

Blueprint For Christ's Church

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Matt. 16:13-19

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Most people are familiar with blueprints. They give dimensions, specifications, etc., that are to be followed when constructing a building. It would be difficult to build a house without a blueprint.

The concept of a blueprint goes back to God

God gave Noah instructions as to how to build the ark. Gen. 6:14-16, "*Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.*" (Gen. 6:14-16).

There are reasons that God wanted Noah to build the ark exactly as He prescribed. The purpose of the pitch was to seal the joints inside and out to prevent water from leaking into the ark. What do you think would be the result if Noah decided not to use pitch because it was too "sticky"?

God also told Noah to build the ark from gopher wood. Today, we would call it cypress wood. The results would have been disastrous if Noah chose to use a different type of wood such as Boa Boa or even cedar. God had a specific reason why He told Noah to use gopher wood; it doesn't matter whether we knew His reason, or not.

God also told Noah to build the ark in dimensions of 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. How long is a cubit? Well, that varied depending upon the place and time period it was used. Also, there was a difference in how the cubit was measured. Most often a cubit was measured from the elbow to the tip of the finger; this was referred to as the short measurement of a cubit. The long measurement of a cubit was taken from the elbow to the tip of the finger plus the width of the palm.

As you are probably aware, the length of everyone's arms differ; especially between cultures of people. Typically, though, as discovered from archaeological studies, the length of a cubit was as follows:

Method of Cubit Measurement	Inches	Centimeters
Common short	18"	45.72
Hebrew short	17.5"	44.45
Hebrew long	19.8"	50.29
Egyptian short	17.6"	44.70
Egyptian long	20.6"	52.32
Babylonian long	19.8"	50.29

Babylonian long, 19.8", was the oldest cubit measurement recorded, as the Babylonian period was the next period after the flood and the other cubit measurements did not occur until later in history; so that measurement would be the most accurate in determining the measurements of the ark. Ezek. 43:13 describes the Babylonian long cubit: *“And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar.”* That would make the ark to be about 495 feet long, 82 1/2 feet wide, and 49 1/2 feet high or about 151 meters long, 25 meters wide, and 15 meters high.

Shipbuilders for several decades have discovered the proportional dimensions of the ark were just perfect to keep large ships afloat on the seas of the oceans, even in a storm. If they wanted to build a ship twice as long, they would also double the width and height of the ship. Any other ratios used would peril the ship. What if Noah decided to build the ship only half as wide? That would present two problems:

- Not all of the animals that God wanted to be on board the ark would fit. God knew when he designed the ark just how big it should be.

- Also, the ark would be very unstable from side-to-side. If the ark were to turn sideways to the wind it would tip over because of its height. God knew what He was doing when He designed the ark.

The same is true for “Christ’s church”. Let us study what is involved in Christ’s blueprint for His church.

God is the architect

Man cannot improve upon anything that God has designed. Did you know that God kept His plans for the Kingdom secret from the foundation of the world? *“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”* (Matt. 13:35).

The church was not an afterthought; it was very important to God. If someone changed His plan, they would be destroyed. *“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”* (Deut. 4:2). Also, *“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”* (Prov. 30:6). We must all face Him at the Day of Judgment. Do you want Him to call you a liar at that time if you “improved” upon the plan He gave for the church?

The one true builder is Jesus Christ

Jesus said He would build **His** church, *“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 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. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matt. 16:13-19).

Only Jesus Christ had authority to build the foundation. Some think it is an improvement to add to or subtract from His plans.

Consider the warning God gave in Psalms 127:1, *“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”* If we build something that God has not given us, our effort is worthless. Not only is it worthless, but our soul will be lost in hell. *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”* (Rev. 22:18-19).

We must refuse any other builder than Jesus Christ.

Some say we remove structure by being so strict. They are wrong. *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”* (Matt. 7:13-20)

The Greek word for "strait" is "stenos" which means "a narrow passage or entrance".

The Greek phrase for a "narrow way" is "thlibo hodos" which means "a compressed or restricted way".

So, the first references how strict we must be to follow God’s instruction as to how to become a Christian. The second references how strict we must be in following His instructions in living our daily lives and worshipping Him after we have become a Christian.

Many are willing to make changes to God’s design of the church so that many others can be members of the church. So, false leaders of the church widen the rules to make more entry possible. This was not God’s plan. He provided the way narrow for His purposes.

Some years ago I wanted to have a woodshop that was designed to my likening, so I drew up my blueprint designs and submitted them to the city for approval. I designed windows to be on the east side of the shop that faced the driveway so that I could see when

any visitors arrived when I was working. On the west side of the shop I designed to have a lumber storage area, thus I did not design windows for that side. If I were to have someone build my shop I would want them to build it just as I designed it. What if a builder thought to himself, “The west side of the shop has a great view, I’m sure the owner would be happy to see such a great view of that horse pasture from his shop.”; so he builds windows into that side of the shop. I’ll admit that would have been a great view. Would I have been happy? No, I would not, for it would have deprived me of a convenient lumber storage in my shop. I designed it for my purposes, not because of what someone else thinks it should be.

We need to consider that when God gives us instructions as to how we are to build something, His ideas are a lot better than ours. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa. 55:7-9).

All other buildings will fail!

We are told by Jesus that not all “righteous” people will be saved. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” (Matt. 7:21-27).

Why would Jesus say to anyone who claims to do many wonderful works in His name, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”? The answer is in the very thing of God’s blueprint that many religious people reject — baptism. It is when we are baptized that our sins are washed away, that we are added to

the church, and our names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; & Phil. 4:3; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-41; 8:12; 10:48; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21). It doesn't matter what we claim to do in His name; if we have not been baptized our name is not recorded in the Book of Life; and if it is not recorded in the Book of Life, He will say, "*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*".

Great will be the fall of those who build the church on sand.

No building is stronger than its foundation

The Church of Jesus Christ has a strong foundation. It was built upon a rock: Jesus Christ. "*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.*" (Matt. 16:16-17). We cannot lay another foundation than that which is already laid. "*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

The blood-bought church must be on the true foundation. "*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.*" (Acts 20:28).

The structure of the church

Christ's church is not made of bricks, stones, or wood. It is a group of people who are His true followers. "*... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" (Acts 2:47). Also, "*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*" (1 Pet. 2:5). The church is Jesus' spiritual body on the earth of which He has full authority. "*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.*" (Col. 1:18). If He has the preeminence in all things to the church, does that leave anything for us to have preeminence? The church is His body to do with as He pleases. "*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.*" (Col. 1:24).

Jesus is the head of body, the church

God gave Jesus all power over the church. *“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”* (Eph. 1:22-23). In our physical bodies we have many parts; do we allow our hands to decide what they are going to work on; or our feet to decide where they are to go? No, that decision comes from our head; our hands and feet have no decision-making power. The same is true in the church; we, as His body have no decision-making power; that all belongs to Christ.

The church is to wear the name of Christ

The church is the bride of Christ. *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 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. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* (Eph. 5:22-32).

Is it seemly to you that in a marriage between a man and a wife that she should wear the name of another? Husbands – How would you feel if when you got married your bride told you she didn't want to wear your name, but instead wear the name of the man across the street? Any man would be upset if his wife wore the name of another. Were you aware that the practice of the wife taking the name of the husband goes back to Adam and Eve? *“Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”* (Gen. 5:2). Individually, God called them Adam and Eve, but as a married couple, God called them Adam.

What name does the Bible call the church?

“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.” (Acts 20:28). We see that the church was called *“the church of God”*. Whose blood purchased the church? God the Father, or God the Son. Jesus told Peter He would build His church (Matt. 16:13-19).

The apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Rome made a number of salutations in the 16th chapter; he ended the salutations in the 16th verse with: *“...The churches of Christ salute you.”* (Rom. 16:16). He recognized the church as belonging to Christ; we should do the same.

Are we allowed to use any other name? We are told to use no other name. *“Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:10-12). Jesus is the cornerstone in the foundation of the church. What is the purpose of a cornerstone in a building today? It has the date of construction, who owns the building or the the name of the church or business that uses it, and the contractor who built it.

"None other name under heaven" means no other name that has not come from heaven. We have the name recorded in the New testament which came from heaven. "None other name...given among men" means names that man calls the church. "None other name...whereby we must be saved". How important is the name? God says it is important.

That means we are not to use Lutheran, Pentecostal, 7th day, Adventist, Catholic, Mormon, or any other man-made name for the church.

Eph. 2:19-22 makes it clear the cornerstone that Peter was talking about was the cornerstone of the church, *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”*

Buildings that are erected with a cornerstone imbedded in its structure have the following information inscribed in the cornerstone: 1). The name of the building or owner. 2). The contractor who build the structure. 3). The date the structure was built.

Who owns the church? **Jesus** (Matt. 16:18). What is Jesus the head of? The church! (Eph. 1:22-23). What is the name of the church? **Church of Christ** (Rom16:16). Who built the church? **Jesus** (Matt. 16:18). When was the church build? **Day of Pentecost, 30 A.D.** (Acts 2). This is the same information that is inscribed on a cornerstone. Jesus is the cornerstone of the church. No other name is allowed under heaven, given among men to the church other than Jesus Christ. The church was established in 30 A.D. and it was called His church - Church of Christ universally and churches of Christ individually. No other name is allowed for the church. (Acts 4:10-12).

My name is Ellis Forsman; my bride's name before we were married was Lynell McCay; her name is now Lynell Forsman. At that time she had red hair; now it is a graying red hair; she also walks with a limp, so if I were to describe her that way to you, you would know from this description that she is my bride.

My brother's name is Evart Forsman; his wife's name is Becky; she has brown hair and walks normally. If you were to hear that here last name was Forsman and see her description, you would say that is not Ellis Forsman's bride.

There exists today religious groups that wear the name of Christ, but their description does not match the description of Christ's bride in the New Testament; therefore, they cannot be His bride.

The divine blueprint specifies how a person becomes a Christian

- **Faith.** Heb. 11:6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* When I was in high school (I was about 17 years old), a neighbor boy my same age told me he was an atheist. Since I had been baptized, I took the opportunity to talk to him about the scriptures. He told me, “I can see that living the life of a Christian was a good life, an honest life, but I'm not sure if I believe there is a God. But to be on the safe side, maybe I should go to church, and when I die and stand before God (if there is a God) on the day of Judgment (if there is a

Judgment), maybe if God sees that I have gone to church and lived a good life that God would send me to heaven (if there is a heaven), and not to hell (if there is a hell).” I told him, “It doesn’t work that way. You have to believe in Him with all your heart or you cannot please Him.”

- **Repentance.** Acts 2:38, “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” Acts 11:18, “... *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*” If while you were sleeping, you heard a noise in the other room, and you think to yourself, “There’s a burglar in my house!” So you reach for your cell phone, and as quietly as you can, you call the police, tell them there is a burglar in your house, and you give them your address. Soon, you heard them arrive and capture the thief. He yells, “I’m sorry; I’m sorry!” What is he sorry for? He is sorry that he got caught; not that he stole. In true repentance the thief would be sorry that he ever stole and wants to change his life so that he would never steal again. That is true repentance. It is a change of mind that brings about a change of action. That is what we have to do before we can become a Christian.
- **Confession.** Rom. 10:9-10, “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” What do we confess? That we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Note that in the above scriptures that faith (believing), repentance, and confession are “**UNTO**” righteousness, life, or salvation. “Unto” means toward something; not that one has already attained something.

It is baptism where righteousness, life, and salvation are attained. Jesus, himself, was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, “*But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” (Matt. 3:14-17). Jesus was baptized because God said it was the right thing to do. Did you see

how pleased God was about Jesus being baptized? Jesus also said *“it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”* We are baptized because it fulfills His righteousness, not because it is of our righteousness. (Believe unto righteousness + baptism = fulfilling all righteousness).

We have a new life in baptism. Rom. 6:4, *“Therefore we are **buried with him by baptism** into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life.**”* (Repentance unto life + baptism = we walk in a new life).

It is in baptism that we reach salvation by having our sins washed away. Mark 16:15-16, *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that **believeth and is baptized shall be saved**; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* (believe unto righteousness + confession unto salvation + baptism = salvation).

Jesus sent Saul to Ananias and he would tell him what he must do to be saved. Acts 22:16, *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and **be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**”* (Confession unto salvation + baptism = salvation from your sins).

In fact, if we are not baptized, we are still in our sins. *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* (Acts 2:38). Peter, what did you say the reason of baptism is? *“for the remission of sins”*. Why would anyone want to leave out the step that removes our sins?

Jesus commanded that to reach salvation we **must** be baptized. *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth **and** is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* (Mark 16:15-16).

People tell me that Jesus took care of their sins when he died on the cross and that they didn't need baptism. Yes, Jesus had my sins on the Cross when He died, but our sins are still with us unless we personally bury them.

Baptism is called a burial. *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* (Rom. 6:4). *Our old man is to be dead to us. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been*

planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom. 6:3-6). Baptism is God’s blueprint for applying the blood of Christ in our lives by baptism. When we are buried in baptism Jesus is buried with us, keeping our sins in the watery grave. We are free from our old sins only when we are baptized.

This doesn’t mean “sprinkling. The scripture above says baptism is a burial. We don’t take a dead body to the cemetery and sprinkle a little dirt over it; we bury the body.

The divine blueprint also specifies the things we are to do in worship

- **Sing.** Every New Testament involving music in the church says to “sing”; such as, *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”* (Eph. 5:19). It doesn’t say, “clap”, “play a drum”, “play a keyboard”, or any other such instrument created by man. It is presumption to think we can do anything otherwise than “sing”. We are told in Psalms 19:13, *“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”* There are those who claim, “Yes, but David played musical instruments!” Yes, he did; but was God pleased? In fact, he was not: *“Woe to them ... That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;”* (Amos 6:1,5). We cannot use David as an example for using instruments of music..
- **Pray.** When the apostle Paul was traveling he asked the churches to pray for them, *“Brethren, pray for us.”* (1 Thess. 5:25). He also said they kept the churches in mind in their prayers, *“Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (2 Thess. 1:11-12). We also pray for each other. *“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the*

sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:13-16).

In Bunda, Tanzania, there were two teenage boys that disappeared. They were gone for a few days; no one knew where they went. Word got around to various congregations in East Africa, and I sent word to the congregations in America. A lot of prayers went up to God for the safety of those two boys. Shortly after that, the two boys reappeared. The story they told was frightening! A man told them, "If you're interested, I have a good paying job for you boys; but we have to travel to another part of the country for you to work." They accepted. The man took them to a witch doctor who kills people for their body parts. During this time is when all those prayers were going up to God. The transaction between the man and the witch doctor failed. Normally, when a transaction like this fails, the captor would kill his captives for they could identify him. In this case, the captor let the boys go. They made it back home safely. Prayer works!! The boys' father was not a Christian, but he was so impressed by the effect of all those prayers that he became a Christian himself shortly after the boys got home.

- **We are to pray to God, not to Jesus Christ.** In all of the examples of prayer in the New Testament, the prayers of men were directed to God. In the Old Testament the Jews who were under the Law of Moses had a high priest who accessed God directly in the Holy of Holies in the temple. This was done one day a year (Day of Atonement, Lev. 16:2) and only after he was sanctified. God was inaccessible to everyone else.

Jesus Christ has become our High Priest and sits at the right hand of God in heaven. Heb. 9:11-15, "*But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the*

mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

Since Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of God, He has required that when we pray, we pray to God through Him (Jesus). John 16:23-24, "*And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*"

Note that in that day (when He is sitting next to God) Jesus says, (I'm, paraphrasing), "Don't ask ME anything, ask God in my name. Previously you have asked nothing in my name, but now you do when I am sitting next to God."

- **Some teach that it is okay for everyone to pray at the same time.** How can I say "Amen" to prayers that I could not hear by others because of the loud noise by everyone praying at the same time? It is confusion; it is not being decently and in order. 1 Cor. 14:27-31, "*If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.*" 1 Cor. 14:40, "**Let all things be done decently and in order.**" That includes our prayer.
- **We are to pray and sing with the spirit and understanding.** "*What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*" (1 Cor. 14:15). We are to pray and sing from our heart and we should think about what we are praying and singing. I have heard the following mentioned in the prayers of some members: "Lord, we ask you to answer all the prayers that are in people's hearts." How can we say amen for something of which we don't know? Maybe someone is praying for something in which they can consume upon their lusts. Also, I have seen members singing verses in songs that are unscriptural. We need to be aware of these things.

- **Worship on the first day of the week.** Acts 2:1, “*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*” The Day of Pentecost always appeared on the first day of the week in the Jewish observances. That is when the church started. We are also told in Acts 20:7, “*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*” The Old Testament practice of worshiping on the Sabbath was done away when Jesus died on the cross.

Ellen White (originator of The 7th Day Adventists) claims that an angel told her the day we are to worship is the sabbath, not Sunday; that the Catholics incorrectly changed the day of worship in 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicea. There is multiple problems with this: (1) There is no mention of the word "Catholic" in any of the writings concerning the Council of Nicea. (2) There is no mention of the word "Pope" in any of the writings concerning the Council of Nicea. (3) If the Catholic Church was in existence at that time, the Pope would have been in charge of this council, not Constantine, who was never even baptized until just before his death. (4) If the Catholic Church was in existence at that time, the meeting would have been held in Rome, not Nicea. The Catholic Church did not exist until 606 A.D. when it was started by Boniface who declared that he was the leader of all of the bishops of the world.

History verifies the Christian observance of worship on the first day of the week; these are listed in reverse sequence from the most recent (prior to the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.) back to the time of the Apostles:

- Eusebius of Caesarea [319 A.D.] in Proof of the Gospel 4:16:186 wrote “[T]he day of his [Christ’s] light..was the day of his resurrection from the dead, which they say, as being the one and only truly holy day and the Lord’s day, is better than any number of days as we ordinarily understand them, and better than the days set apart by the Mosaic Law for feasts, new moons, and sabbaths, which the Apostle [Paul] teaches are the shadow of days and not days in reality”.
- Eusebius of Caesarea [312 A.D.] in Church History 1:4:8 wrote “They [the early saints of the Old Testament] did not care about circumcision of the body, neither do we [Christians]. They did not care about observing Sabbaths,

nor do we. They did not avoid certain kinds of food, neither did they regard the other distinctions which Moses first delivered to their posterity to be observed as symbols; nor do Christians of the present day do such things”.

- Victorinus [300 A.D.] in *The Creation of the World* wrote, “The sixth day [Friday] is called parasceve, that is to say, the preparation of the kingdom...On this day also, on account of the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, we make either a station to God or a fast. On the seventh day he rested from all his works, and blessed it, and sanctified it. On the former day we are accustomed to fast rigorously, that on the Lord’s Day we may go forth to our bread with giving of thanks. And let the parasceve become a rigorous fast, lest we should appear to observe any Sabbath with the Jews...which Sabbath he [Christ] in his body abolished”.
- The Didascalia [225 A.D.], “The apostles further appointed: On the first day of the week let there be service, and the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and the oblation, because on the first day of the week our Lord rose from the place of the dead, and on the first day of the week he arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week he ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week he will appear at last with the angels of heaven”.
- Tertullian [204 A.D.]: “The church of Christ composed of baptized believers, does meet each Lord’s day to partake of the Lord’s Supper.”
- Tertullian [A.D. 203] in *An Answer to the Jews 2* “[L]et him who contends that the sabbath is still to be observed as a balm of salvation, and circumcision on the eighth day . . . teach us that, for the time past, righteous men kept the sabbath or practiced circumcision, and were thus rendered ‘friends of God.’ For if circumcision purges a man, since God made Adam uncircumcised, why did he not circumcise him, even after his sinning, if circumcision purges?...Therefore, since God originated Adam uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, consequently his offspring also, Abel, offering him sacrifices, uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, was by him [God] commended [Gen. 4:1-7, Heb. 9:4]...Noah also, uncircumcised — yes, and unobservant of the sabbath — God freed from the deluge. For Enoch

too, most righteous man, uncircumcised and unobservant of the sabbath, he translated from this world, who did not first taste death in order that, being a candidate for eternal life, he might show us that we also may, without the burden of the law of Moses, please God”.

- Justin Martyr, [155 A.D.] in First Apology, chapter 67 wrote: “...on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits...”
- Justin Martyr, [155 A.D.] also wrote in Dialogue with Trypho, 18, 21, “[W]e too would observe the fleshly circumcision, and the sabbaths, and in short all the feasts, if we did not know for what reason they were enjoined [on] you — namely, on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your heart...How is it, Trypho, that we would not observe those rites which do not harm us — I speak of fleshly circumcision and sabbaths and feasts?...God enjoined you to keep the sabbath, and impose on you other precepts for a sign, as I have already said, on account of your unrighteousness and that of your fathers”.
- Ignatius of Antioch [110 A.D.] in the Letter to the Magnesians 8 wrote: “[T]hose who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e. Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord’s day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death”.
- Barnabas [74 A.D.] in the Letter of Barnabas 15:6-8, “We keep the eighth day [Sunday] with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead”.

Even if Ellen White received a message from an angel, the Apostle Paul in Gal. 1:8-9 said to reject it, *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”*

- **Lord's Supper.** The early Christians always observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. *"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."* (Acts 20:7). Also, 1 Cor. 11:26-29, *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."*
- **Contribution.** *"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."* (1 Cor. 16:2). We see the our giving was also to be done on the first day of the week; in fact, the Greek "*Kata mien sabatoon*" means "Every first day of the week".
- **Women to be silent in the church.** *"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."* (1 Cor. 14:34-35). Don't blame the preacher for mentioning this passage and don't blame Paul for writing it, because he said it was God's commandment. We must accept everything Paul wrote for he was an apostle guided by the Holy Spirit. *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."* (1 Thess. 2:13).

