

# The Church of Jesus Christ

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# The Church of Jesus Christ

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*He said 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 Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*Matthew 16:16-19*

Today, many people think of a church as a building where those who believe in God and Jesus Christ might come to worship. In fact, even the 1828 Webster's Dictionary defines a church as "a house consecrated to the worship of God, among Christians; the Lords house." The Webster's Dictionary also defines a church as a "collective body of Christians, or those who profess to believe in Christ, and acknowledge him to be the Savior of mankind. A particular number of [Christians], united under one form of ecclesiastical government, in one creed, and using the same ritual ceremonies; as the English church." These definitions however are somewhat contrary to the Scriptural definition of the Church.

In Ephesians, chapter four, Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus commanding them to be one people who were united in faith, in doctrine, and in hope, saying, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, in one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."<sup>1</sup> We would like to stress to the reader that while the definitions from Webster indicated a world of multiple churches and beliefs, Paul commanded the saints to be one. This introduces the question that many individuals have asked over the years, namely "If there is one God and one Jesus Christ, how can there be so many different churches?" Likewise, we might ask, "If there is only one true Church of Jesus Christ, how might we be able to recognize it?" The following chapter will attempt to answer these questions and more.

## The Temple of God

In Exodus, chapter twenty-five, we find the first instruction from God for the building of a place of worship. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it *willingly with his heart* ye shall take my offering...And let them make me a *sanctuary*; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the *pattern* of the tabernacle, and the *pattern* of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it."<sup>2</sup>

It is important to understand that not only did God command Moses to build a sanctuary, which was called the tabernacle of the congregation, but He also instructed him on *how* to build it and what

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:3-6

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 25:1-2 and 8-9

instruments were to be housed within the tabernacle, such as the Ark of the Covenant. In particular, there were three distinct segments that formed the tabernacle. First, the court where the congregation gathered and where the sacrifices were made, second, the holy place which was separated by a veil and where the table for the showbread, the golden candlestick, and the altar of incense was kept, and third, the most holy place which was separated with a second veil and where the Ark was housed. God also commanded that the high priest was to enter into the most holy place once every year in order to offer up a sacrifice for the sins of the people [read Leviticus 16 and Hebrew 9]. God promised Moses that if the people would keep His commandments then the Lord would meet Moses above the mercy seat, which was upon the Ark of the Covenant, and commune with him there.

For the next few hundred years, the Levites were commissioned by God to preserve and to keep the tabernacle of the congregation, which essentially was a very large tent that Israel carried with them and then pitched as they traveled from place to place, as well as the Ark of the Covenant. It was not until King David brought the Ark into the city of Jerusalem that the tabernacle had a more permanent resting place [read 2 Samuel 6]. However, it was David's son, King Solomon, that actually constructed a temple of wood and stone to be dedicated to the Lord and to house the Ark, and this Solomon did in part because of his father's desire "to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob."<sup>3</sup>

It seems that the Lord God did not command Solomon to build a temple, but instead told him, "Concerning this house which *thou art* in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee which I spake unto David thy father; And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel."<sup>4</sup>

If our study ended here, it would appear as if God has commanded mankind to build Him a house, or in other words a church, in order for us to worship Him and His Son. Nevertheless, as we will cover in **Chapter Twenty-two**, the laws that were given to Moses and to Israel during this time period were given to lead the people to Christ, just as Paul wrote to the Galatians, saying, "Wherefore then, the law was added *because of transgressions*, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made in the law given to Moses...Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *until Christ*, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are *no longer under* a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ."<sup>5</sup> As we continue our study of the Church, we will witness and learn that God commanded Moses to build the *tabernacle of the congregation* as a type and shadow of Jesus Christ.

In the Scriptures, we read that Paul, the author of the book of Hebrews, continually contended against those individuals throughout his ministry who were intent on following after the law of Moses and all of its traditions. In response, Paul wrote directly to the Jews in the book of Hebrews in order to clearly testify that Jesus Christ was the only mediator of the new covenant. Paul explained that the tabernacle which Moses built was a type and shadow of the Kingdom of God, and just as the high priest was

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<sup>3</sup> Acts 7:46

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 6:11-13

<sup>5</sup> Galatians 3:19 and 24-26

commanded in the law of Moses to enter past the second veil, also known as the most holy place, and offer a sacrifice for the people once a year, Jesus also offered Himself once in order to be an atonement for all those who choose to exercise faith in Him. In so doing, the veil that separated man from God was rent, for we read, "Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, saying, Father, it is finished, thy will is done, yielded up the ghost. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.<sup>6</sup>" Therefore, because of the atonement which Jesus made, all men are now able to commune with God through the only Mediator, Jesus Christ our Lord. Please read the following from Hebrews 8:1-11, Hebrews 9:1-8, 11-12, and 23-26, and Hebrews 10:14-20:

**8:1** Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum; we have such a high priest [Jesus Christ], who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; **8:2** A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. **8:3** For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer [as Jesus was without sin].

**8:4** Therefore while he was on the earth, he offered for a sacrifice his own life for the sins of the people. Now every priest under the law, must needs offer gifts, or sacrifices, according to the law. **8:5** Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

**8:6** But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established upon **better promises**. **8:7** For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. **8:8** For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; **8:9** Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

**8:10** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; **8:11** And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; **for all shall know me**, from the least to the greatest.<sup>7</sup>

**9:1** Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. **9:2** For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. **9:3** And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all; **9:4** Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 27:54-55

<sup>7</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34

that budded, and the tables of the covenant; **9:5** And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

**9:6** Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the ***first tabernacle***, accomplishing the service of God. **9:7** But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people; **9:8** The Holy Ghost signifying this that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was standing;

**9:11** But Christ being come a 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***; **9:12** 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.

**9:23** It was therefore necessary that the ***patterns of things in the heavens*** should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. **9:24** For Christ is not entered into the holy places **made with hands**, which are the ***figures of the true***; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; **9:25** Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; **9:26** For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the meridian of time hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

**10:14** For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that ***are sanctified***. **10:15** Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, **10:16** This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws **into their hearts**, and in their minds will I write them; **10:17** And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

**10:18** Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. **10:19** Having therefore, brethren, **boldness to enter into the holiest** by the blood of Jesus, **10:20** By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, **through the veil**, that is to say, his flesh;

Paul explained that the “worldly sanctuary,” meaning the physical tabernacle that Moses was commanded to build, was patterned after heavenly things, and that Jesus did not enter into “holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself.” Thus, we learn that all of mankind can enter into the holiest of all, or into the presence of God, if we will truly repent and become sanctified by the new and better covenant because of the sacrifice which Jesus made. [To learn more about this covenant read **Chapter Two**]. Of course, this does not change the truth that all men, whether they be good or evil, will stand before God to be judged according to their works. Instead, the Scriptures from Hebrews touched on that better covenant and promise which allows mankind to obtain eternal life.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a belief that mankind cannot worship God and His Son without a building in which to worship in. We often misinterpret the Church of Jesus Christ as a physical building.

We read in the seventh chapter of Acts however, “Howbeit the Most High *dwelleth not* in temples made with hands...Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; what house will ye build me? Saith the Lord; or what is the place of my rest? Hath not *my hand* made all these things?<sup>8</sup>” We do ask the reader, “If God created the heavens and the earth, do we truly believe that God needs or requires a building that man has constructed in order to dwell with us?” The answer, as Paul stated, is no. There are Scriptures nonetheless, such as the one above from Hebrews, chapter eight, that allude to a “true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Please read the following passages of Scripture from Acts 17:24-29, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, and Ephesians 2:18-22:

**17:24** God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, *dwelleth not in temples made with hands*; **17:25** Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; **17:26** And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; **17:27** That they should seek the Lord, if they are willing to find him, for *he is not far* from every one of us; **17:28** *For in him we live*, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. **17:29** Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

**3:16** Know ye not that *ye are the temple of God*, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? **3:17** If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

**6:19** What! know ye not that *your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost* which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? **6:20** For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

**2:18** For through him [Jesus Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. **2:19** Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; **2:20** And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; **2:21** In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an *holy temple in the Lord*; **2:22** In whom ye also are builded together for an *habitation of God through the Spirit*.

It is crucial to remember that the Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Wherefore, verily I say unto you, that *all things* unto me are *spiritual*, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal, neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam your father, whom I created; behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him; for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural, nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the commandments which appear to be natural

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<sup>8</sup> Acts 7:48-50

<sup>9</sup> DC 28:9

or carnal, such as the law of Moses or even the building of the tabernacle, are actually patterned after spiritual and heavenly truths.

God has therefore called on mankind to enter into a covenant with Him and to become His sons and daughters through the waters of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is given by the laying on of hands by those who have received authority from the Lord. While the baptism of the water and the Spirit are done through temporal means, such as the physical immersion and the literal laying on of hands, they are spiritually symbolic. Thus we are given to be the temple of the Lord so that God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost might dwell and live within each and every soul. Nevertheless, the only way to receive this blessed promise is if we sanctify our hearts and minds, for “man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple.”<sup>10</sup>

### Upon this Rock I will Build My Church

If the Church of God, or in other words the Church of Jesus Christ [read Mosiah 9:49], is more than simply a building made with hands, then what exactly is it? In Matthew, chapter sixteen, Jesus gave insight to what His Church truly is when He asked His disciples at Caesarea Philippi, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias; or one of the prophets. He said 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 Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood *hath not revealed this unto thee*, but my Father who 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.”<sup>11</sup>

Today, there are many people who believe that this Scripture passage was proclaiming that Peter was the foundation of the Church. However, we understand from Psalms, Isaiah, Acts, Romans, Ephesians, and from Jesus Himself, that Christ is the chief cornerstone for which the holy temple of the Lord is fitly framed together. “And Jesus said unto them, Marvel ye at the words of the parable which I spake...? Verily, I say unto you, *I am the stone*, and those wicked ones reject me. *I am the head of the corner*.”<sup>12</sup> Jesus was not saying that Peter was the rock which the Church would be built upon, but instead that the Church would be built upon the rock of revelation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Moreover, the Lord said in a latter day revelation, “And now behold, whosoever is of *my church*, and endureth of *my church* to the end, him will I establish upon my Rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against him.”<sup>13</sup> Please read the following Scriptures from 1 Timothy 3:16 and Matthew 7:34-35:

**3:16** The pillar and ground of the truth is, (and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness,) God was manifest in the flesh [speaking of Jesus], justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

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<sup>10</sup> DC 90:5f

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 16:14-19

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 21:51-52

<sup>13</sup> DC 3:17

**7:34** Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock, and the rains 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**. **7:35** And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

The pillar and ground of truth on which the Church of God is built upon is the rock of Jesus Christ and His Gospel. It is on this foundation that the Church structure, or in other words the spiritual framework, begins to take shape. Providentially, the Book of Mormon helps to further clarify that the Church of God is built and established on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For we read that after Jesus' resurrection, He visited the peoples of the Book of Mormon and taught them the same doctrines which He taught to the disciples in Palestine, including the baptism of the water and the baptism of the Spirit. Please read the following from 3 Nephi 12:10-24:

**12:10** And it came to pass that the disciples **whom Jesus had chosen**, began from that time forth to baptize and to teach as many as did come unto them: and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost...**12:12** And it came to pass that they did do all things, even as Jesus had commanded them. **12:13** And they who were baptized in the name of Jesus, were called the church of Christ.

**12:14** And it came to pass that as the disciples of Jesus were journeying and were preaching the things which they had both heard and seen, and were baptizing in the name of Jesus, it came to pass that the disciples were gathered together, and were united in mighty prayer and fasting. **12:15** And Jesus again shewed himself unto them, for they were praying unto the Father, **in his name**; and Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, What will ye that I shall give unto you? **12:16** And they said unto him, Lord, we will that thou wouldst **tell us the name whereby we shall call this church**; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter.

**12:17** And the Lord said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? **12:18** Have they not read the Scriptures, which say, Ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? for by this name shall ye be called at the last day; and whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day; **12:19** Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name, that he will bless the church for my sake; and how be it my church, save it be called **in my name**?

**12:20** For if a church be called in Moses' name, then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man, then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name, then it is my church, **if it so be** that they are built upon my gospel. **12:21** Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call in my name; therefore

if ye call upon the Father, for the church, if it be in my name, the Father will hear you; **12:22** And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel, ***then will*** the Father shew forth his own works in it; **12:23** But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you, They have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return; **12:24** ***For their works do follow them***, for it is because of their works that they are hewn down; therefore remember the things that I have told you.

The Scriptures unquestionably declare that the rock which the Church of Jesus Christ is built upon is the Gospel which *the Lord* gave to mankind. “Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you rely upon the things which are written; for in them are all things written concerning the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my Rock; wherefore, if you shall build up my church upon the foundation of *my gospel* and *my Rock*, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.<sup>14</sup>” The belief therefore that the Church is merely a collection of people who all believe in Jesus as their savior is not the conclusion of the whole matter. Instead, the members of the Church, or the collective body, must not only believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but also must be firmly founded upon the Gospel which was from the beginning [read John 1:1-9].

Moreover, just as the Gospel was from the foundation of the earth, so was the Church of God, and this we know because the Church of God was purchased through the blood of Jesus Christ who is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.<sup>15</sup>” The Gospel and the Church are not physical in nature, as mentioned earlier, but they are spiritual. Wherefore, when a group of people covenant with the Lord and keep His commandments, the spiritual Church manifests itself on the earth, which is not built with the hands of men, but by the strength of God. For example, when Alma the Elder formed the Church of God after two hundred and four people were baptized in the waters of Mormon, we read that he and his people were able do so only “through the strength and power of God.<sup>16</sup>” Conversely, when the people turn away from God and do not keep His commandments, or in other words apostatize, the spiritual Church is not manifest on the earth, but is taken away into that spiritual wilderness “where she had a place prepared of God.<sup>17</sup>”

It is vitally important to understand that the Church of God is not ours, but rather that it is God’s, for Jesus asked, “How be it *my church*, save it be called *in my name*?” Unfortunately, we have the tendency to look at the Church of God as a piece of property that we own either as individuals or as various collective bodies. The reader has perhaps even heard individuals or denominations state, “My church believes in...,” or, “Our church does...,” as if implying ownership. No single person or group owns the Church of God. Instead, the Church of God is something that we belong too, or become members of. For example, while Paul was exhorting a group of priesthood members in the twentieth chapter of Acts, he said, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath

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<sup>14</sup> DC 16:-1c-d

<sup>15</sup> Revelation 13:8

<sup>16</sup> Mosiah 9:172

<sup>17</sup> Revelation 12:5

made you overseers,<sup>18</sup> to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.<sup>19</sup> Similar to the priesthood, the Church of God cannot be purchased with money or owned by men, but rather the Church has already been purchased through the precious blood of Christ.

## The Church clothed with Glory of the Sun

In Revelation, chapter twelve, we read John's spiritual description of the Church of God, also referred to as the "woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."<sup>20</sup> In order to prevent confusion on who the woman truly was, John gave a number of spiritual clues, including the more obvious reference found later in the same chapter which stated that the woman "was the church of God."<sup>21</sup>

The reader might be asking at this point, "what is the sun, and moon, and twelve stars have to do with the Church?" The answer to this question will help us to better understand what the Church of God is and how we might recognize it today. As we have previously discussed, the Church of God is more than just a building or a temple, or even a collective body of individuals, but that the Church is built upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is by studying the word of God rather than the opinion of men that we can discern what God's Church truly is, starting first with the "woman clothed with the sun." Please read the following Scripture from Revelation 12:1:

**12:1** And there appeared a great sign **in heaven**, in the *likeness of things on the earth*; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

There are some individuals today who believe that the woman in chapter twelve is actually a reference to Mary, the mother of Jesus. However, there should be no question as to who the woman was, as John clearly wrote that the woman "was the church of God." In addition, verse one explains that the woman which John saw was a sign in heaven "in the likeness of things on the earth," meaning simply that the woman was a symbol of spiritual truths. Understanding this crucial point is essential in comprehending the three remaining symbols of the sun, the moon, and the stars.

Throughout the Scriptures, the Lord has continually used patterns and likenesses of temporal things in order to open our understanding of God's spiritual nature. For example, we read in Genesis, chapter six, "And, behold, all things have their likeness; and all things are created and made to *bear record of me*, both things which are *temporal*, and things which are *spiritual*; things which are in the *heavens above*, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath, all things bear record of me."<sup>22</sup> We find in the Book of Mormon, "And all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the *typifying of him*."<sup>23</sup> Thus, we know that even the heavens above, including the sun, the moon, and the stars, bear witness of God and Jesus Christ. Please look to the following tables in order to better understand the

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<sup>18</sup> Overseer is one who overlooks; a superintendent; a supervisor.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 20:28

<sup>20</sup> Revelation 12:1

<sup>21</sup> Revelation 12:7

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 6:66

<sup>23</sup> 2 Nephi 8:9

symbols given in Revelation, chapter twelve. The information found in the tables was taken from Elder Argil Reynolds' study on the Book of Revelation.

### The Sun

God's Creation	Temporal Significance	Spiritual Meaning
<p>Genesis 1:19, "And I, God, made...the greater light to rule the day...and the greater light was the sun."</p>	<p>Without the sun the earth would lie frozen and in darkness; unable to sustain life. Therefore, the sun is the provider, the conservator, and the protector of earth. Moreover, we would not be able to see the world in which we live without sunlight</p>	<p>John 11:9-10, "If any man walks in the day, he stumbles not, because he sees the <b>light</b> of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles, because there is <b>no light in him.</b>"</p> <p>John 1:1, "In him [Jesus] was the <b>gospel</b>, and the gospel was the life, and the life was the <b>light of men.</b>"</p> <p>2 Corinthians 4:3-4, "But if our <b>gospel</b> be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the god of this world hath <b>blinded</b> the minds of them which believe not, lest the <b>light of the glorious gospel of Christ</b>, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."</p> <p>Psalm 104:1-2, "Bless the Lord...who coverest thyself with <b>light as with a garment.</b>"</p>

### The Moon

God's Creation	Temporal Significance	Spiritual Meaning
<p>Genesis 1:19, "And I, God, made...the lesser light to rule the night...and the lesser light was the moon."</p>	<p>At night the moon is the brightest object in the sky, but it gives off no light of its own. A portion of the light from the sun is reflected from the moon to the earth. Moreover, the moon is to keep the earth in a steady path on its axis as it orbits the sun. If we remove the attraction the moon has upon the earth then we remove the power that keeps the earth from wobbling as it circumnavigates the sun.</p>	<p>Hebrews 5:12 and 6:1-3, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be <b>the first principles of the oracles of God</b>; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. Therefore <b>not leaving</b> the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto <b>perfection</b>; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith</p>

For if the earth wobbled on its axis, it could not support life

toward God. Of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And we will go on unto perfection if God permit.”

### The Stars

God’s Creation	Temporal Significance	Spiritual Meaning
<p>Genesis 1:20, “The stars also were made, even according to my word; and I, God, set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth.”</p>	<p>The sun, the moon, and the stars all have one common theme, which is that they all give some portion of light.</p>	<p>Genesis 37:9-11, “And he [Joseph] dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and behold, the sun and the moon and the <b>eleven stars</b> made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to you to the earth? And his...father observed the saying.</p> <p>Luke 6:12-13, “And it came to pass...that he [Jesus] went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and of them he chose <b>twelve</b>, whom also he name apostles.”</p> <p>1 Nephi 3:165, “It [the Bible] contained the plainness of the <b><i>gospel of the Lord</i></b>, of whom the twelve apostles <b>bear record</b>; and they bear record according to the <b>truth</b> which in the Lamb of God.”</p>

From the Scriptures presented, we learn that the sun, the moon, and the stars all represent a portion of the light of Jesus Christ, or in other words His Gospel, and it is only through the light of Christ that we can see the truth and come unto God. [To learn more about the light of Jesus, read **Chapter Thirteen**]. When all three are shining brightly, the power of God is made manifest through His Church. In particular, we read that the Church of God is clothed with the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ [the sun], it is founded on the principles of the Gospel of Christ (i.e. repentance, faith, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment) [the moon], and it is crowned with the apostolic office, or priesthood, who represent the Master on earth [the stars].

If any one of these three pillars is missing, then the Church of God cannot fully exist, or function properly, on the earth, and it is during these times that the Church is taken away into the wilderness as described in the twelfth chapter of Revelation. Sadly, this event has occurred multiple times throughout the Scriptures. Nevertheless, the most prevalent event to us today, and the one which John saw in Revelation, occurred after Jesus had reestablished His Church following His death and resurrection, and after the ministry of the apostles. It is important to note that Paul continually warned the saints both in his day and in ours, of this impeding apostasy in the twentieth chapter of Acts, in the first chapter of Galatians, in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, and in the second epistle to Timothy. Please read the following Scriptures from Acts 20:27-30, Galatians 1:6-7, 2 Timothy 4:1-4, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. It is vital to understand that in each passage, Paul is talking directly to priesthood members.

**20:27** For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. **20:28** Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. **20:29** For I know this, that after my departing **shall grievous wolves enter in among you**, not sparing the flock. **20:30** Also of *your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

**1:6** I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto ***another gospel***; **1:7** ***Which is not another***; but there be some that trouble you, and would ***pervert***<sup>24</sup> the gospel of Christ.

**4:1** I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing in his kingdom; **4:2** Preach the word; be instant in season; those who are out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and ***doctrine***. **4:3** For the time will come when they will **not endure sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; **4:4** And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be **turned unto fables**.

**2:1** Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, **2:2** That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled by letter, except ye receive it from us; neither by spirit, nor by word, as that the day of Christ is at hand. **2:3** Let no

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<sup>24</sup> Pervert is to turn from truth, propriety, or from its proper purpose; to distort from its true use or end; as to pervert reason by *misdirecting* it; to pervert the laws by *misinterpreting and misapplying* them

man deceive you by any means; for there shall come ***a falling away first***, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition [Satan]; **2:4** Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. **2:5** Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

**2:6** And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. **2:7** For the mystery of iniquity ***doth already work***, and he it is who now worketh, and Christ ***suffereth him to work***, until the time in fulfilled that he shall be taken out of the way. **2:8** And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth [truth], and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming [light].

**2:9** Yea, the Lord, even Jesus, whose coming is not until **after there cometh a falling away**, by the working of Satan with all power, and signs and lying wonders, **2:10** And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they **received not the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. **2:11** And for this cause ***God shall send them strong delusion***, that they should believe a lie; **2:12** That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

For many people in the Restoration, the falling away that Paul spoke of was the great apostasy mentioned in Revelation, chapter twelve, which described that as Satan sought to devour the woman and her child [the child will be covered in **Chapter Eight**], “the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore years,<sup>25</sup>” which translates to 1,260 years. Following the points of reference given in Revelation, we understand that this event started around 570 AD, which was when the last territories of Rome were conquered by the Lombards and when the time period known as the dark ages began. During the dark ages, overall education and knowledge plummeted to such an extent that only a small percentage of the population could even read and write. This of course was a physical manifestation of a spiritual condition which we many prescribe as an apostasy.

## Authority and the Church

The falling away which Paul mentioned was also prophesized in the Old Testament by Amos and Micah. Both of these prophets warned of a time when the Gospel of Jesus Christ would be darkened or diminished. For Amos prophesized, saying, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, *not* a famine of bread, *nor* a thirst for water, but of *hearing the words of the Lord*; And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and *shall not find it*.<sup>26</sup>” While Micah wrote, “Therefore *night* shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it *shall be dark* unto you, that ye shall *not divine*; and the sun

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<sup>25</sup> Revelation 12:5 (the King James Version states days instead of years, however Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 explain that in prophecy, each day stands for a year, thus 1260 years)

<sup>26</sup> Amos 8:11-12

shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded; yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is *no answer of God*.<sup>27</sup>

It was during this time that the Gospel of Jesus Christ could not be found, or in other words it was a time when the woman was not clothed with the sun and the authority to administer the Gospel was taken away, similar to what occurred with the children of Israel after they rejected the higher law of Christ. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two other tables of stone, like unto the first, and I will write upon them also, the words of the law, according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest; but *it shall not* be according to the first, for I will *take away the priesthood* out of their midst; therefore *my holy order*, and *the ordinances* thereof, *shall not* go before them; for my presence shall not go up in their midst, lest I destroy them.”<sup>28</sup> [Read also Jeremiah 31:31-32]

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the verse from Exodus helps to further explain why Jesus did not go to just anyone in order to be baptized, but rather He went to John the Baptist who had authority given to him by God. Remarkably, several of the founding Protestants also recognized during their day that there was a lack of authority to perform the ordinances, such as baptism of the water and of the Spirit. Please read the following quotes:

Notable Protestant	Quote
<p><b>John Wesley</b> (1703-1791) <i>Founder of Methodism</i></p>	<p>We seldom hear of them [gifts of the Holy Ghost] after the fatal period when the emperor Constantine called himself a Christian: From this time they almost totally ceased: The cause of this was not (as has been vulgarly supposed,) “because there was no more occasion for them,” because all of the world became Christian.</p> <p>This is a miserable mistake: not a twentieth part of it [the world] was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, “the love of many” – almost of all Christians, so called, was “waxed cold”. The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ, than the other heathens. This was the real cause why extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian church; because the Christians were turned heathens again, and had only a dead form left.<sup>29</sup></p>
<p><b>Johann Lorenz von Mosheim</b> (1693-1755) <i>German Lutheran church historian</i></p>	<p>During this [seventh century] true religion lay buried under a senseless mass of superstitions, and was unable to raise her head. The earlier Christians had worshipped only God and His Son; but those called Christians in this century worshipped the wood of a cross, the images of holy men, and bones of dubious origin.<sup>30</sup></p>
<p>Of <b>Roger Williams</b> it is said: (1603-1683)</p>	<p>He conceived that the apostasy of Anti-Christ hath so far corrupted all, that there can be no recovery out of that apostasy, till Christ shall send forth <i>new apostles to plant churches anew</i>.<sup>31</sup></p>

<sup>27</sup> Micah 3:6-7

<sup>28</sup> Exodus 34:1

<sup>29</sup> *Wesley’s Sermons, vol. 2, p. 266*

<sup>30</sup> *Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History, Fourth American Edition, p. 250*

<sup>31</sup> *Struggle; and Triumphs of Religious Liberty, p. 238-239*

<p><i>Started the first Baptist church in America</i></p>	<p>On his return from England he [Roger Williams] refrained from fellowship with the church, and lived in an isolated religious condition, preaching the gospel to the Indians as he found opportunity, but refusing to participate in the ordinances. He had embraced a singular notion, which is thus stated by one of his biographers: "He denied that any ministry now exists which is <b>authorized to preach the gospel</b> to the impenitent, or to <b>administer the ordinances.</b>"<sup>32</sup></p>
<p><b>Alexander Campbell</b> (1788-1866) <i>Leader of a Reform effort that is historically known as the Restoration Movement or Stone-Campbell Movement</i></p>	<p>We argue that all Christian sects are more or less apostatized from the institutions of the Saviour: that by all of the obligations of the Christian religion, they that fear and love the Lord are bound to return to the ancient order of things, in spirit and truth.<sup>33</sup></p> <p>. . .either some new revelation or some new development of the revelation of God must be made . . . We want the old gospel back, and sustained by the ancient order of things;<sup>34</sup></p> <p>We have to pattern after the first church as well as we can. But we can <b>never equal it</b>. With all our efforts, the great disparity will ever remain. And could the Apostles and primitive Christians be here, they would doubtless weep at beholding it.<sup>35</sup></p> <p>The primitive gospel in its effulgence and power, is yet to shine out in its original splendor to regenerate the world.<sup>36</sup></p>
<p><b>John Robinson</b> (1576-1625) <i>Pastor of the "Pilgrims Fathers" before they left on the Mayflower.</i></p>	<p>"I charge you before God...that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveals anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as you were to receive any truth by my ministry, for I am verily persuaded the Lord hath <b>more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word</b>. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of those reformed churches which...will go, at present, <b>no further than the instruments of their reformation</b>. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; whatever part of His will our God had revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it; and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented..."</p>

