

THE CHURCH---ITS FOUNDATION AND ITS FUTURE

(Your questions and comments are welcome)

(**Bold type** and underlining in scripture text have been added for emphasis)

It is not uncommon that when the churches are discussed, they are explained in the context of what we see scattered throughout America. They are described as a group of people who commonly gather together on one or more occasions during the week, in a particular location. *The group is often said to consist of “true believers” (those who are born again), and “mere professors” (those who are not born again).*

While this may well be true in reference to what we observe about us today, when the scripture refers to churches, it has in view the Lord’s people (those who have come to Christ, or are saved by grace, through faith-Eph. 2:8), and who live in a particular location, such as a city or other community. We must adhere to the scriptures definition of the church or churches. In this regard, we read at: Ephesians 1

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 filleth all in all.

1 Corinthians 12

¹³ For by **one Spirit** are we all baptized into **one body**, whether we be **Jews** or **Gentiles**, whether we be bond or free; and have been **all** made to drink into **one Spirit**.

This is the church referred to in scripture, whether of God’s children in the universal or the local context. That is not to say that those who do not believe do not come into the midst of God’s people. That they do is expressed at: 1Corinthians 14

²³ **If** therefore the whole **church** **be come together into one place**, and all speak with tongues, and **there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers**, will they not say that ye are mad?

²⁴ But if all prophesy, and **there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned**, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

²⁵ And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face **he** will worship God, and report that God **is in you** of a truth.

Even in this scripture, it is evident that the “one that believeth not” is distinguished from the church. Further, when the church gathers together, their ministry in word should reveal the secrets of that person’s heart resulting in a response of conviction.

That the Lord does not view the “churches” as assemblies consisting of “true believers” and “mere professors” is clearly evidenced in the following scripture. Paul writes to the church at Corinth:

2 Corinthians 6

¹³ Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as **unto my children**,) be ye also

enlarged.

¹⁴ **Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:** for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? **for ye are the temple of the living God;** as God hath said, **I will dwell in them, and walk in them;** and I will be **their God, and they shall be my people.**

¹⁷ Wherefore **come out from among them,** and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; **and I will receive you.**

¹⁸ And will be a **Father unto you,** and ye shall be **my sons and daughters,** saith the Lord Almighty.

What is the foundation of the Church?

Ephesians 2

¹¹ Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past **Gentiles** in the flesh, who are **called Uncircumcision** by that which is called the **Circumcision** in the flesh **made by hands;**

¹² That **at that time** ye were without Christ, being **aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,** having no hope, and without God in the world:

¹³ **But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.**

¹⁴ For he is our peace, who hath **made both one,** and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; **for to make in himself of twain one new man,** so making peace;

¹⁶ And that he might **reconcile both unto God in one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

¹⁷ And came and preached peace to **you which were afar off,** and to **them that were nigh.**

¹⁸ For through him we **both have access by one Spirit** unto the Father.

¹⁹ Now therefore ye are **no more strangers and foreigners,** but **fellowcitizens** with the saints, and of the household of God;

²⁰ **And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;**

²¹ In whom **all** the building fitly framed **together** groweth unto **an holy temple in the Lord:**

²² In whom ye also are builded **together** for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Several points to be noted in this Ephesians passage are:

- **In the Old Testament, God identified with and ministered to and through the “commonwealth of Israel”, as separate from the Gentile nations.**
- **A fundamental distinction rests in that the Israelites were circumcised in the flesh, while the Gentiles were not.**

(Circumcision in the flesh was instituted by God in His covenant with

Abraham, and circumcision was a **sign** of the righteousness that is by faith. Romans 4:9-14)

- **Now, in Christ, both Jew and Gentile are “fellowcitizens” and made one in the “household of God”.** The Gentiles were “strangers from the covenants of promise” made to Israel-v12, but now they are “no more strangers” to the covenants that God made with Israel, and are now fellowcitizens with them-v19.
- **Both have access to God by one Spirit and are the temple wherein He dwells with them through the Spirit**
- **The foundation for this union as the habitation of God is threefold: The Lord Jesus, as the “chief corner stone”, who also is the reference point for the other two aspects of the foundation: the Old Testament prophets proclaimed this union as God’s dwelling in general terms; the apostles, in the New Testament, explained it in specific terms. Regarding the last two aspects, we read at:**

