

IS THERE A UNIVERSAL CHURCH?

Please note! We intend to add more information to this paper so it is important that you return often so that you do not miss any of the information.

An example of how the Bible uses the word "church" in an **institutional** sense is how we use the word "*school*". We both attended "*school*". But most of us attended and was a member of a different local "*school*". Yes, we both attended "*school*". But that does not mean we were members of a "*universal school*". When we say that we attended "*school*", we do not mean that we attended the same school nor do we mean that we attended a "*universal school*". We are using the word "*school*" in an **institutional** sense to refer to a composite of all the local, visible schools. That is, when we say we both attended "*school*", we mean that both of us were members of a composite of local visible schools that we simply refer to as "*school*".

We can agree that there have been people on this earth who have never applied for membership in and received acceptance in a local school. Does that mean that those who have **not** applied for membership in and received acceptance in a local school somewhere, are still members of a "*universal school*"? **NO!**

THE PATTERN

In order for a person to be a member of a scriptural church, they must apply for membership in a local, visible, New Testament church. They must also receive baptism by the authority of a local, visible, scriptural church. **That was the pattern that Jesus Christ used when He established His local, scriptural churches.** When Jesus Christ established the first scriptural church, the church in Jerusalem, the **Church Age** began and the **Church Age** will end in the twinkling of an eye when Jesus Christ returns to "catch up" the members of the Family of God, **including** His Bride. ¹³ *My friends, we want you to understand how it will be for those*

followers who have already died. Then you won't grieve over them and be like people who don't have any hope. ¹⁴ *We believe that Jesus died and was raised to life. We also believe that when God brings Jesus back again, he will bring with him all who had faith in Jesus before they died.* ¹⁵ *Our Lord Jesus told us that when he comes, we won't go up to meet him ahead of his followers who have already died.* ¹⁶ *With a loud command and with the shout of the chief angel and a blast of God's trumpet, the Lord will return from heaven. Then those who had faith in Christ before they died will be raised to life.* ¹⁷ *Next, all of us who are still alive will be taken up into the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the sky. From that time on we will all be with the Lord forever.* ¹⁸ *Encourage each other with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (Contemporary English Version)*

We believe that Jesus Christ is part of the Trinity, that is, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We believe that the members of the Trinity are omnipresent, that is, everywhere at the same time. Therefore, because Jesus Christ is omnipresent, He is in the Throne Room in Heaven acting as our High Priest, He is on this earth fellowshiping with the saved and He is also in Paradise fellowshiping with those who have already died in Christ. When God brings Jesus back again to catch up His children, Jesus Christ will bring with Him, **from Paradise**, all who had faith in Jesus before they died. If you have any questions about that statement, you may read the paper " Future Things -The Catching Up - Picture" and the paper "03-The Catching Up-Where Are The Saved" on our website, <http://www.bayourouge.net>.

The entire theory that Christ emptied Paradise when He ascended to Heaven is based upon one scripture and that scripture does not say He emptied Paradise. In Ephesians 4:8, Paul said Christ led captivity captive when He ascended on high. What Paul said was that Christ took as His captive the thing that (up to that time) had us as its captive. What had us as its captive? DEATH. Until Christ's resurrection, we had no hope of ever returning from the dead, never to die again.

⁵¹ *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ⁵² *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* ⁵³ *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴ *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the*

saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory.*⁵⁵ *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*⁵⁸ *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."* 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 (King James Version)

CHRIST'S CALLED OUT ASSEMBLY

Jesus Christ called out to individuals who had been saved under the ministry of John the Baptist and who John the Baptist had scripturally baptized. Jesus Christ made fishers of men of those who responded to His call and followed Him. They became His "called out assembly", His ἐκκλησία (Strong's Number 1577). Jesus Christ then gave His "called out assembly" the authority to scripturally baptize those who applied for membership into the local church in Jerusalem if they had not been baptized by John the Baptist after their salvation. " ¹ *Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John* ² *(**though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples**)*, ³ *He left Judea and departed again to Galilee."* John 4:1-3 (New King James Version)

We can agree that there have been some people on this earth who have never applied for membership into and received acceptance into a local, visible, **school**. In other words, they never "went to school". Does that mean that those who have **not** applied for membership into and received acceptance into a local, visible, school are still members of a "*universal **school***"? **NO!** Yet some people teach that those who have **not** applied for membership into and received baptism by the authority of a local, scriptural church are still members of a "*universal church*". If you check the scriptures that they offer to prove that theory, however, you will find that either the scripture they offer as proof, refers to "the church" in an institutional sense (all of the members of all the local, scriptural churches combined) or that scripture was written to a local, scriptural church and, in many cases, applies only to the members of local, scriptural churches. Naturally, if the scripture was written to a local, scriptural church, the scripturally baptized members do indeed belong to "the church", that is, the composite of the members of all the local, scriptural New Testament churches combined. In fact, when we consult the Bible we will see

that **scriptural baptism** was always a prerequisite to becoming a member of **any** of the churches mentioned in the Bible. We know, however, that **not all** of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations **have received scriptural baptism**. But Jesus Christ instructed us that when a saved person applied for membership in a local, visible, New Testament church they **must** receive scriptural baptism before they could be a member of one of His churches. **Scriptural baptism is not necessary for salvation**. If it was, no one in the Old Testament is saved because no one received scriptural baptism in the Old Testament.

HOW WERE THE PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SAVED?

They could not have been saved by **keeping the Ten Commandments** or keeping the Law because James 2:10 says that if we only commit one sin during our entire lifetime, God holds us accountable as if we broke all His laws. *“10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. And in Galatians 3:11 we find, “11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith.” (King James Version)*

*”²¹ But now, apart from law, God's righteousness has been openly shown as in view, having witness borne to it by the law and the prophets; indeed, God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ **to all who believe**, for there is not a distinction, for all sinned and are falling short of the glory of God; being justified gratuitously by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God placed before the eyes of all as an expiatory satisfaction through faith in His blood for a proof of His righteousness in view of the pretermission of the sins previously committed, this pretermission being in the sphere of the forbearance of God, also for a proof of His righteousness at the present season, with a view to His being just and the justifier of the one whose faith is in Jesus.²⁷ Where then is the glorying? It was once for all excluded. Through what kind of a law? Of the aforementioned works? Not at all, but through the law of faith, for our reasoned conclusion is that **a man is justified by faith apart from works of law**.²⁹ Or, of Jews only is He God? Is He not also of Gentiles? Yes, also of Gentiles, assuming that*

there is one God who will justify the circumcision out of a source of faith and the uncircumcision through the intermediary instrumentality of faith. Then are we making law of none effect through this aforementioned faith? Let not such a thing be considered. Certainly, we are establishing law." Romans 3:27 (Wuest New Testament: An Expanded Translation)

They could not have been saved because they lived in a **different dispensation** because everyone who will be saved from Adam and Eve to the last person who will be saved will be saved because of the **grace** (unmerited favor) of God. In fact, we find in Galatians 3:8, "8 *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."* Also, Acts 15:1-11 teaches that the people of the circumcision (the Jews) were saved by grace just as we are. "11 *No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are*". This fact is also taught in Romans 3:24-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21 and Genesis 6:8, just to name a few. So we are in the dispensation of GRACE that will last from the Garden of Eden to the last person who will be saved.

Hebrews 10:1-6 says that **the blood of bulls and goats** cannot take away sins. It will not pay our sin debt. " ¹ *For the law, having a shadow of the coming good things, not the image itself of the things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually yearly, perfect those who approach.* ² *Since, would they not indeed have ceased being offered, on account of the worshippers once purged having no longer any conscience of sins?* ³ *But in these [there is] a calling to mind of sins yearly.* ⁴ *For blood of bulls and goats [is] incapable of taking away sins.* ⁵ *Wherefore coming into the world he says, Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not; but thou hast prepared me a body.* ⁶ *Thou tookest no pleasure in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin."* Hebrews 10:1-6 (Darby)

They did not "**join a church**" because there was no church to join.

They did not "get **baptized**" because there was no one to baptize them.

They were not saved by their **good works** because, in God's eyes, all their good works looked like filthy rags. ⁶ *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as*

filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."
Isaiah 64:6 (King James Version)

"³ All of us once lived among them in the desires of our flesh, following the wishes of the flesh and the impulses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; ⁹ it is not from works, so no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them." *Ephesians 2:3-10 (New American Bible-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)*

THE KEY TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Again, there is not one member of any of Christ's scriptural churches who did not receive scriptural baptism first! **WHY?** Because scriptural baptism is the key for membership into a scriptural church. Most of the members of the local, scriptural church that authorizes the baptism probably were not present when the candidate repented of their sins and asked Jesus Christ to pay their sin debt. They cannot physically see the candidates' faith in a future resurrection when the candidate will rise in order to ever be with the Lord. So the candidate provides a **living testimony** of their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and their faith in the **POWER** that will resurrect them sometime in the future, never to die again. There may only be one member of that local church present to observe their living testimony. There may be 1,000 members of that local, scriptural church present to observe their living testimony. It is important to remember, however, that the authority to administer scriptural baptism was given by Jesus Christ to His local, scriptural churches not to the Family of God (that is, all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations).

Jesus Christ appeared to His disciples during the 40 days following His resurrection. At the end of those 40 days He instructed His disciples to meet Him on a mountain in Galilee and when they did, He gave them a commission." ¹⁸ *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All **authority** has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen."* Matthew 28:18-20 (New King James Version)

SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM

In order for baptism to be scriptural, you must have three things. First you must have a scriptural candidate, that is, the candidate must **already** be saved. Second, you must have a scriptural mode, that is, it must be complete immersion. Otherwise, how can their baptism be a picture of death and resurrection? We have never attended a funeral where the deceased was sprinkled with a little dirt or where a little dirt was poured on them and then they were left on top of the ground where they were exposed to the elements. " ¹ *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized **into** Jesus Christ were **baptized into his death?** ⁴ Therefore we are **buried with him by baptism into death**: that like as Christ was **raised up from the dead** by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."* Romans 6:1-6 (King James Version)

The third thing that is necessary in order for baptism to be scriptural is scriptural authority. The local church that has authorized and administered the baptism must be a local, scriptural, New Testament church.

THE FAMILY OF GOD

All of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations compose the **Family of the Living God**. At the moment a person goes to the Lord in prayer, repents of their sins and asks that the payment Jesus Christ gave on Calvary pay their sin debt, the Lord **adopts** them into His family. The Lord becomes their Heavenly Father and they become one of His children. Up until that moment, they were one of God's creations but they were not one of God's children, that is, a member of the Family of God. ⁴ *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,* ⁵ *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the **adoption** of sons.* ⁶ *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* ⁷ *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Galatians 4:4-7 (King James Version)*

However, there is a difference between (1) the Family of the Living God and (2) the Bride of Christ, that is, the scripturally baptized members of a local, scriptural New Testament church. Again, please note that the only scriptures in the Bible that speak of a church are referring to either a particular local, scriptural New Testament church or to the **institution of the church** that is composed of the members of all the local, scriptural New Testament churches combined.

THE FAMILY OF GOD AND THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

All members of **the Bride of Christ** are members of the Family of God but not all members of the Family of God are members of **the Bride of Christ**. It is very important that we recognize that when the Bible speaks of a church or "the church", it is not speaking of a "universal church". Most people do not understand the difference between the Family of God and the Bride of Christ. Apparently they have accepted the theory of the existence of a great big, invisible "universal church" that all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations belong to, because someone they highly respected taught it. Of course, if it was possible to check, we would find that the person who taught them that there was a "universal church" was taught that by a person they respected who was taught that by a

person they respected, who was taught that by a person they respected, who was taught that by a person they respected. Therefore, they feel that they are entitled to all the special benefits that Jesus Christ promised to His Bride exclusively. So, usually the reason a person teaches that theory is because someone they highly respected taught it and they never stopped to question the statement. And usually the reason that person taught the theory is because someone they highly respected taught it. And so on and so on and so on. Naturally, we want to trust the people we respect but the lesson each of us should learn is, "TRUST BUT **VERIFY**". That lesson is even applicable to the paper you are reading right now.

Now we have a serious dilemma! Some of us have spent years embracing and sometimes teaching the error of the existence of a "universal church". Some of us are pastors whose livelihood has depended upon pastoring a church who has been embracing and teaching the error of the existence of a "universal church". Some of us are pastors whose livelihood has depended upon pastoring a church who has affiliated with an association or a convention that embraces and teaches the error of the existence of a "universal church". Now that we know the truth, what do we do?