While considering the authority of the priesthood within the Church of God, the question arises that if the Church is to be called after His name, should not God choose those that He desires to represent Him and His Son as the Lord did with Paul [read Acts 13:2-4]? If Jesus chose the twelve disciples only after He had prayed to God concerning the matter, as we read in the sixth chapter of Luke, and if He also

<sup>32</sup> J.M. Cramp, *Baptist History*, p. 461

<sup>33</sup> *The Christian Baptist*, vol. 5, p. 402

<sup>34</sup> *Christian System*, p. 250

<sup>35</sup> *Millennial Harbinger*, vol. 5, p. 40

<sup>36</sup> A.S. Hayden, *History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve*, p. 37

established a variety of priesthood offices as described in the second and fourth chapter of Ephesians, then why would these priesthood offices simply disappear, or why would we not need them today? In addition, why would those priesthood members not be called of God as was Aaron, Paul, and even Jesus Christ [read Hebrews 5:4-5 and Galatians 1:1 and 10-12]? It is always important to remember that God does not change, thus if Jesus established a priesthood while on the earth to represent Him, the Church of God also requires a holy and authoritative priesthood in order to fully function and shine forth the power of God on the earth.<sup>37</sup> Please read the purpose of priesthood from Ephesians 4:11-16:

**4:11** And he [Jesus] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **4:12** For the *perfecting of the saints*, for the *work of the ministry*, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ; **4:13** *Till* we, in the unity of the faith, *all* come to the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; **4:14** That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with **every wind of doctrine**, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; **4:15** But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; **4:16** From whom the **whole body fitly joined together and compacted** by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Jesus called and ordained men to different offices of the priesthood for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying the body of Christ *until* every member of the Church of God has obtained the knowledge of the Only Begotten. In so doing, the members of the Church, as well as those who are seeking for the truth of the Savior, will no more be deceived by the craftiness of men or of the devil, who seeks to pervert and destroy the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, just as Jesus was the good shepherd who gave His life for His sheep, the priesthood is also called and ordained to be shepherds over the flock of God. It is again vital to understand that this authority can only come from God and not man, for “the shepherd is not as a hireling, whose own the sheep are not, who seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth the sheep and scattereth them. For I [Jesus] am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. But he who is a hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.”<sup>38</sup>

The Book of Mormon also testifies of the authoritative priesthood, saying, “And now Alma was their high priest, he being the founder of their church. And it came to pass that *none received authority* to preach or to teach, except it were by him *from God*. Therefore he consecrated [ordained] all their priests, and all their teachers, and none were consecrated except they were just men. Therefore they did watch over their people, and did *nourish them* with things pertaining to righteousness.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The priesthood offices, such as prophet, apostle, bishop, high priest, elder, priest, teacher, and deacon, can be found in the New Testament in Luke 10:1 and 18, Acts 14:23, 1 Corinthians 12:27-28, Ephesians 2:19-22, Ephesians 4:11-16, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:4-5 and 7-9, Hebrews 5:1, Hebrews 8:1

<sup>38</sup> John 10:12-14

<sup>39</sup> Mosiah 11:17-20

Without the authority of priesthood, the Church of God cannot shine forth and manifest the power of God in the flesh just as the Lord withheld His holy order and ordinances from Israel after they rejected Him at Mount Sinai. The Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Therefore, in the ordinances thereof the power of godliness *is manifest*; and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is *not manifest* unto men in the flesh; for without this, no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.<sup>40</sup>” Thus, the woman cannot be fully and properly clothed if she is not adorned with the crown of twelve stars, which represented the apostolic office, or the priesthood. If the Son of God required the priesthood during and after His ministry in the flesh, does He not require the same in the Church of God today? “For I am the Lord, I change not.<sup>41</sup>”

### The Church and the Duties of a Member

At this moment, the reader might be asking, “If the Church of God is more than a temple made with hands, if the Church is founded and built upon the revelation and Gospel of Christ, and if the Church is adorned with power and light of God and His Son, how then do I go about recognizing this Church?” The answer is in prayer and in studying the Scriptures. We hope that during this chapter, the reader has begun to see the spiritual structure on which the Church of God is formed and established, thus we recommend that the reader take that spiritual structure and compare it with the variety of churches that exist today. If a church does not match the framework which God and Jesus Christ established, then it cannot be called the Church of God, even if it has a portion of the truth. For the doctrine of Christ is pure and unadulterated, thus anything more or less than the truth cannot be God’s Church.

