

THE NATURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH



Most of us are going to go to church somewhere. Why does our church use the name Baptist? Are all churches the same? If some are right then some are wrong.

The history of the Baptist church, or any church, must begin with an understanding of what is a church. What was the church in the New Testament? When did it begin? How did it grow and multiply? What was its purpose for existence? Who opposed it and why?

The Baptist Approach to Church Perpetuity

Jesus said the following,

(Matthew 16:18) "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

This is a promise of church perpetuity; the church will _____ to exist and accomplish its Founder's purpose. No one could prevail against the church of Jesus Christ! Nothing could extinguish its flame! It has continually existed since the time that Jesus first established it. With this understanding we will trace the history of God's church throughout the ages. We expect to see Christ's true church in all ages, even in the midst of false churches that have forsaken the doctrines of the Son of God. Satan did not prevail against the church only to have it rescued by the _____ fifteen hundred years later.

- I. The Nature Of The New Testament Church
- II. The Church Compared To The Kingdom Of God/ Heaven
- III. The Church As The Body Of Christ
- IV. The Founding Of The New Testament Church

I. THE NATURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

A. *Meaning of the Term "Church."*

1. _____, means *assembly*. Ek = out from, Clesia = to call. Its primary meaning is: "An organized assembly whose members have been properly called out from private homes to attend to public affairs."
2. *Ecclesia* was as commonly used in the New Testament era as we use the term assembly today. Examples: Athletes assembling in the locker room; the General Assembly is in session; parents assembled at the school; the skeptics assembled in the lecture hall.
3. Christ used it to refer to _____ assembly.
4. Assembly (*ecclesia*) is also used in New Testament as—
 - a. Israel in the wilderness

Acts 7:38 “This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.”

b. A trade-guild assembly in Ephesus

Acts 19:32,39,41 “Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. {39} But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. {41} And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.”

5. How often *ecclesia* occurs in the KJV: (how it is translated)
- a. Church—_____ times.
 - b. Churches—36 times.
 - c. Assembly—3 times.
 - d. Total of 115 times.

6. How *ecclesia* is used in the KJV:

- a. Used in the particular, specific, _____ sense, singular in number—56 times.

Example:

Acts 13:1 “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch”

- b. Used to designate a plurality of specific local churches—36 times.

Example: Acts 9:31 “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria....”

- c. Used in the _____ sense—18 times.

- (1) Example #1 of the generic use of a term: If a law writer should say: “In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the court shall be the judge of the law, and the jury shall be the judge of the facts,” and if he should add: “In giving evidence, the witness shall tell what he knows to the jury, and not to the court,” he evidently uses the terms “court,” “jury,” and “witness” in a generic sense. But in the application, the generic always becomes particular— i.e., a particular judge, a particular jury or a particular witness, and never an aggregate of

- all judges into one big judge, nor all juries into one big jury, nor of all witnesses into on big witness.
- (2) Example #2: “The horse is a magnificent animal.”
- (3) Biblical Example: What terms are used generically in this verse?

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

- d. Used of a trade _____ assembly of the silversmiths and of the legal city assembly—3 times.
- e. Used one time of the assembly of the children of Israel in the wilderness (Acts 7:38).
- f. Used one time in a prophetic reference to the final general assembly in heaven.

Hebrews 12:23 “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

B. Exegesis of Matthew 16:18.

“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 16:18)

1. What is the church?
 - a. Definition—“A called out assembly of saved and _____ members, who meet together to worship God, observe the ordinances, and fulfill the great commission.” It is visible, literal, localized, organized.
 - b. Definition by Baptist historian John Christian—“A New Testament Church is a company of baptized believers voluntarily associated together for the maintenance of the ordinances and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”
 - c. Christ distinguished His assembly from others when He said, Matthew 16:18 “...I will build my church...”
 - d. Acts 20:28 “...feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
2. Who established it? _____
3. What is the foundation? “...Upon this rock....”
 - a. Common interpretations are:
 - (1) the rock is _____
 - (2) the rock is Christ, or

- (3) the rock is the _____ of faith in Christ, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the son of the living God. Which one is accurate?

The rock that the church is built upon is NOT Peter. Why?

Peter is a translation of the Greek word “petros”, which means rock and is a name. Petros is a masculine proper noun that specifically refers to a rock or pebble that might be thrown or easily moved. The word translated rock in “upon this rock” is a feminine noun (which is not a name) that specifically refers to a _____ rock that is attached as in a mountain cliff for foundation bedrock. It denotes an immovable stone. Matthew 16:18 uses two different words with different meanings; though subtle sounding to the ear, they are not insignificant.



- b. The rock is Jesus Christ, or more specifically, the truth that Peter had just confessed, i.e., “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Christ meant that Peter had seen the basic, essential truth concerning His person, the essential truth upon which the church would be founded, and that nothing would be able to overthrow that truth, not even all the forces of evil that might be arrayed against it.

This understanding is supported elsewhere in Scripture.

- *1 Corinthians 3:11* “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
- *1 Peter 2:6* Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and

he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. {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.”

- *(Ephesians 2:20) “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”*

- c. In Matthew 16:18, Christ used a play on words (petros and petra).

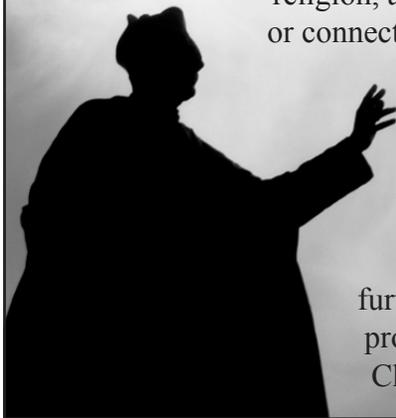
Popery

The word “popery” comes from the Latin _____, meaning “father.”

Jesus forbade his followers to call any man “father” in a spiritual sense (Matthew 23:9). By the word “papacy” is meant the system of ecclesiastical government in which the pope is recognized as the supreme head. The title “pontiff” (as also the term “pontificate,” meaning to speak in a pompous manner), which literally means “bridge builder” (pons, bridge, and facio, make), comes not from the Bible but from pagan Rome, where the emperor, as the high priest of the heathen religion, and in that sense professing to be the bridge

or connecting link between this life and the next, was called “Pontifex Maximus.” The title was

lifted from paganism and applied to the head of the Roman Catholic Church. The pope claims to be the mediator between God and men, with power over the souls in purgatory so that he can release them from further suffering and admit them to heaven, or prolong their suffering indefinitely. However, Christ alone is our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).



II. THE CHURCH COMPARED TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD/HEAVEN

A. *The Kingdom Concept in the New Testament*

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ came to offer to God’s people, Israel, the promised kingdom. The Gospel of Matthew was written to

present Jesus Christ as the King, the Son of God, the Messiah, and the rightful heir to David's throne. Matthew records the following:

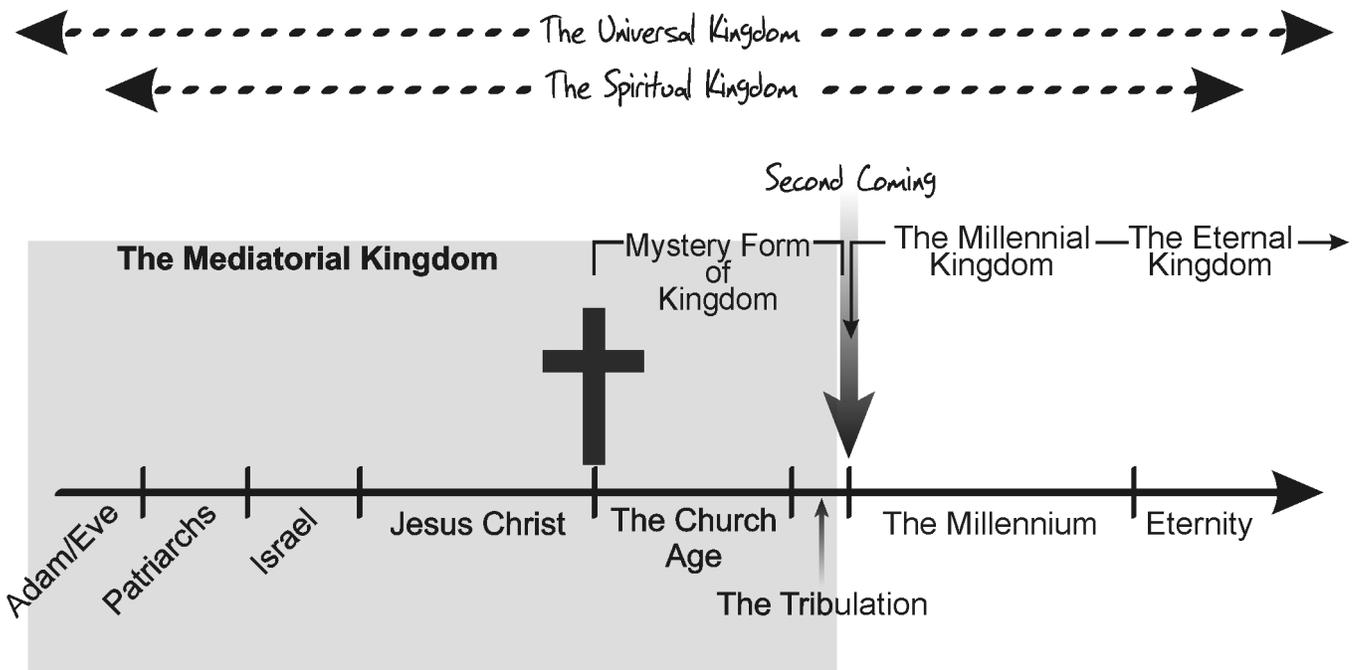
1. The presentation of Jesus Christ as the _____
2. Israel's opposition to Him and His offered kingdom.
3. The official and final rejection of Christ as King and His kingdom.

B. Rejection of the Kingdom.

When Israel rejected Christ as King she rejected His kingdom. Christ then pronounced judgment on Israel and _____ the establishment of His kingdom on earth. Christ did not eliminate the Kingdom altogether because God promised Israel a future Kingdom, and God keeps His promises. When will this future Kingdom come to earth? —at the Second Coming of Christ. Had the Jewish people believed Christ the first time He came, they would have received the King internally and the Kingdom externally.

C. The Interim Period

The Kingdom of God *(on earth)*



We are living in the time between the _____ of the kingdom and Christ's Second Coming. In Mark 4:11 Christ calls this time "the mystery". It was a period of time hidden from the people. The parables of

Matthew 13 are so important because there were no teachings on what that period of time would be like. If we can understand what Jesus says about that period, then we can know what we should be doing during it. That is why we need to understand Matthew 13 and the parables of the kingdom.

This “in between” time is called the _____ Age. God is mediating His rule through the institution of the church. The church is to work for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. (but it is not the Kingdom of God)

D. General Facts About the Kingdom of God

1. The Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven are the _____. The terms are used interchangeably.

For example:

Matthew 13:11 “He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”

Mark 4:11 “And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.”

2. The saints of all _____ are in the Kingdom of God.
3. People enter the Kingdom of God by the new birth (John 3:3).
4. When Jesus said in Matthew 4:17, “...Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” He was inviting men into the mediatorial aspect of His Kingdom—the _____ community.
5. At the point of rejection the complete fulfillment of the kingdom was postponed. The kingdom does now exist, but it is an _____ kingdom. In its complete fulfillment, it will be both internal and external.
6. When the external Kingdom of God is established on earth it will last for 1000 years; we call it the _____ Kingdom.

III. THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Pauline writings present an analogy of the church as a body—sometimes referred to as Christ’s body (Colossians 1:18,24; Ephesians 1:23).

Colossians 1:18,24 “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. {24} Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions

of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.”
Ephesians 1:23 “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

A. The Purpose of the Term “Body of Christ.”

1. To illustrate the _____ of believers within the local church.
2. To illustrate the practical _____ of the members of the churches.

B. The Problem of the Term “Body of Christ.”

Some have supposed that Paul was introducing a new entity, which he calls the church, which is different from the local church. The teaching of this new entity has caused many Christians to be disloyal to Christ's true local churches—resulting in disunity, splintering, and hence, the local church losing its impact in the world.

C. The Primary Passages Referring to the “Body of Christ.”

1. Romans 12:5,6
2. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
 - a. *Body* refers to the church of _____.
Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27.
 - b. *Body* analogy in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.
 - c. *Spirit* refers to the _____ Spirit (see context).
 - d. *By* refers to being led by the Holy Spirit. Cf. Luke 2:27.
 - e. *Baptized* refers to water baptism.
3. Ephesians 1:22-23; 4, 5:23f
4. Colossians 1:18,24; 2:17; 3:15

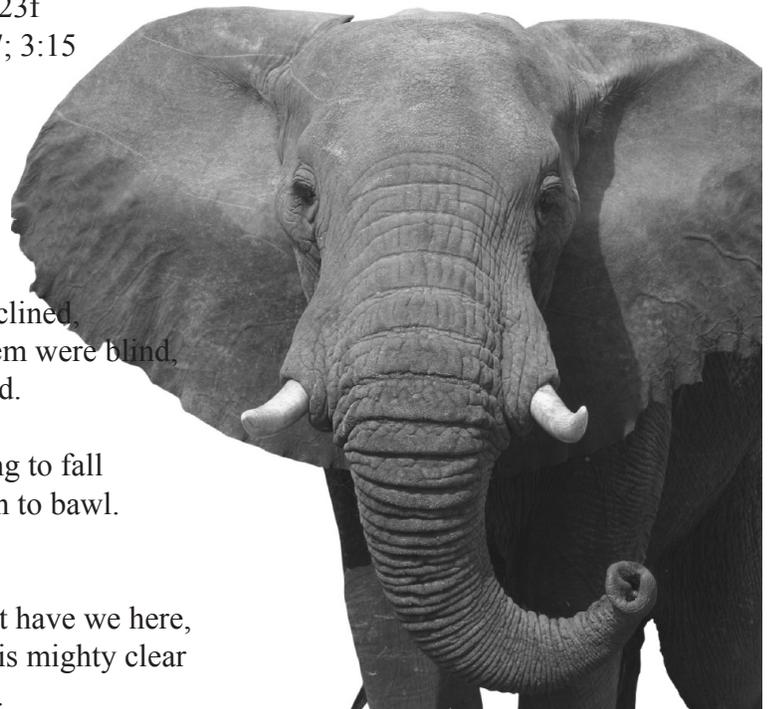
The Blind Men and The Elephant

by John Godfrey Sacks

It was six men of Indistan to learning much inclined,
Who went to see the elephant, though all of them were blind,
That each by observation might satisfy his mind.

The first approached the elephant and happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side at once began to bawl.
God bless me, the elephant is very like a wall.

The second, feeling of the tusk cried, Ho! What have we here,
So very round and smooth and sharp? To me tis mighty clear
This wonder of an elephant is very like a spear.



The third approached the animal and happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands, thus boldly up and spake,
I see, quoth he, the elephant is very like a snake.

The fourth reached out an eager hand, felt about the knee.
What most this wondrous beast is like is mighty plain, quoth he.
Tis clear enough the elephant is very like a tree.

The fifth who chanced to touch the ear said even the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most. Deny the fact, who can,
This marvel of an elephant is very like a fan.

The sixth no sooner had begun about the beast to grope
Than seizing on the swinging tail that fell within his scope
I see, quoth he, the elephant is very like a rope.

And so these men of Industan disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right and all were in the wrong.

IV. THE FOUNDING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Now that we know what the church is, when did it begin? There are at least five views respecting the origin of the local church, which are: (1) With John the Baptist, (2) With the choosing of the twelve disciples, (3) A gradual development, (4) In the upper room after the resurrection, (5) On the Day of Pentecost. Each of these has some merit in-as-much as they all fit together in one big picture.

A. The Church's Establishment

1. John the Baptist's ministry—the _____ of the church.
 - a. It did not actually begin with John the Baptist in terms of a completely organized and functioning body. John initiated the process that resulted in the formation of the church.
 - b. John announced the Gospel.
John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."
 - c. John introduced the ordinance of baptism.

2. The choosing of the twelve disciples
 - a. In the calling of the twelve we see the principle of a group of believers being “called out” and “_____” around Christ as the Head. Christ was their good shepherd—their pastor. John 10:14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.
 - b. Through the ministry of Christ and his congregation, the group of followers grew numerically. Those who responded to the message and received Christ were baptized by the disciples.

John 4:1-4 “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, {2} (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) {3} He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. {4} And he must needs go through Samaria.”

3. A gradual development
 - a. Beginning with John’s baptism there was a continual adding to Christ.
 - b. Christ is seen as the Builder (Matthew 16:13-18), and the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).
 - c. Church _____ is provided for (Matthew 18:15-17).
 - d. The Lord’s Supper is given (Matthew 26:17-30).
 - e. The church only needs to be _____ with the blood of Christ.

Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

4. The upper room (John 20:19-22)
 - a. After purchasing the church on the cross, Christ meets with them in the upper room.
 - b. He breathes the Holy Spirit upon them, thereby fusing them together into an _____ (vv. 19-22). This is the birthday of the church.
 - c. The church is commissioned.

John 20:21 “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

This is a repetition and enlarging of the commission already given (Matthew 4:19).

5. On the Day of Pentecost (cf. Pentecost section, p.15)
 - a. The church is _____ by the Holy Spirit for the task of world evangelism.

Acts 1:8 “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Acts 2:4 “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”
 - b. Universal Church view. The church began on the Day of Pentecost, and it is universal and invisible in nature.

B. The Church's Accreditation

1. The events on the Day of Pentecost.
 - a. The church had gathered (120 were present).
 - b. The Holy Spirit came with an outward show of miraculous signs.
 - c. The Christians spoke in languages other than their native tongue (_____ of tongues). Jews from all over the Roman Empire were present in Jerusalem for the religious holiday. The travelers heard God's message spoken in their own language and marveled.
2. The purpose of the miracles
 - a. To accredit the institution of the church to the Jews.
 - b. They saw that it was of God. God's by-passing of the Temple and other divinely given institutions of the past signified that this new institution, the church, was the one that He would now work through.
 - c. Divine institutions of the past were accredited.
 - (1) The nation of Israel (Exodus 4:1-9)
 - (2) The Tabernacle and Temple

Exodus 40:34-35 “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. {35} And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”

- (3) The miracles never were intended to be the norm and to continue throughout history. Once the institution was accredited and the revelation validated the need for the supernatural event ended.

C. *The Church’s Mission*

1. The church’s mission is called *The Great Commission*. *Matthew 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: {20} Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

2. Persecution _____ the Gospel. *Acts 8:1 “...And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”* *Acts 8:4 “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”*

3. Peter went to the Gentiles (Acts 10).
4. Paul was saved and sent out (Acts 9).
5. The Jerusalem conference supported the spread of the Gospel (Acts 15).
6. Other missionaries were sent out (Acts 13).
7. Out of the mission of the church grows the doctrine of church perpetuity.

D. *Theories of Church Perpetuity*

Does history validate what the Scriptures imply concerning church perpetuity? If so, how? How can it be proven that Christ’s church has

been perpetuated throughout the last 2000 years?

1. The “_____ - _____” Theory
 - a. Defined: In order for a church today to be assured that it is a New Testament church it must be able to trace its genealogy church-by-church back to Christ.
 - b. Doubted: To trace such a succession is impossible for any church. Because:
 - (1) Churches have not left adequate records to accomplish the tracing of such as succession. Many church records throughout history have been destroyed. Terrible persecutions brought upon the New Testament churches destroyed both Christians and their writings.
 - (2) Other historical records were the testimonies of the enemies of the true churches (distorted views and false information). Records were falsified to justify the cruelty done to the true churches.
 - (3) True New Testament churches have not existed throughout history under any single name.
 - c. To deny positively the existence of such a succession is going too far: but to assert it positively is to assert what can not be proved.
2. The “_____ -Succession” Theory
Defined: A church of baptized believers was baptized by a man who was baptized by a man...who was baptized by John the Baptist. This theory attempts to trace a succession of baptisms.
3. The “_____ -Kinship” Theory
 - a. Baptist church perpetuity is not the tracing of a name that has had at all times a definite meaning. The name Baptist is of relatively modern origin. The name has been applied to those who were not Baptist, and many who were Baptist in principle existed before the origin of the name.
 - b. Spiritual-Kinship perpetuity is “the tracing of a _____ which has been held by various bodies, sometimes with completeness and sometimes not, and sometimes in close association with other like bodies and sometimes by those who were isolated and widely scattered.”
 - (1) Baptists trace their origin through a succession of churches that are in agreement “in all essential matters of conduct, doctrine, and polity.”
 - (2) This doesn’t mean that those churches were exactly what Baptist churches are today “in all points, great

and small, without addition or diminution.” Not all Baptist churches today are exactly alike. But there were fundamental principles (Baptist distinctives) which they did primarily hold to.

- c. There was a succession of Christian bodies, known under different names and stretching down from the Apostles’ day to today, who kept alive the truth of the gospel in its essential purity. They bore strong resemblance to those who were afterwards called by the name Baptist and usually emphasized some fundamental tenet of our faith.
- d. “Baptist churches are more like a load of bricks which have been picked up along the way, all alike because made in the same mold but each complete in itself and independent of all the rest.” (The Baptist In History, by R. C. Mosher).
- e. In 1819 the King of Holland appointed Dr. Ypeij, Professor of Theology in the University of Groningen, and Rev. I. J. Dermout, Chaplain to the King, both learned men and members of the Dutch Reformed church, to prepare a history of their church. In the authentic volume which they prepared and published at Breda, 1823, they devote one chapter to the Baptists, in which they make the following statement:

We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses, and who long in the history of the church receive the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the apostles, and as a Christian society has preserved pure the doctrine of the gospel through all ages.

(History of the Dutch Reformed Church, by A. Ypeij, Doctor and Professor of Theology at Groningen, and I. J. Dermout, Secretary of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, and Preacher at The Hague, at Breda, 1819.)

- f. A Baptist church is Baptist if it holds to and carries out the basic teachings of the New Testament.

Reasons why the church did not begin on Pentecost:

1. Christ, not the Holy Spirit, started the church. If it began on Pentecost then the Holy Spirit was the builder.

2. Of Pentecost we read,

Acts 2:41 “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

3000 people were added by baptism—added to what? Something had to exist for people to be added to.

Cf. Acts 2:47 “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

3. Christ instructed the disciples in church discipline.

Matthew 18:17 “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”

Would He instruct the disciples in a rule of discipline relating to a church that was non-existent? The disciples constituted His church in its incipient (budding) stage.

Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:28 “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers,”

4. The disciples had the following items before Pentecost which are surely sufficient to constitute them a church. They had:

The Gospel; they were converted and baptized; they had Christ as Head; they were instructed in church truths; they were called to obey Christ; they were ordained; they were commissioned; they were organized enough for their needs; they had a missionary program; they had a teaching program; they had church discipline; they had true church democracy; they had qualified pastors; they had the Lord’s Supper; they had the Holy Spirit; they had prayer meetings they had business meetings; they were united and “added unto”; Christ was their cornerstone.

5. Otherwise the church would be without a commission. The commission would have been given to individuals and not to the organism of the local church. Dr. C. I. Scofield said, “The visible church as such is charged with no mission...The commission to evangelize the world is personal and not corporate.”