- **1 Peter 1**

⁹ Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰ Of which salvation **the prophets** have enquired and searched diligently, **who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:**

¹¹ **Searching what, or what manner of time** the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it **testified beforehand** the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

¹² Unto whom it was revealed, that **not unto themselves**, but **unto us** they did **minister the things**, which are now reported **unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you** with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

While in the Old Testament, the manner in which the Gentiles would be included in the promises and covenants made to Israel remained a mystery, it was revealed to the apostles, and to the end that the wisdom of God might be seen in the Church. We read at:

Ephesians 3

⁴ Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in **the mystery of Christ)**

⁵ **Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;**

⁶ That the **Gentiles should be fellowheirs**, and **of the same body**, and **partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:**

⁹ And to make **all men see** what is **the fellowship** of the mystery, which from the **beginning of the world** hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

¹⁰ To the intent that **now** unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known **by the church** the manifold wisdom of God,

¹¹ According to the **eternal purpose** **which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:**

¹⁵ Of whom the **whole family in heaven and earth** is named,

What God has eternally purposed, and this is of great significance, is that He would gather together, in Christ Jesus, the “whole family in heaven and earth”. He would do this in the “dispensation of the fullness of times”, which is this present age.

Ephesians 1

⁹ **Having made known unto us** the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

¹⁰ That **in the dispensation of the fulness of times** he might **gather together in one all things in Christ**, both **which are in heaven**, and **which are on earth**; even in him:

¹¹ **In whom also we** have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Galatians 4

⁴ But when the **fulness of the time was come**, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

⁵ To redeem **them that were under the law**, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

⁶ And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

⁷ Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then **an heir** of God **through Christ**.

God made the promise to Abraham and his seed, as we read at:

Galatians 3

¹⁶ Now to **Abraham** and **his seed** were the promises made. **He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ**.

The “whole family in heaven and earth” is inclusive of all who are of faith in Christ, the seed to whom the promise was made. The promise was not made to “seeds, as of many”. **The promise** of inheritance under the new covenant made with Israel, which is an eternal and spiritual covenant instituted by the death of Christ (Heb.9:15), **does not inure to anyone because they are the physical posterity of Abraham**. **The promise is realized by all who are of faith in Christ, who in the collective sense are Abraham’s seed.**

Galatians 3

²² But the scripture hath concluded **all** under sin, that **the promise** by faith of Jesus Christ might **be given to them that believe**.

²³ But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

²⁴ Wherefore **the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ**, that we might be justified **by faith**.

²⁵ But **after that faith is come**, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

²⁶ For **ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus**.

²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

²⁸ There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for **ye are all one in Christ Jesus**.

²⁹ And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The entire company of saints under God's administration in the Old Testament and those saints under His administration in the New Testament are one family on the basis of faith in the Person and work of Christ. **And further, Abraham and all those who "died in faith" were not looking for an inheritance on this earth, but rather, they were looking for an heavenly inheritance.** We read in this regard at:

Hebrews 11

⁸ By **faith** Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

⁹ By faith he sojourned in **the land of promise**, as in a **strange** country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

¹⁰ For **he looked for a city** which hath foundations, **whose builder and maker is God.**

¹¹ Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

¹² Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

¹³ **These all died in faith**, not having received the promises, but having seen them **afar off**, and were **persuaded of them**, and **embraced them**, and confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims on the earth.**

¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

¹⁶ But now **they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly**: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for **he hath prepared for them a city.**

³⁹ And these all, having obtained a good report **through faith**, received **not the promise**:

⁴⁰ God having provided some **better thing for us**, that **they without us should not be made perfect.**

The word "strange" in verse 9 is translated from the Greek word *allogrios* meaning *another's*, i.e. not one's own; by extension *foreign, not akin...*

The word "strangers" in verse 13 is translated from the Greek word *xenos* meaning *foreign* (lit. *alien...*)...

