

Chapter Twelve



“The Lord God...will feed His flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs in His arms, He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.”
(*Isaiah 40:10-11*)

“Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out...And I will set up over them one Shepherd, my servant David, (Jesus) and He shall feed them: He shall feed them and be their shepherd.”
(*Ezekiel 34:11, 23*)

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life.”
(*John 10:11, 27-28*) (Jesus)

“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which He obtained with His own blood.” (Paul to Pastors [shepherds]) (*Acts 20:28*)

God's People – The Christian Church

The Exodus of Old Israel – Exodus 14

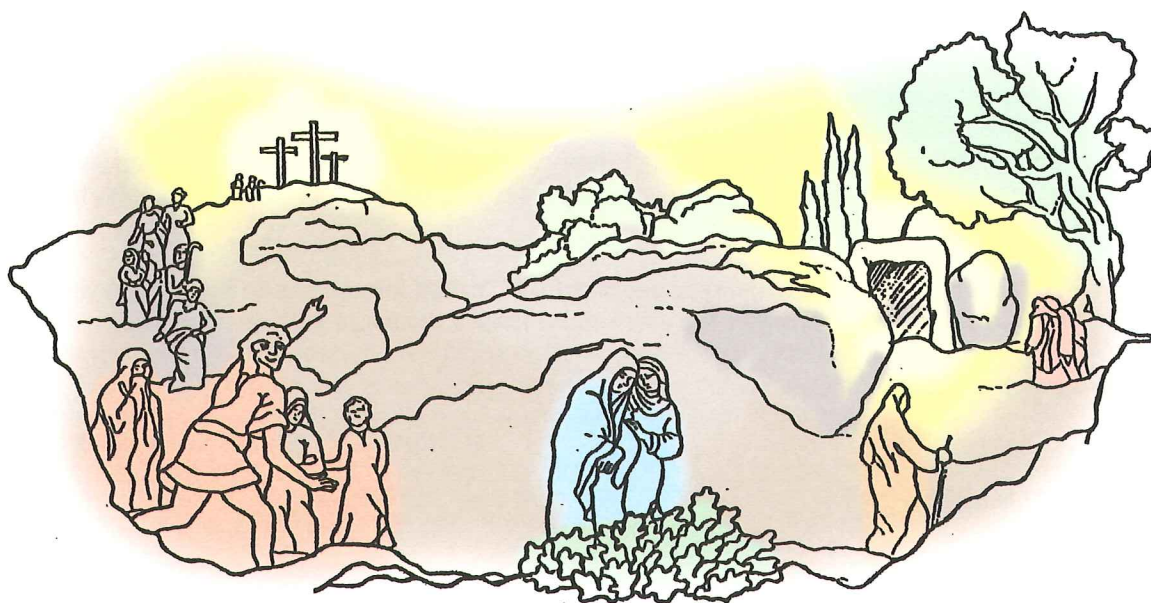


Old Israel

Exodus 19:3-7

1. God chose the 12 tribes of Israel to be His chosen people. (Also called Hebrews and Jews) (*Exod. 6:6-7*)
2. God delivered Israel from slavery to Pharaoh by a mighty Exodus which was also a “baptism into Moses” (*Exod. 14; 1 Cor. 10:1-3*)
3. God appointed Moses to be their Leader and gave Him the Law on Sinai. Moses taught the people, interceded for them, faithfully led them. (*Numb. 12:6-9; Exod. 20; Deut. 5 & 6*)
4. God led His people through a 40-year wilderness journey – a time of testing and hardship – thus He taught them to trust and obey Him. (*Deut. 8*)
5. God promised those who faithfully followed Moses and were obedient, that He would bring them to the promised land. (*Exod. 3:7-8*)
6. God made a Covenant with the Nation of Israel. The Law was written on slabs of stone. (Ten Commandments) (*Exod. 20; Exod. 24*)
7. God’s presence was with them on their Journey, in a pillar of cloud by day, and a fiery pillar of cloud by night. (*Exod. 13:21-22; Numb. 9:15-23*)
8. God also met with the people and received their worship and sacrifices at the Tabernacle/Temple which housed the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant. (*Exod. 30:42-46; Exod. 40; 1 Kings 8*)
9. God sustained the people miraculously on their journey, feeding them manna, and water out of rock. (*Exod. 16-17:7; Numb. 20:2-11*)
10. Many proved unfaithful and did not reach the promised land. Those faithful were led into the promised land by Joshua (same name as Jesus in the Hebrew). (*Numb. 14:20-32; 27:15-23*)

