornication: In 1 Cor. 5, Paul addresses a case in the church in Corinth, where a man lived in fornication: "In general, it is said that there is fornication among you, and that there is such a fornication as does not even exist among the Gentiles: that one wife of his father. And you were puffed up, and were you not rather sad, so that you cast out from among you

¹¹⁸ MacDonald, "Christus und die Gemeinde", S. 51

the one who did this deed?" (1 Cor. 5:1-2). Sexual sin is cause for church discipline. Paul intervenes here and calls on the Corinthians to act. What is sometimes overlooked, however, is that the apostle mentions other sins in this connection which are just as serious and should be judged in the same way. In verse 11 he writes, "Rather, I wrote to you, 'You shall not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother, and is a fornicator, or a miser, or an idolater, or a blasphemer, or a drunkard, or a robber; with such a one you shouldn't eat either.'" Here the church needs a lot of courage, but also a lot of wisdom to discipline or correct such people.

False teachers: In the pastoral epistles, the apostle Paul emphasizes "the salutary doctrine". It is the responsibility of the church leadership to preserve this salutary teaching. Sometimes it is necessary to chastise heretics, even "shut up" them. Paul writes in Tit. 1:10-11: "For there are many impudent, useless talkers and deceivers, especially among the Jews, whose mouths have to be shut up, because they confuse whole houses and teach what is not allowed, um shameful gain" (see also verses 12-16).

"Brawlers": Sometimes there are people in the Church who always want to argue about everything. They are not happy unless there is some issue. Paul speaks of such people in Titus 3:9-11: "But keep away from foolish questions, from genealogies, from strife and disputes about the law, for they are useless and worthless. Avoid a heretical person, if he speaks again and again once admonished, and know that such a one is quite perverse and sins, thereby judging himself" (see also Rom. 16:17). Unity is very important in the church. When people disturb this unity like this, the elders have to step in.

5. What does the phrase "hand over to Satan" mean?

We find this expression in 1 Cor. 5:5 and 1 Tim. 1:20. It is not clear from the text whether only an apostle (in both cases Paul) or also a church can take this step. Nor is it easy to explain exactly what it means to hand someone over to Satan. It was probably some kind of church discipline, probably in the sense of "excommunicate". Perdue opines, "When the culprit is excommunicated, he is thrown back into the pagan world, which is under the control of Satan. And here something more has been done, perhaps the subject in question has been subjected to physical suffering under apostolic authority".¹¹⁹ The goal of this procedure in 1 Tim. 1:20 is that people "slander no more". In 1 Cor. 5:5 is the reason "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord". It seems like Satan gets more freedom in the life of such a person. Just thinking about it should motivate us to want to serve our Lord faithfully and obediently.

5. What does church discipline look like in practice?

Church discipline does not mean that the person is no longer allowed to come to church. Attending the hours and hearing the Word of God is what he needs. Discipline probably means mainly that the person should not partake of the sacrament. In addition, according to 2 Thess. 3 that the other Christians should not associate with this person so freely that he may understand his situation correctly and be willing to repent.

The church is where everyone gets correction. It is a blessing and a privilege to have leaders who care about the spiritual well-being of the church members. If they do it right, the church members are to accept the correction with the right attitude.

H. Sending out missionaries

¹¹⁹ Perdue, S. 32

We see the importance of mission in the church of Jesus right at the beginning of the church time: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit is coming on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and until then end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Missionary activities played a crucial role in Acts.

The early churches sent out missionaries "But as they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. So they fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them and let them go (Acts 13:2-3); supported "For you Philippians know that in the beginning of my preaching of the gospel, when I came out of Macedonia, no congregation had fellowship with me in give and take but you alone. For also to Thessalonica you sent something for my need, once and after that again" (Phil. 4:15-16); and received reports from them "And when he had greeted them, he related one by one what God among the Gentiles through his ministry" (Acts 21:19). They also prayed for the missionaries who had been sent out because of which I am also in chains" (Col. 4:3). These early churches selected people, prepared them and sent them on missions.

Heinz Weber writes: "A missionary church is a lively church - a lively church is a missionary church".¹²⁰ Our Lord's great commission in Matthew 28 shows us that mission should have a central emphasis in the church of Jesus Christ.

I. Diaconia

"Take care of the needs of the saints," writes Paul in Rom. 12:13. There are several examples in the New Testament of believers giving freely to meet the needs of other brethren. In 2 Cor. 8:3-5 we read: "For to the best of their ability, I testify, and even beyond their strength, they willingly gave, asking us with much persuasion that they might help in the benefit and fellowship of the service of the saints; and not only as we hoped, but they gave themselves, first to the Lord, and afterwards to us, according to the will of God". The church must be careful to lead the way in this area and set an example in the world. Sometimes unbelievers are more generous than Christians. Arnold Fruchtenbaum says that in the US far fewer Jews receive welfare than other ethnic groups because Jews help one another. John shows that this is the expression of genuine love: "But if a man has goods in this world, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him? My children, let us not love with words nor with the tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18).

J. To do good in this world: Christians especially should have this goal in mind and the church of Jesus Christ should be known for it. Paul writes in Gal. 6:9-10: "But let us do good and not grow weary; for in due time we will also reap, if we do not slack off. Therefore, while we still have time, let us do good to everyone, but mostly to his fellow believers". Paul writes further in Rom. 12, 18: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, have peace with all men".

K. Evangelism and Discipleship: The main statement of the Great Commission in Matthew 29:18b-20 is "to make disciples": "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . .". That task is not accomplished by simply helping someone make a decision for Jesus. Too often we are satisfied with that and think that we have fulfilled our responsibility. Making younger means much more and means a lot of time and work - intensive support for the newborn.

¹²⁰ Weber, S. 137

L. Gesang:

In the New Testament the word **ψαλμός** **G5567** *psal-mos'* From **G5567**; a set piece of music, that is, a sacred ode (accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument; a "psalm"); collectively the book of the Psalms: - psalm. Compare **G5603**. Total KJV occurrences: 7 times (see Lk. 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33; 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3,16). The word means "psalm," "hymn," or "song of praise".¹²¹ The word **ὑμνέω** *hymnéo* **G5214** 1) to sing the praise of, sing hymns to 2) to sing a hymn, to sing 2a) singing of paschal hymns these were Psalms 113-118 and 136, which the Jews called the "**great Hallel**" It occurs four times in the New Testament (see Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25 and Hebrews 2:12) and means "to sing praises" or "to sing a hymn".¹²² Singing seems to have been an important part of worship in the early church. Paul and Silas even sang in prison (Acts 16:25). Paul exhorted the church to sing: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly: teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, sing in your hearts grateful to God" (Col. 3:16).

dr Ryrie writes: "Several New Testament passages are probably quotations from songs of the early church (Eph. 5:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). The many doxologies also underline this important aspect of worship (Rom. 9:5; 11:33 -36; 16:27; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 6:16; 2 Tim. 4:18)".

Music continues to play a vital role in the Church today. There is a lot of discussion about style. I doubt there is a definite answer in Scripture as to what is right and what is wrong. Perhaps a very important question is whether what we do glorifies God? "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17). We are to aim for what the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote: "I will preach your name to my brothers and sing your praises in the midst of the church" (Heb. 2:12).

M. donations

Giving is a great privilege. The New Testament has a great deal to say about the giving of a believer. Some feel that more is written about giving than any other aspect of church life.¹²³ MacDonald writes: "Throughout the New Testament it is said, both directly and indirectly, that the church receives its means from those who are within... blood of Christ".¹²⁴

a. The example of giving:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ is the model of giving. Paul writes in 2 Cor. 8:8-9: "I do not say this as a command; but because others are so zealous, I also test your love to see whether it is of the right kind. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: although he was rich, he became yet poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich".

b. Principles of Giving:

¹²¹ Bible Works, Freiberg Lexikon

¹²² Bible Works, Freiberg Lexikon

¹²³ Ryrie, S. 474

¹²⁴ MacDonald, S. 106

- We are to give knowing that everything belongs to the Lord. Paul writes of the churches in Macedonia: "And not only as we hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and afterwards to us, according to the will of God" (2 Cor. 8:5). We are only administrators. Our lives are His and everything we have He has entrusted to us. It is our responsibility to properly manage the property entrusted to us.
- We should give out of the motivation of love for God and neighbor: "But if someone has goods in this world and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). Paul writes about this in 1 Cor. 8:8 and 24: "I do not say this as a command; but because others are so zealous, I also test your love to see whether it is of the right kind . . . prove your love and show that we are right before them boasted publicly before the churches".
- We should give regularly. Paul gives us an example in 1 Cor. 16:1-2: "But as for the collection for the saints, as I have commanded in the churches in Galatia, so ye shall also do: On the first day of the week each of you put aside something for yourselves and store it up, as much as he can, so that the gathering doesn't happen until I come".
- We are to give voluntarily: "Everyone according to his heart's purpose, not with reluctance or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver".
- We are to give joyfully: "Everyone according to his heart's purpose, not with reluctance or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver."
- We are to give according to our personal wealth, as God has given to each of us: "Each first day of the week, each one of you should set aside something for yourself and accumulate as much as you can, lest the accumulation take place when I am coming" (1 Cor. 16:2). Paul continues: "Now do your doings, so that as you are inclined to will, you may also be inclined to do according to what you have" (2 Cor. 8:11).
- We are to give in secret (see Matthew 6:1-4).

N. Provision of widows:

- Scripture often expresses God's concern and care for widows (see Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 24:17-21; Ps. 94:6; Isa. 1:17, Mal. 3, 5; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 5:3-16 and James 1:27). But the church must be careful to support widows who are really in need. These "tested widows" should be specially honored. They are valuable and if they depend on the church they should be helped.
- In 1 Tim. 5:4-10 Paul makes two main statements regarding the responsibility for widows in the church:
 - The main responsibility for widows is not in the church but in the family. This responsibility falls on two generations, the children and the grandchildren. This help for the mother or grandmother is an expression of the right attitude towards God and a grateful recompense for what one has received oneself. Paul underscores this responsibility in verse 8. The Gentiles took this family responsibility very seriously. If a believer did not do this, even though he has the highest example of love and giving in Jesus Christ, he would be worse than a Gentile.
 - The widows supported by the church must meet certain physical, moral, and spiritual requirements:

- "She stands alone": This word **μεμονωμένη** memonomeni from **μονω** **G3443** 1) to make single or solitary 2) leave alone, forsake occurs only here in the New Testament and means that she is alone or has been left alone.¹²⁵ She has no one to support her. There are no children or grandchildren to help her. She really is penniless.
- "She puts her hope in God": On the one hand she has no one to support her, but on the other hand she shows great trust in God. She puts her faith into action.
- She did ministry - "She pleads and prays persistently day and night": Her situation frees her to serve God more intensely. The word "persistent" occurs seven times in the New Testament (see Matthew 15:32; Mark 8:2; Acts 11:23; 13:43; 18:18; 1 Tim. 1:3 and 5:5) and expresses a constant cessation of prayer. This widow is reminiscent of Anna in Luke 2:37: ". . . now a widow of about eighty and four years, she did not depart from the temple, serving God by fasting and praying day and night" (see Luke 18:1-8).¹²⁶
- In contrast to this woman, Paul mentions one who lives just the opposite, namely in "luxuriance" or for her pleasure. Some interpreters here see widows leading an immoral life (prostitutes) to earn a living. It is clear that such widows are not meant to receive the support of the church and that in reality they are "dead alive".
- She should be at least 60 years old - "No widow should be chosen under the age of sixty . . .": Paul names a clear age limit and goes on to speak of a "list". This word **καταλέγω** katalégo **G2639** 1) to lay down, to lie down 2) to narrate at length, recount, set forth 3) to set down in a list or register, **to enrol** occurs only here in the New Testament and seems to have been an official list of the church. Only those listed here are eligible for support. Rienecker writes: "The Jews believed that aging began at 60".¹²⁷ In the OT pension begins with 60 compared to Leviticus 27:1-10 where a category of ages is given and for the priest's pension begins for the sons of Kohath and Levi with 50 years of age compare with Numbers Chapter 4.
- "She shall have been the wife of one man": This is a condition similar to that of elders and deacons in chapter 3. She must have been married only once in her life.
- "She shall have a testimony of good works": Paul then gives five examples of these good works in verse 10:
 - "if she has raised children": She must have a maternal manner. This does not necessarily mean that the children must have been their own. The word occurs only here in the New Testament.
 - "if she has been hospitably": The Greek word occurs only here in the New Testament and means "hospitably to a stranger".¹²⁸ Lydia would be an example of this virtue (see Acts 16:40).
 - "when she washed the feet of the saints": This was an important habit and part of the culture of the time (see Genesis 18:6 and 1 Sam. 25:41).
 - "if she helped those in distress": many Christians were being persecuted and oppressed at the time. A true widow would have helped such people (see 2 Thessalonians 1:4).

¹²⁵ Rienecker, S. 283

¹²⁶ Perdue, S. 68

¹²⁷ Rienecker, S. 284

¹²⁸ Bible Works, Freiberg Lexikon

"when she has done every good work": This requirement is of a general nature. Your life should be marked by it. The word "follow" expresses a way of life.

In verses 11-15 Paul shows why younger widows should not belong to this group in the church. Verse 12 seems to indicate that being on the register is equivalent to making a vow to God that they cannot keep. Her natural desire is to remarry. The expression "if they indulge their lusts contrary to Christ" expresses a restless attitude - a sexual desire that alienates them from Christ.¹²⁹ Your limits will make you impatient. The image is like that of a young animal that is under the yoke and wants to be free. The practical Paul understands that it is natural for a young widow, after a period of time, to desire to remarry and have a family. Because it is so, she is not to be included in this group of widows in the church.