The word "pilgrims" in verse 13 is translated from the Greek word *parepidemos* meaning an *alien alongside*, i.e. a *resident foreigner...* (Strong's Concordance)

We learn that Abraham viewed the earthly "land of promise" as being another's and not his own. So also, those in the Old Testament who died in faith viewed their dwelling on this earth as that of aliens and resident foreigners. *These had "a good report through faith", and seeing the promises afar off "were persuaded of them and embraced them", but they*

did not receive the promises because they “without us” (New Testament saints), “should not be made perfect” or complete.

A further distinction between the old covenant administration and that of the new covenant is explained at:

Hebrews 12

¹⁸ **For ye are not come** unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

¹⁹ And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

²⁰ (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

²¹ And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

²² **But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,** and to an innumerable company of angels,

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,

²⁴ **And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling,** that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Under the old covenant the children of Israel came to Mount Sinai where, through Moses, they received the law from God. However, in Christ, in whom the new covenant is realized, we are come to:

- **Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.**
- **The church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.**
- **Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and we are sprinkled with His blood.**
- **The spirits of just men made perfect.**

For further explanation of the above distinction between the old and new covenants we read at:

Galatians 4

²² For it is written, that Abraham had **two sons**, the one **by a bondmaid**, the other **by a freewoman**.

²³ But he who was of the **bondwoman** was born **after the flesh**; but he of the **freewoman** was **by promise**.

²⁴ Which things are an allegory: for these are the **two covenants**; the one from the mount Sinai, which **gendereth to bondage**, which is Agar.

²⁵ For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to **Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children**.

²⁶ **But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.**

²⁸ **Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.**

The earthly Jerusalem is identified with the law, and was “in bondage with her children”. Jesus came to deliver the children of Israel out of that bondage, and into the freedom of **the New Jerusalem**, which is the mother

of all those who are the children of promise through faith. And, as we have seen, the Father included in His mercy and grace, the Gentiles who believe.

We have pursued the New Testament writers explanation of God's eternal purpose to gather together all people of faith, both Jews and Gentiles, which are in heaven and on earth, into Christ, which gathering is the church, the body of Christ, "an habitation of God through the Spirit".

In turning our attention from the identity of the church and its foundation, we will consider the future of the church. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the "earnest" of our inheritance pending our possessing the inheritance in it's fullness. We read at:

Ephesians 1

¹³ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

¹⁴ Which is the **earnest** of our inheritance **until** the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The word "earnest" is translated from the Greek word arrhabon, which means a *pledge* i.e. part of the purchase money or property given in advance as *security* for the rest. (Strong's Concordance) Thus, we learn that we have entered into our inheritance in measure until it is realized in its fullness.

The full inheritance is seen at:

Revelation 21

¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

² And I John saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem**, coming down from God out of heaven, **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, **Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.**

⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

⁵ And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

⁶ And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

⁷ **He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.**

⁸ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

⁹ And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, **Come hither, I will shew thee the bride,**

the Lamb's wife.

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, **and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,**

¹¹ Having the **glory** of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

¹² And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are **the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:**

¹³ On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them **the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

As we have read in Heb. 12:22-24, **when we come to Christ we have come to mount Zion and the New Jerusalem.** However, **in the present age**, this is the **habitation of God through the Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance.** Also, the Apostle Paul, in citing **God's promise to Israel** in Jeremiah 31:33 of a new covenant, reminds **the Church** at Corinth that: **...“ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”-2 Corinthians 6:16.** Thus, we learn that the earnest of the inheritance that is now realized in measure, is of the **same nature and essence as** the inheritance when it will be realized in fullness in the future. When the inheritance is realized in its fullness, the **“tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.** (Rev. 21:3) Further, we see identified with the **New Jerusalem, the twelve tribes of the children of Israel** (v-12), and the **names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb** (v-14), **the whole family in heaven and in earth gathered together in one, in Christ** (Eph. 1:10; 3:14,15). **Those who died in faith in the time of the Old Testament**, who did not receive the promises because **they**, without **us who are of faith in the time of the New Testament**, could not be made perfect, but in Christ, they are made complete together with us, as the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Finally, we see gathered together, in Christ, all people of faith, according to the promises that God made to Abraham and his seed, which is Christ. And, as was told Mary, the mother of Jesus, her son would be given the throne of his father David, and that He would reign over the house of Jacob forever, and also, His kingdom would have no end (**Luke 1:30-33**).