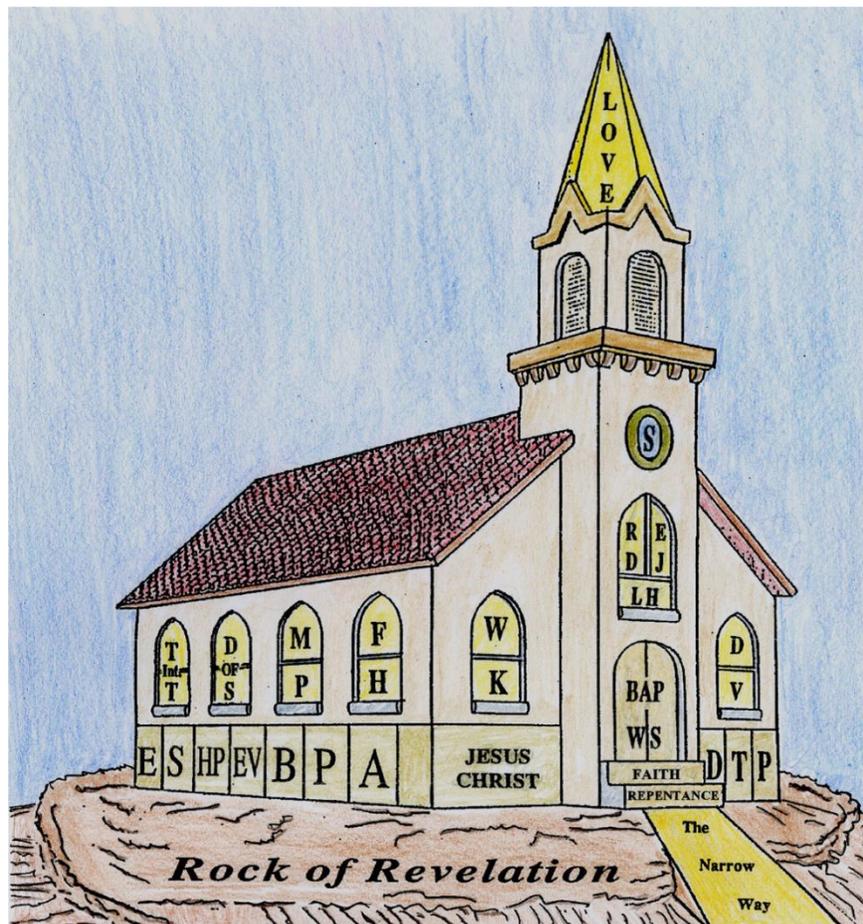
It is important to remember however that this does not mean that the people of a particular church or denomination are evil, that they do not love God, or that God does not bless them, but rather that the foundation of that church was not built upon the truths which God has given mankind. The Scriptures have demonstrated that when the children of men do God’s will God’s way, they are abundantly blessed. As elder Ralph Ruckmann once said, “It is one thing to know God’s will and to do it, but it is something else entirely to know God’s will, to do His will, and to do God’s will God’s way.” To help illustrate the spiritual framework of the Church of God, please look at both the legend and the picture provided below:

Symbol	Meaning	Scripture Reference
<b>Rock of Revelation</b>	Jesus Christ is the Rock upon which the Church is built	Matthew 16:16-19
<b>Jesus Christ</b>	Jesus Christ is the cornerstone	Isaiah 28:16, Matthew 21:51-52, Ephesians 2:19-20
<b>A</b>	Apostle	Matthew 10:2, Luke 6:13
<b>P</b>	Prophets	1 Corinthians 12:27-28, Ephesians 4:11
<b>B</b>	Bishops	Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:7-9
<b>EV</b>	Evangelists	Acts 21:8, Ephesians 4:11
<b>HP</b>	High Priests	Hebrews 5, Hebrews 7:11, Hebrews 8
<b>S</b>	Seventies	Luke 10:1 and 18

<sup>40</sup> DC 83:3c

<sup>41</sup> Malachi 3:6

<b>E</b>	Elders	Acts 14:23, Titus 1:4-5, James 5:14
<b>P</b>	Priests	Acts 6:7, 8:12-17
<b>T</b>	Teachers	1 Corinthians 12:27-28, Ephesians 4:11
<b>D</b>	Deacons	Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:8-13
<b>The Narrow Way</b>	The path to the Kingdom of God and eternal life	Matthew 7:22-24
<b>BAP WS</b>	Baptism of the water and the Spirit	Hebrews 6:1-3, John 3:1-5
<b>LH</b>	Laying on of hands	Hebrews 6:1-3, Acts 8:14-17
<b>RD</b>	Resurrection of the Dead	Hebrews 6:1-3, John 5:28-31
<b>EJ</b>	Eternal Judgment	Hebrews 6:1-3, Revelation 20:12-15
<b>S</b>	Stewardship	1 Corinthians 4:1-2
<b>Love</b>	Love of God	Matthew 22:35-39
<b>T Int. T</b>	Tongues and interpretation of tongues	1 Corinthians 12:3-13, Acts 2:4-11
<b>D of S</b>	Discernment of Spirits	1 Corinthians 12:3-13, 1 John 4:1-6
<b>M and P</b>	Miracles and Prophecy	1 Corinthians 12:3-13; Acts 2:22
<b>F and H</b>	Faith and Healing	1 Corinthians 12:3-13, James 5:14-15
<b>W and K</b>	Wisdom and Knowledge	1 Corinthians 12:3-13, 1 Cor 2:9-16
<b>D and V</b>	Dreams and Visions	1 Corinthians 12:3-13, 2 Cor 12:1-4



The reader might also ask, “Once we recognize the true Church of God, how do we become a member of His Church?” The answer to this question was covered in part in **Chapter Two**. In particular, we become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ by humbly following the path which Jesus laid before us, for He has said, “Behold, this is my doctrine: Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church; whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore, he is not of *my church*.<sup>42</sup>” “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus, save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father? And the Father said, Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my beloved Son. And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying, He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, *follow me*, and do the things which ye have seen me do.<sup>43</sup>” The following passage from the Book of Mormon details not only how we are to become a member of Christ’s Church, but also our duties as members of the body of Christ. Please read from Mosiah 9:35-64:

**9:35** And it came to pass after many days, there were a goodly number gathered together to the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. **9:36** Yea, all were gathered together that believed on his word, to hear him. **9:37** And he did teach them, and did preach unto them **repentance, and redemption, and faith on the Lord.**

**9:38** And it came to pass that he said unto them, Behold, here are the waters of Mormon; for thus were they called. **9:39** And now, as ye are desirous to **come into the *fold of God***, and to be called ***his people***, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; **9:40** Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life: **9:41** Now I say unto you, If this be the desire of your hearts, **what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord**, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

**9:42** And now when the people had heard these words, they ***clapped their hands for joy***, and exclaimed, This is the desire of our hearts. **9:43** And now it came to pass that Alma took Helam, he being one of the first, and went and stood forth in the water, and cried, saying, O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart. **9:44** And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said, Helam, I baptize thee, having ***authority from the Almighty God***, as a testimony that ye have entered into a ***covenant*** to serve him until you are dead, as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world. **9:45** And after Alma had said these words, both Alma and Helam were buried in the water; and they arose and came forth out of the water rejoicing, being filled with the Spirit.

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<sup>42</sup> DC 3:16

<sup>43</sup> 2 Nephi 13:13-15

**9:46** And again, Alma took another, and went forth a second time into the water, and baptized him according to the first, only he did not bury himself again in the water. **9:47** And after this manner he did baptize every one that went forth to the place of Mormon: and they were in number about two hundred and four souls; **9:48** Yea, and they were baptized in the waters of Mormon, and were filled with the grace of God: **9:49** And they were called the **church of God, or the church of Christ**, from that time forward. **9:50** And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God, was **added to his church**.

**9:51** And it came to pass that Alma, **having authority from God**, ordained priests; even one priest to every fifty of their number did he ordain to preach unto them, and to teach them concerning the things pertaining to the **kingdom of God**. **9:52** And he commanded them that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets. **9:53** Yea, even he commanded them that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people. **9:54** And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism; having their **hearts knit together** in unity and in love, one towards another. **9:55** And thus he commanded them to preach. And thus they became the **children of God**.

**9:56** And he commanded them that they should observe the Sabbath day, and keep it holy, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God. **9:57** And he also commanded them that the priests, whom he had ordained, **should labor with their own hands for their support**; **9:58** And there was one day in every week that was set apart that they should gather themselves together to teach the people, and to worship the Lord their God, and **also as often as it was in their power**, to assemble themselves together.

**9:59** And the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support; but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the Spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God.

**9:60** And again, Alma commanded that the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had; **9:61** If he have more abundantly, he should impart more abundantly; and he that had but little, but little should be required; and to him that had not should be given. **9:62** And thus they should impart of their substance, of their own free will and good desires towards God, and to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul. **9:63** And this he said unto them, having been commanded of God; **9:64** And they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another, **both temporally and spiritually**, according to their needs and their wants.

Through this single passage of Scripture, the foundation and spiritual structure of the Church of God can be discerned. Moreover, we read concerning the duties of both the priesthood and the members, who are commanded to work together in order to become the children of God and to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. Jesus taught His disciples in the sixth chapter of Matthew, saying, “Wherefore,

seek not the things of this world but seek ye *first* to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness.<sup>44</sup> It is important to understand that the single greatest purpose of the Church of God is build up the Kingdom of God. If the Church is not clothed with the glory of the sun, if it is not standing on the principles of the moon, and if it is not adorned with authority of the stars, it cannot manifest God's power on earth. The Lord desires a pure people and a righteous priesthood who will serve Him, who will keep His commandments, and who will endure to the end. How then shall we respond?

## Conclusion

This chapter began with the questions, "If there is one God and one Jesus Christ, how can there be so many different churches," and, "If there is only one true Church of Jesus Christ, how might we be able to recognize it?" We have sought to bring to light the framework of the Church, which is not owned by man, but instead has been purchased by God through the blood of His Only Begotten Son, in order that the reader might obtain a greater knowledge of the Church as presented in the word of God. While there are approximately 41,000 different Christian denominations in the world today, the Scriptures speak of one Church of God, which is especially important concerning the mission to build up the Kingdom. The Lord has said, "Be one, and if ye are not one, ye are not mine."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Paul wrote, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches<sup>46</sup> of the saints."<sup>47</sup> How can 41,000 different churches and faiths bring about the Kingdom? The answer is simply that they cannot, can the reader imagine the confusion and chaos that would ensue?

We have learned that the Church is not a physical building or entity made with hands of men, but rather that it is a spiritual temple made without hands, which God pitched and not man. A church building can always be destroyed or taken away, however if a people will awaken and covenant with God in love, nothing can destroy the Church. "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; be careful, therefore, lest ye be found even to fight against God."<sup>48</sup>

The Scriptures clearly illustrate that the Church of God is built upon the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God, as well as upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If the Church is built up the Gospel, Jesus has promised "then will the Father shew forth his own works in it." However, in order for the Father to show forth His works within the Church, the Church must be clothed with the sun, stand upon the moon, and be adorned with the twelve stars, for this is the only way that the power of godliness can be manifested in the flesh. Finally, we do encourage the reader to search the Scriptures and to pray to God in faith believing that he or she will receive the truth concerning His Church. The Lord has said, "Thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Matthew 6:38

<sup>45</sup> DC 38:6a

<sup>46</sup> Mosiah 11:96-104 explains that there can be many branches, but one Church of God

<sup>47</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:33

<sup>48</sup> John 5:38-39

<sup>49</sup> Deuteronomy 4:29