At one gospel meeting where I spoke to a gathering of mostly Pentecostal members, one person told me their evangelist told them that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 was only addressing a problem at Corinth where women were taking over the congregation, that this scripture did not apply to anyone but them. I replied that the Apostle Paul instructed Timothy in things he was to preach wherever he went. 2 Tim. 2:2, *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."* And those to whom Timothy taught were also to

teach the same things. Among the things in which Timothy was to preach was the women were to be silent in the churches and not to usurp authority over the men. 1 Tim. 2:11-14, "*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*" So we must also teach the same. If the women want to be upset at someone for their fate in life, don't blame the Apostle Paul for he was instructed to write this by God, blame Eve.

Also, the Apostle Paul was not instructed to say anything different than was the rest of the apostles. When Paul went to Jerusalem after 14 years of preaching to the Gentiles, he met with James, Peter, John, and others and found everyone was preaching the same thing. Gal. 2:6, "*But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me.*" The Holy Spirit guided them all in speaking the same thing.

The church has the oversight of leaders

Eph. 4:11-12, "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*"

An evangelist is one who traveled and preached the gospel of Christ.

Pastors & shepherds.

In the New Testament "*pastors*" is only mentioned in the above verse. The Greek word for "*pastors*" is "poy-mane"; which means "to tend or feed a flock". "Poy-mane" is also translated as "*shepherds*" 15 times in the New Testament. "*Pastors*" and "*shepherds*" are referring to the same office in the church in which they are to tend or feed the flock of Christians in a congregation.

In the Old Testament pastors and shepherds also had the same meaning. Jer. 23:1-4, "*Woe be unto the **pastors** that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries*

*whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up **shepherds** over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.”*

The Hebrew word in this passage for “Pastors” is “ra’ah”; which means “to tend or feed a flock”. The Hebrew word for “shepherds” in the same passage is also “ra ah”; “to tend or feed a flock”.

In both the Old and New Testaments “pastors” and “shepherds” mean the same – “to tend or feed a flock.” It is the same duty.

Elders.

“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.” (Acts 20:17). In verse 28 Paul instructed the elders of the church, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” The elders were to oversee the flock, to tend to the flock, to feed the flock. It’s the same job description given to the pastors or shepherds; hence, pastors, shepherds, and elders are the same position.

In Titus 1:5-7 we have the qualifications for the office of the elders (pastors & shepherds): *“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;”* We see here that the elders are the same as bishops; those who oversee a flock; a bishop is not someone who presides over many congregations. Bishop simply means one who oversees.

So the bishops are also those who tend or feed a flock.

Jesus was called the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls; further tying those two names together in one office: *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” (1 Pet. 2:24-25).*

So we have the same office of tending and feeding the flock being referred to by four different names: pastors, shepherds, elders, and bishops. Each of these are always given in the plural; the practice of one man called a pastor leading a congregation is unscriptural.

There are also deacons of the church who are to take care of the physical needs of the church. *“Likewise must the deacons be grave,*

not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Both of the elders and deacons must be proved before they can use the office.

We saw the need for deacons in the church in Acts 6:1-4, “*And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*”

We find both offices were filled at the church at Philippi. “*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Phil. 1:1-2).

There are only two office positions in the church: Those who are to oversee or tend and feed the flock (congregation): pastors, shepherds, elders, or bishops; and those who have the oversight of taking care of the physical needs of the congregation, the deacons.

Do not do things to make ourselves stand out other than by doing good works for the Lord

Matt. 23:5, “*But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,*”

Catholic priests and others like to do this. Some religious groups wear black suits with a backward white collar to make themselves stand out. They do this to be seen of men claiming, “I am a righteous person”. Let your good works show that you are a Christian.

Matt. 23:27-28, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”*

1 Tim. 2:9-10, *“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”*

Even the women are told not to do things to make them stand out in a crowd in the way they dress for fix their hair. They are to let their good works show that they are a Christian.

Call no man Father, Master, or Reverend

Matt. 23:9-10, *“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.”*

The members of the Sanhedrin insisted they be called Father or Master because of their “wisdom and experience in which they excelled”. This is the usage of Father and Master to which Jesus referred that we should not do.

The word Reverend is only used once in the Bible: Psalms 111:9 (chapter subject: Praises to the Lord), *“...holy and reverend is his name.”* Only God is to be called Reverend.

Conclusion

I hope this tract has given you a clear picture of God's blueprint for the church.