Paul continues his argument in verse 13 by giving another important reason why they should not be included. There is a danger that they will become idle or lazy and that life will seem boring to them so that they spend their time chattering from house to house. The word "gossipy" occurs only here in the New Testament. The word "cheeky" means they pay attention to things that don't concern them.¹³⁰ You become pushy. Through this bad occupation, they will do and say things that could harm the church.

That's why Paul thinks they should rather get married, have children and run the household. The last two expressions occur only here in the New Testament. These women would then be meaningfully engaged in an honorable task. Paul gives as a good reason "not to give the adversary any reason to blaspheme". The expression means not to give the adversary "a base for his activity". This gives the enemy no room. In verse 15 Paul shows that his admonition is not unfounded: "For some have already turned away and are following Satan".

Verse 16 is again a general challenge that the church should not be burdened with the responsibility of widows who can be otherwise cared for. This "extra-congregational" provision for widows is particularly a task for women.

The New Testament names five groups of women:

Old widows: "Now this is a true widow, standing alone, putting her hope in God, and fervently pleading and praying day and night" (1 Tim. 5:5).

Young widows: "I want the younger widows to marry, to bring children into the world, to take care of the household, to give the adversary no occasion to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 5:14).

Old women: "Likewise to old women, that they behave as befits saints, not slanderers, not given to drink. But they should teach good things . . ."
(Titus 2:3).

Young wives: "... and command the young wives to love their husbands, to love their children, to be careful, chaste, domestic, kind, and subject to their husbands, lest the word of God should be blasphemed" (Titus 2 ,4-5)

Single: "And the woman who has no husband, and the virgins, are concerned about the cause of the Lord, that they may be holy in body and also in spirit; but the married woman is concerned about the things of the world as they are for the man please" (1 Cor. 7:34).

O. To glorify God:

¹²⁹ Rienecker, S. 284

¹³⁰ Rienecker, S. 284

The highest responsibility of the church is to glorify God. In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul expresses this goal clearly: "Praise be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heaven through Christ. For in him he chose us before the foundation of the world was laid, that we should be holy and blameless before him; in his love he predestined us to be his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he has bestowed upon us in the beloved . . . that we are something to the praise of his glory, which we hoped in before in Christ... Who is the pledge of our inheritance, our redemption, that we may become his possession, to the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:3-6, 12 and 14).

Peter shows us that the ministries in the church also serve this goal: "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. And serve one another, each one with the gift that he has received, as the good stewards of the varied grace of God: when someone preaches, that he speak it as the word of God; if anyone ministers, that he do it with the power which God gives, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. His is the glory and authority forever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet 4:9-11)

Heinz Weber sums up the mission of the Church as follows: "The divine calling of the Church today is to live in the world. In doing so, we orientate ourselves in three directions. Our mission is:

up - to glorify God

outward - to evangelize the world

inwards - to build the church."

This presentation is a good summary of the church's mission. Glorifying God comes first and must always remain so. If the church fulfills the other two goals equally, it will also serve to fulfill the main goal, the glory of God.

VIII. The future of the Church

The church has a bright future. The Lord has set a high goal for them: "... just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her to sanctify her. He cleansed her by the water bath in the Word, that he might present her before himself as a glorious church, having no spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:25b-27).

The congregation is met by the Lord himself: "For the Lord himself, with the sound of the command, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and first the dead that have died in Christ will rise again. After that we who are alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds in the air to meet the Lord, and so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Mauerhofer writes: "The biblical structures and regulations ultimately serve to ensure that the congregation is always ready to meet the returning Christ. Jesus will come suddenly and his congregation will be caught up into heaven".¹³¹ The church must always be ready. She should always live and work in the knowledge that Jesus can come back at any time.

We have a wedding coming up! In Revelation, John shows that the wedding of the church will take place before the Second Coming: "Alleluia!

¹³¹ Mauerhofer, S. 188

For the Lord our God, the Almighty, hath taken the kingdom! Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride is prepared. And it was given to her to clothe herself with beautiful pure linen. But the linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:6b-8).

The congregation will be an eternal testimony: "... so that the manifold wisdom of God may now be made known to the powers and authorities in heaven through the congregation . . . but to him who can do exceedingly beyond everything we ask or understand to the power that is at work in us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever, amen (Eph. 3:10, 2021).