The Exodus of New Israel – Luke 9:31



New Israel – *EPH. 3:4-6; I PET. 2:9-10; HEB. 8:6-13*

1. Jesus chose 12 Apostles as the nucleus of the New Israel of God, comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles. (*Mark 3:13-19; Gal. 6:15-16*)
2. God delivered the New Israel from slavery to Satan by a new Exodus – the death and Resurrection of Jesus. We are “baptized into Christ’s death.” (*Luke 9:31; Rom. 6:3-11*)
3. God appointed Jesus to be the Teacher, Ruler and Savior of His people and He writes His law on their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. (*Acts 2:36; Acts 17:30; II Cor. 3:3*)
4. God leads Christians through the “wilderness” of life in this world of sin and suffering. (*John 16:33; Acts 14:22*)
5. God promises those who trust in Jesus and faithfully follow Him, the gift of eternal life in heaven (our promised land). (*I Pet. 1:3-5; Heb. 9:15; I John 2:5*)
6. Through Jesus God made a New Covenant with the New Israel. He gives us the Gift of the Holy Spirit who writes God’s Law on our hearts. (*Acts 2:17-18; Heb. 8:6-12*)
7. God is present with us through the Holy Spirit. Our bodies are the temple of Holy Spirit and He lives within us. (*I Cor. 6:19-20; II Cor. 6:16*)
8. God receives our worship in any place, at any time, if we worship Him “in spirit and in truth.” (*John 4:23-24*)
9. God sustains His people with the New Covenant in Christ’s blood: He gives us forgiveness and life through the Lord’s Supper. (*Matt. 26:28; John 6:53-54; I Cor. 10:16-17*)
10. If we faithfully follow Jesus, God will give us the Crown of eternal life in heaven at the end of our journey. Our promised Land. (*Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 2:10*)

XII. GOD'S PEOPLE – THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Introduction: The Christian Church is by far the most important organization in the world. Beginning with Jesus and a mere handful of followers, it has now become the greatest organization in the world, comprising people of every nation and language. But, more important than this, **the Church is God's Special People in the world.** The Bible says that Jesus lived and died to bring **The Church** into being; that He "Loved the Church and gave Himself for her," and that He purchased her with His own blood. Now, in a very special way, Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church, and the Church is the agency of His work and presence in the world. Thus, preeminently, the Church is that organization in the world which has God in it, with it, and over it, and as such it will outlast the world. Yet the Church is not merely an organization—it is a living **organism**, alive with people; alive with the Spirit of God. And, therefore, above all, we should earnestly seek to be and remain members of the Holy Christian Church.

1. THE CHURCH IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES. IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES GOD SINGLED OUT **the Jewish* Nation** TO BE HIS SPECIAL PEOPLE. TO THIS NATION ALONE HE REVEALED HIMSELF AND ENTERED INTO A **Covenant** WITH THEM. BY GOD'S FREE CHOICE AND PURPOSE, THEY WERE "THE PEOPLE OF GOD," THE CHURCH OF **Old Testament times**. THE OLD TESTAMENT SPEAKS OF THE "Qahal Yahweh," WHICH MEANS **the Congregation of God**.

(*First called the Hebrews; then the Israelites; then the Jews)

Ex. 6:6-7 (God to Moses) "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. **I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.**'" (Note God's "Freedom of the will.") (NIV)

Deut. 7:7-8 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you.... (NIV)

Is. 51:1-2 Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. **Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you;** for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. (NRSV)

Amos 3:1-2 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: **You only have I known of all the families of the earth;** therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. (NRSV)

1. The Church in Old Testament Times (Cont'd)

Note: In the **Old Testament** the central event in the church's history was the **Exodus** from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. God delivered His people from their bondage to the Egyptians and cruel Pharaoh, and by great miracles brought them out into the wilderness to be His people. There, on Mt. Sinai, He made His Covenant with them, and thus they were His people and He was their God. The Jews forever afterward **look back to the Exodus** as the greatest event in their history, and still to this day commence their calendars with the date of the Exodus.

In the **New Testament**, the central event which all Christians look back to and commemorate in the Lord's Supper, is the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus. Jesus, on the Mt. of Transfiguration, met with Moses and Elijah who discussed with Him the "Departure" (in Greek - **Exodus**) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem (*Luke 9:31*). By Christ's **Exodus**, He accomplished a far greater deliverance of God's people than Moses accomplished. He delivered us from Satan's power, from death and hell. We participate in our "Exodus" through baptism, and also in the Lord's Supper which Jesus called "the New Covenant in My blood." (See the two illustrations at the beginning of this chapter.)

See also: *Deuteronomy 29:10-14* (The Covenant); *Romans 9:1-5* (The Jew's advantages).

2. IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES, A NUCLEUS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH BECAME THE BASIS OF "THE NEW PEOPLE OF GOD." THE FIRST CHRISTIANS WERE ALL JEWISH CHRISTIANS, BUT NOW THE CHURCH WAS WIDENED TO INCLUDE PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS AND RACES. GOD NOW SUMMONS ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TO REPENT, BELIEVE THE GOSPEL (GOOD NEWS) ABOUT JESUS, AND BE BAPTIZED. THOSE WHO DO, WHETHER JEW OR GENTILE, BECOME MEMBERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS NOW "The Israel of God." (GALATIANS 6:16; ROMANS 9:6; 1 PETER 2:9-10)

The Greek word translated by our English word "church" is **ekklesia**, and it literally means "called out." The Church is that group of people who have been **called out** of the mass of mankind to true fellowship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Matt. 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. (NIV)

John 10:16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (Jesus prophesying the call and inclusion of the Gentiles.) (NRSV)

2. The Church in New Testament Times (Cont'd)

John 11:49b-52 (Caiaphas) "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation **but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.** (NIV)

Acts 17:30-31 "While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, **now he commands all people everywhere to repent**, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness **by a man whom he has appointed**, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (NRSV)

Gal. 3:28-29 (In the Church) There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. (NRSV)

Eph. 3:4-6 ...the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

Note: The term "Kingdom of God" and "the Church" are almost synonymous terms as they are used in the New Testament. See Col. 1:13-14.

3. FOR THE SAKE OF UNDERSTANDING, WE SOMETIMES DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE CHURCH.

A. The "Visible" Church (SOMETIMES CALLED "EXTERNAL") IS COMPRISED OF ALL THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE CHRISTIANS AND WHO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH THE VISIBLE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. IN THE VISIBLE CHURCH THERE ARE ALWAYS THOSE WHO MAY THINK THEY ARE CHRISTIANS, BUT WHO ACTUALLY ARE NOT; AND THERE ARE ALSO SOME DELIBERATE HYPOCRITES. BUT WE MAY NEVER PERSECUTE OR KILL THOSE WHO DO NOT APPEAR TO BE CHRISTIANS.

Matt. 13:24-30 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'" 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' " (NIV)

3.A. The Visible Church (Cont'd)

Matt. 13:41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. (NIV)

Note: In *Matthew 13:24-30*, the “**Kingdom of heaven**” is used in a broader sense corresponding to the concept of the **Visible Church**.

See also: *Matthew 13:47-49*.

B. The “Invisible” Church (sometimes called “spiritual”) is the sum total of all true believers in Jesus Christ. Usually these true believers will be found within the Visible Church, but only God knows who these true believers are. We cannot look into another person’s heart and determine who is a genuine Christian and who is not. When we speak of “the Church” we usually do not mean a specific denomination, but the entire body of believers in the world.

John 10:14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me.” (NRSV)

Col. 3:3-4 ...**your life is hidden with Christ in God.** When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. (NRSV)

II Tim. 2:19 Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.” (NIV)

C. Though there is a certain “hiddenness” about the Church in the present world, the true believers will be gloriously revealed on the last day. Then the struggling, suffering Church will become the Church triumphant and glorious. (See Ch 12-4; 12-6 quotes)

Rom. 8:19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. (NIV)

Rev. 7:9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. (NIV)

Rev. 7:13-14 Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; **they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**” (NIV)

4. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH (SEE DIAGRAM CH 12-24)

A. The Church is one. *THERE ARE NOT MANY CHURCHES; there is only one true Church. BUT THIS CHURCH IS NOT A SPECIFIC DENOMINATION; IT IS COMPRISED OF ALL TRUE BELIEVERS WHO SHARE THE SAME BAPTISM, AND THE SAME FAITH IN CHRIST. Wherever the Gospel is preached and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are properly administered, there you will find the Church, FOR THE GOSPEL AND BAPTISM CREATE THE CHURCH.*

Rom. 12:4-5 For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are **one body in Christ**, and individually we are members one of another. (NRSV)

Eph. 4:4-6 There is **one body** and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to **one hope** when you were called—**one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all. (NIV)

B. The Church is holy. *THE CHURCH IS “HOLY” BECAUSE ITS MEMBERS HAVE BEEN separated (BASIC MEANING OF “HOLY”) FROM THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS AND consecrated TO THE WORSHIP AND SERVICE OF GOD. ALL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH HAVE BEEN CLEANSED OF SIN THROUGH THE WASHING OF Baptism AND by faith in Jesus, ALL CHRISTIANS ARE THEREFORE CALLED “SAINTS” (‘HOLY ONES’) IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. (See I Cor. 1:2; I Cor. 6:11b; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1, etc.)*

Acts 26:17-18 (Paul, recounting Jesus' words to him at his conversion.) 'I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may **turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God**, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are **sanctified by faith in me**.' (NRSV)

II Cor. 6:14-18 Do not team up with unbelievers. What partnership can righteousness have with wickedness? Can Christ agree with Belial (the devil), or a believer join with an unbeliever? Can there be a compact between the temple of God and idols? And the temple of the living God is what we are. God's own words are: "I will live and move about among them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And therefore, Come away and leave them, **separate yourselves**, says the Lord; touch nothing unclean. Then I will accept you, says the Lord Almighty; I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters." (REB)

Eph. 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. He did this to **make the church holy by cleansing it, washing it using water along with spoken words**. Then he could present it to himself as a glorious church, without any kind of stain or wrinkle—holy and without faults. (GOD'S WORD)

I John 3:9-10 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. (NIV)

4. (Cont'd)

C. The Church Is Christ's. *CHRIST founded THE CHURCH, died FOR THE CHURCH, NOW lives within THE CHURCH AND rules OVER IT. HE IS A husband TO THE CHURCH, AND SHE IS HIS obedient bride; HE IS THE Shepherd; WE THE SHEEP; HE IS THE Vine; WE ARE THE BRANCHES. HE IS THE Head of the Body; WE ARE HIS MEMBERS. HE IS THE Cornerstone; WE ARE THE "LIVING STONES" OF THE TEMPLE. (JOHN 10:11-15; 15:1-8; I CORINTHIANS 12-27; ROMANS 12:4-8; I PETER 2:4-5.)*

Matt. 16:13-18 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." (NRSV)

Note: In connection with this passage see also: *I Peter 2:4-5; Ephesians 2:19-20; I Corinthians 3:9ff; Isaiah 38:9-10; Psalms 107:17-18; Job 38:16-18.*

Acts 2:47 ...and day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (NRSV)

Eph. 1:22-23 ...God placed all things under his (Christ's) feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body... (NIV)

Col. 1:13-14 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into **the kingdom of his beloved Son**, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (NRSV)

Col. 1:18 He is the head of the body, the church... (NRSV)

See also: *Ephesians 5:23-32 and Colossians 2:19.*

D. The Church is Apostolic. *BY THIS WE MEAN THAT THE CHURCH TEACHES AND BUILDS ITSELF UP by teaching those things which the Apostles of Christ learned from Him and then taught to the Church. THE CHURCH IS ONLY FAITHFUL TO CHRIST AS IT CONTINUES FAITHFUL TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH HE COMMITTED TO THE APOSTLES.*

John 17:20-21 "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also **on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word**, that they may all be one..." (NRSV)

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (NIV)

4.D. (Cont'd)

Eph. 2:19-20 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, **built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.** (NRSV)

Note: An "Apostle" is a person who is instructed and then sent forth to fulfill a duty. He acts in the full authority (Hebrew: **Shaliah**) of the person whom he represents. The **Apostles** were men, carefully chosen and trained by Christ, given authority by Him, and then sent out to establish and build the Church. There are no "Apostles" today—they are part of the foundation of the Church, and the Church does not require a new foundation in each generation. **The Office of an Apostle was a once-for-all** office in the Church. See Acts 1:21-26; also Chapter 1-11.

Acts 5:12 Now many signs and wonders were done among the people **by the hands of the Apostles.** (RSV)

II Cor. 12:12 **The signs of a true apostle** were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works. (NRSV)

II Th. 3:6 **Now we command you, beloved,** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness **and not according to the tradition that they received from us.** (NRSV)

Note: See Ch. 1-9, 10, 11

5. THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH. Where the Gospel is not preached, or is denied, the church ceases to exist. VARIOUS RELIGIOUS GROUPS DENY OR REJECT BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES SUCH AS the deity of Christ, His death as a substitute and sacrifice for mankind; His bodily resurrection; and perhaps most serious of all, they deny that salvation is God's gift, offered to us by grace, and received by us through faith alone. Others teach that salvation is partly by God's grace, and partly by man's works. Such churches are less than Christian since they do not teach the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. (Cf. Deut. 13:1-3; Ch 1-13)

II Cor. 11:3-4 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, **your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive **a different spirit** from the one you received, or **a different gospel** from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. (NRSV)

II Cor. 11:13-15 For such men are **false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.** And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. (NIV)

Gal. 1:6-8 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and **are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all.** Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to **pervert the gospel of Christ.** But even if we or an angel from heaven should **preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!** (NIV)

5. (Cont'd)

II Tim. 1:9 God...has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. (NIV)

I John 2:22-23 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. **No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also.** (NRSV)

6. IN AMERICA WE HAVE MANY DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS. IT MAKES A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFERENCE TO WHICH OF THESE WE BELONG, FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT SOME ARE NOT FAITHFUL AT ALL TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE, WHILE **others are only partially faithful.** WE SHOULD HUMBLY AND PRAYERFULLY SEEK OUT A CHURCH WHICH IS **faithful in its doctrine and practice to the Word of God.** CHRISTIAN LOVE AND FELLOWSHIP, A SPIRIT OF ZEAL, INTEREST IN MISSIONS—THESE ARE FACTORS THAT OFTEN VARY MORE BY INDIVIDUAL CONGREGATIONS THAN BY ENTIRE DENOMINATIONS. (NOTICE THE DIFFERENCES AMONG THE SEVEN CONGREGATIONS OF REVELATION 2 AND 3.)

Deut. 13:1-3 “Suppose there are prophets among you, or those who have dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles, and the **predicted signs or miracles take place.** If the prophets then say, ‘Come, let us worship the gods of foreign nations,’ do not listen to them. The LORD your God is testing you to see if you love him with all your heart and soul.” (NLT)

Matt. 7:15-16 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” (NRSV) (See *Luke 6:45* for the “fruits” of a prophet.)

Matt. 15:6-9 “So, **for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God.** You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; **in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.**’” (NRSV)

Rom. 16:17-18 I implore you, my friends, keep an eye on those who stir up quarrels and lead others astray, contrary to the teaching you received. Avoid them; such people are servants not of Christ our Lord but of their own appetites, and they seduce the minds of simple people with smooth and specious words. (REB)

Col. 2:8-10 See to it that no one makes a **prey of you by philosophy** and empty deceit, according to human tradition...and not according to Christ. For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and **you have come to fullness of life in Him.** (RSV)

Col. 2:18-19 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, **taking his stand on visions,** puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. (RSV)

I John 4:1 Beloved, **do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God;** for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (NRSV)

Thesis 62 (of Luther's 95 Theses)

**The true treasure of the Church is the most Holy Gospel of the
Glory and Grace of God.**

The Gospel of God is something which is not very well known to a large part of the church. Therefore I must speak of it at greater length. Christ has left nothing to the world except the Gospel. Also He has handed down to those who have been called to be his servants no such things as gold, silver and gems..., in order to show by these terms which speak of temporal treasures that the Gospel is the true treasure. ...Christ speaks of the Gospel as a treasure which is hidden in a field (Matt. 13:44). And because it is hidden, it is at the same time neglected.

Moreover, according to the Apostle in Rom. 1:3-6, the Gospel is a preaching of the incarnate Son of God, given to us without any merit on our part for salvation and peace. It is a word of salvation, a word of grace, a word of comfort, a word of joy, a voice of the bridegroom and the bride, a good word, a word of peace. Isaiah says, chapter 52:7, "How beautiful...are the feet of those who bring good tidings, who publish peace, who preach good tidings". But the law is a word of destruction, a word of wrath, a word of sadness, a word of grief, a voice of the judge and the defendant, a word of restlessness, a word of curse. For according to the Apostle, "The law is the power of sin" (1 Cor. 15:56), and "the law brings wrath" (Rom. 4:15); it is a law of death (Rom. 7:5,13). Through the law we have nothing except an evil conscience, a restless heart, a troubled breast because of our sins, which the law points out but does not take away. And we ourselves cannot take it away. Therefore for those of us who are held captive, who are overwhelmed by sadness and in dire despair, the light of the Gospel comes and says, "Fear not" (Is. 35:4), "comfort, comfort my people" (Is. 40:1), "encourage the fainthearted" (1 Thess. 5:14). "Behold your God" (Is. 40:9), "behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jo. 1:29). Behold that One who alone fulfills the law for you, whom God has made to be your righteousness, sanctification, wisdom and redemption, for all those who believe in Him (1 Cor. 1:30). When the sinful conscience hears this sweetest messenger, it comes to life again, shouts for joy while leaping about full of confidence, and no longer fears death, the types of punishments associated with death, or hell. Therefore those who are still afraid of punishments have not yet heard Christ or the voice of the Gospel, but only the voice of Moses.

Therefore the true glory of God springs from this Gospel. At the same time we are taught that the law is fulfilled not by our works but by the grace of God who pities us in Christ and that it shall be fulfilled not through works but through faith, not by anything we offer God, but by all we receive from Christ and partake of in him. "From his fullness have we all received" (Jo. 1:16), and we are partakers of his merits.

(Excerpted from Luther's 95 Theses, P. 230-231, Vol. 31 of Luther's Works)

WORKSHEET FOR CHAPTER XII

1. On the basis of this lesson, can you answer the following questions?

1. Give one or two ways in which the Church of the Old Testament differs from the New Testament Church.
2. What is the essential difference between the Church and all other organizations?
3. How is the Church brought into existence, and how is its life sustained?
4. When we speak of the Visible and Invisible Church what idea are we attempting to express by this distinction?
5. How can we say that the Church is "One" when there are so many different denominations?
6. Why is it proper on the basis of the New Testament to think of yourself as a Saint?
7. What is the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church?
8. What is the Significance of the Apostles and their teachings for the life of the Church?
9. What are some of the causes for various Denominations and the differences between them?
10. When is a church body **Christian**, and when does it **cease** to be Christian?

2. The New Testament Pictures the Church in Many Different Ways. On the left are descriptions of the Church; on the right Bible references. Look up the references, match and write in the proper reference beside each description of the Church.

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| 1. The Bride of Christ _____ | A. Ephesians 2:19 |
| 2. The Vineyard of the Lord _____ | B. Luke 17:20-21 |
| 3. Zion, or the City of Jerusalem _____ | C. I Cor. 3:16-17 |
| 4. The Household of God _____ | D. John 10:14-16 |
| 5. The body of Christ _____ | E. Isaiah 5:1-7 |
| 6. The Temple of God _____ | F. Romans 9:6-7 |
| 7. The True Israel _____ | G. Rev. 21:2-9 |
| 8. The Flock and its Shepherd _____ | H. I Cor. 12:12-13, 27 |
| 9. God's Field and Planting _____ | I. I Cor. 3:5-9 |
| 10. The Kingdom of God _____ | J. Isaiah 62:1 |

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3. Problems for thought and discussion.

1. If you found yourself marooned with about a dozen people on a remote island, how could you establish the Christian Church in such a situation?
2. What would be a good question to ask someone if you wanted to know whether or not he or she is a Christian?
3. What are valid reasons for individual churches not uniting with other churches? And what would **not be valid reasons** for staying separate?
4. American Missionaries working in Jordan have adopted Arabic names and customs. Why do they do this, and do you think it a good idea?
5. Is it possible to hold certain incorrect doctrines and practices and still be a true Christian?

4. How many denominations can you identify by certain specific doctrines or practices? You will probably need some help on this section – ask the Pastor or consult a book on various denominations.

1. A denomination that claims its bishops are in direct succession from the Apostles: _____
2. This denomination observes the Sabbath Day and refrains from eating pork: _____
3. This denomination baptizes people on behalf of their ancestors: _____
4. This group teaches that there is no pain, disease, sin or death: _____
5. This Sect claims all of its members are ordained ministers and its members refuse to have a blood transfusion: _____
6. This Church practices baptism by Immersion: _____
7. This denomination claims its members can heal sicknesses and speak in tongues: _____
8. This denomination refuses to be called a denomination and also refuses to have musical instruments in their services: _____
9. This church claims it is the largest in the world: _____
10. _____ This denomination thinks highly of John Wesley:
11. _____ This denomination thinks highly of John Knox:
12. _____ This denomination thinks highly of Martin Luther:

Answers (Not in Order): Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Church of Christ, Methodist, Mormon, Pentecostal, Christian Scientist, 7th Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses.