This is the consummation of what the apostle Peter realized when he was sent to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. We read at:

Acts 10

³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth **I perceive that God is no**

respector of persons:

³⁵ But in **every nation** he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

³⁶ The word which God sent **unto the children of Israel**, preaching **peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all;)**

The above description of the New Jerusalem, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife”, is a general view of the ultimate inheritance with the glory of God and the Lamb to be the light thereof (Rev. 21:23).

While in measure, God, in Christ Jesus, by the indwelling Holy Spirit has made provision for **His glorious virtues to be seen in the church today**. *However, not within a company where there is mixture*, but only in a company that consists of the Lord’s people, and whose **inward posture** is that of unwavering devotion and commitment to our heavenly Father, and His risen Son. Such an **inward position** of heart is **faith**.

Some scriptures that address the Divine provision and the human hindrances are:

Ephesians 3

⁸ Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

⁹ And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

¹⁰ To the intent that **now** unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known **by the church** the manifold **wisdom of God**,

¹¹ According to **the eternal purpose** which he purposed **in Christ Jesus** our Lord:

Ephesians 3

¹⁶ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might **by his Spirit in the inner man**;

¹⁷ That **Christ may dwell** in your hearts **by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in **love**,

¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

¹⁹ And **to know** the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that **ye** might be **filled** with *all the fulness* of God.

²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

²¹ **Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus** throughout **all ages**, world without end. Amen.

1 Peter 2

⁹ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that **ye** should **shew forth** the praises of him who hath called you **out of darkness** into **his marvellous light**;

¹⁰ Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

¹¹ Dearly beloved, I beseech you **as strangers and pilgrims**, abstain from **fleshly lusts**, which war against the soul;

¹² Having your conversation **honest** among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your **good** works, which they shall behold, **glorify God** in the day of visitation.

1 John 2

¹⁵ **Love not the world**, neither **the things** that are in the world. If any man **love** the world, the **love of the Father** is **not** in him.

¹⁶ For **all** that is in the world, **the lust of the flesh**, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is **not of the Father**, but is **of the world**.

¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth **the will of God** abideth for ever.

Colossians 3

¹ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

² **Set your affection** on things above, **not** on things on the earth.

Romans 8

² For the law of **the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus **hath made me free** from the law of **sin and death**.

³ For what the law could not do, in that it was **weak through the flesh**, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, **condemned sin in the flesh**:

⁴ **That** the righteousness of the law might be **fulfilled in us**, who **walk not** after the flesh, but **after the Spirit**.

⁵ For they that are after the flesh do **mind** the things **of the flesh**; but they that are after the Spirit the things **of the Spirit**.

⁶ For to be **carnally minded** is death; but to be **spiritually minded** is life and peace.

James 1

⁵ If any of you **lack wisdom**, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and **it shall be given him**.

⁶ But let him ask **in faith**, nothing **wavering**. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

⁷ For **let not that man** think that **he shall receive any thing** of the Lord.

⁸ A **double minded** man is unstable in **all his ways**.

1 John 1

⁵ This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light**, and in him is **no darkness at all**.

⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

⁷ But **if we walk in the light**, as he is in the light, **we have fellowship** one with another, **and** the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

James 3

¹³ Who is a **wise man** and endued **with knowledge** among you? let him **shew** out of a **good** conversation his works with **meekness of wisdom**.

¹⁴ But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

¹⁵ **This wisdom** descendeth **not from above**, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

¹⁶ For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

¹⁷ But **the wisdom** that is from above is **first pure**, then **peaceable**, **gentle**, and **easy to**

be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is **sown in peace** of them that make peace.

1 Peter 1

²² Seeing ye have **purified** your souls **in obeying the truth** through **the Spirit** unto **unfeigned** love of the brethren, *see* that ye **love one another** with a **pure** heart fervently:

1 Timothy 1

⁵ Now **the end** of the commandment is **charity** out of a **pure** heart, and *of* a **good** conscience, and *of* **faith unfeigned**: