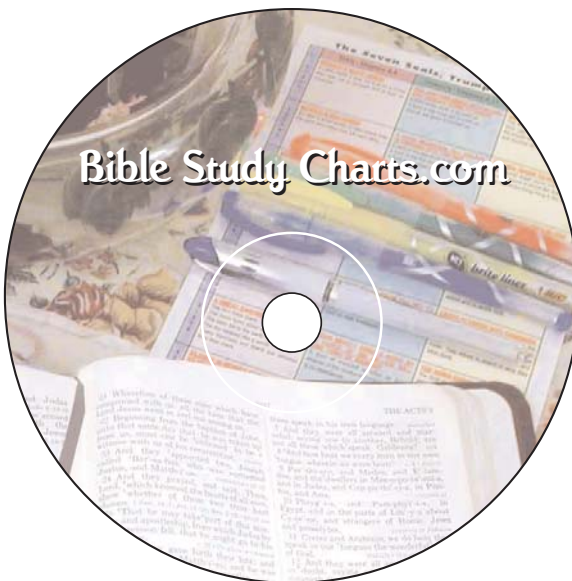


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The Church

I. THE CHURCH: ITS FOUNDATION

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:16-18

Jesus blessed Peter and said that this great truth came from God the Father. Again He said to Peter, Thou art Peter, (Petros, a little rock) and upon this rock (Petra, a big rock) I will build my church." Jesus did not say that He would build His church upon Peter, but upon Himself, the Rock of Ages.

Simon Peter called Jesus the "Living Stone" the chief "Corner Stone" a "Stone of stumbling," and a "Rock of offense." He spoke of all believers, including himself, as "living stones." Christ is the foundation and we are the building stones (1 Peter 2:1-10).

II. THE CHURCH: ITS HEAD

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. Colossians 1:18

The church is more than a religious organization, it is an organism, with Christ as the living head. It is alive with the life of Christ made living in each member (1 Cor. 12:1-31). Let us examine briefly the church, and observe its role as the body of Christ.

1. We are given spiritual gifts according to the will of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1-11).
2. The unity of the body is seen by our different duties in the church (verse 12).
3. We are all baptized by one Spirit into one body (verse 13).
4. We differ one from another, yet we function as one. (verses 14-18).
5. The least member is necessary for the proper function of the whole body.
6. If one member suffers the whole body suffers, if one is honored, all are honored.
7. We are to covet the best spiritual gifts and minister in love (verse 31).

The Lord Jesus Christ has never delegated His authority to any one. "He is head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22) the only absolute and final authority.

III. THE CHURCH: ITS DISCIPLINE

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone... Matthew 18:15-17

This the most difficult and necessary function of the local assembly, and it's importance cannot be exaggerated. The motive for disciplining a brother is love, (1 John 4:7-11) the goal is to restore him to fellowship with his Lord and the church.

1. The first step is to be taken by the one sinned against. He is to go to his brother alone, not seeking revenge or self-justification, but to "gain thy brother."
2. If he does not repent, the second step is, to take one or two believers and go to him again.
3. If he will not hear the two or three, the third step is, take it to the church.

IV. THE CHURCH: ITS POWER

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you... Acts 1:8

On the day of Pentecost the church received power to evangelize the world. Some were empowered for special service, but all received power to witness.

The real power of the church is not found in:

1. Modern buildings or unique methods of preaching and teaching.
2. It's great wealth or how that wealth is used.
3. The church's prominence or popularity.

The Laodicean church (Rev. 3:14-22) bragged:

They said, we are rich, God said they were poor.

They said, we are wealthy, God said they were wretched.

They said, we do not need anything, God said they needed everything.

They said, we are busy in the church. God said they were miserable.

They said, we have a vision, God said they were blind.

A Holy Spirit powered church evidence is obvious, they have power to:

1. Evangelize (2 Tim. 4:5).
2. Reproduce (1 Peter 1:23).
3. Affect lives (Acts 2:37-41).
4. Impact the world (Acts 17:6).

This is the power that filled the Upper Room congregation on the day of Pentecost. That power is with us today in the person of the Holy Spirit.

V. THE CHURCH: ITS FUTURE

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air... 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

The true church of Jesus Christ has a glorious, victorious future in the world, in the air, in the kingdom and in eternity, it cannot fail. "The gated of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

The future of the church in the world is to:

1. wage war (Eph. 6:10-18).
2. run a race (Heb. 12:1,2).
3. labor in love (1 Cor. 3:9).

The future of the church in the air we are caught up:

1. in our glorified bodies
2. to met the Lord.
3. and have our works judged.
4. and receive our rewards.

The future of the church in the kingdom:

1. The 12 apostles will sit on thrones and judge the 12 tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28).
2. We shall reign with Him a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).

The future of the church in eternity: After the kingdom reign of one thousand years there will be "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1).

The church. His bride will remain in His presence forever. Even in our perfect, glorified bodies it will take eternity to begin to comprehend the greatness of His grace.