We do not claim to be the Holy Spirit! We can, however, pass on some wisdom that was shared with us many years ago. SERVE THE LORD AND TEACH HIS TRUTHS TODAY, AND HE WILL PUT YOU WHERE HE WANTS YOU TO BE TOMORROW. Solomon shared, " ¹ My son, forget not my teaching, and let thy heart observe my commandments; ² for length of days, and years of life, and peace shall they add to thee. ³ Let not loving-kindness and **truth** forsake thee; bind them about thy neck, write them upon the tablet of thy heart: ⁴ and thou shalt find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. ⁵ **Confide in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own intelligence; ⁶ in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will make plain thy paths.** ⁷ Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear Jehovah, and depart from evil: ⁸ it shall be health for thy navel, and moisture for thy bones. ⁹ Honour Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; ¹⁰ so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine. ¹¹ My son, despise not the instruction of Jehovah, neither be weary of his chastisement; ¹² for whom Jehovah loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. ¹³ Blessed is the man that findeth wisdom, and the

man that getteth understanding. ¹⁴ For the gain thereof is better than the gain of silver, and her revenue than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not equal unto her. ¹⁶ Length of days is in her right hand; in her left hand riches and honour. ¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is he that retaineth her. ¹⁹ Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens. ²⁰ By his knowledge the deeps were broken up, and the skies drop down the dew. ²¹ My son, let them not depart from thine eyes; keep sound wisdom and discretion: ²² so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace unto thy neck. ²³ Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely, and thy foot shall not stumble; ²⁴ when thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid, but thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet. ²⁵ Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the destruction of the wicked, when it cometh; ²⁶ for Jehovah shall be thy confidence, and he will keep thy foot from being taken." *Proverbs 3:1-26 (Darby's Translation)*

Sad to say, there will probably be some who will acknowledge to themselves that what we are sharing is the truth, but they have invested too much to change openly. Personally, we made a decision long ago to share the truth of God's Divine Word, even though it may not be popular with some. What the reader does with the information in these papers is between them and the Living God. "

32 SCRIPTURES

Let us take a moment to look at 32 scriptures that are offered by the proponents of a "universal church". Perhaps these 32 scriptures were only offered as proof that a New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous **local** congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the **two ordinances** of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. We agree with that.

But after we examine these 32 scriptures, we believe you will agree with us that although many of them do, indeed, speak of the existence of a **local**, scriptural church or many of them do, indeed, speak of the church in an **institutional** sense, not one of them provides proof of the existence of a "universal church". **Now, here's the question.** If **all** of these 32 scriptures only prove that a New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous **local** congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth, **where are the scriptures that prove the existence of a "universal church"?** **Surely they would not make a statement about the existence of a "universal church" without telling us where, in God's Divine Word, that is taught!** Perhaps the existence of a "universal church" is taught in other scriptures other than these 32. If you know of any scripture that teaches the existence of a "universal church", please consider it your duty to share with us where they are located. Our email address is roberttanner@bayourouge.net.

Why did the advocates of a "universal church" theory list those 32 scriptures? Sometime we wonder if they thought we would be so impressed when they told us that there were 32 different scriptures that taught about the existence of a "universal church" that we would never read those 32 scriptures ourselves. Perhaps they were counting on us being too lazy to look them up and that we would just take their word for it. TRUST BUT **VERIFY!** Again, please notice for yourself, as we study those 32 scriptures, that many of those scriptures do speak of a scriptural church or scriptural churches but not one of those 32 scriptures teach that there is a "universal church"! Just because a scripture contains the word "church" does not prove the existence of a "universal church"!

1- Matthew 16:15-19

"¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in

Heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you (**the local church who is administering the scriptural baptism**) the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven."

Jesus Christ was questioning **His disciples, the local church in Jerusalem.** They affirmed that He was, indeed, the Messiah and Christ stated that He was going to establish the institution of the church on the fact that He was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Peter, who was there, confirmed that Jesus Christ was the Rock that the institution of the church was founded on when he wrote his first letter to the members of the scriptural churches. **The chief corner stone is the stone which the whole building is built upon.** " ¹ Wherefore laying away all malice, and all guile, and dissimulations, and envies, and all detractions, ² As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation: ³ If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet. ⁴ Unto whom coming, as to **a living stone,** rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honourable by God: ⁵ Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. ⁶ Wherefore it is said in the scripture: Behold, I lay in Sion **a chief corner stone,** elect, precious. And he that shall believe in him, shall not be confounded. ⁷ To you therefore that believe, he is honour: but to them that believe not, **the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner:** ⁸ And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal, to them who stumble at the word, neither do believe, whereunto also they are set. ⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare his virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: ¹⁰ Who in time past were not a people: but are now the people of God. Who had not obtained mercy; but now have obtained mercy. ¹¹ Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul, ¹² Having your conversation good among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by the good works, which they shall behold in you, glorify God in the day of visitation." 1 Peter 2:1-12 (Douay-Rheims Version, New Catholic Edition)

Please note that Jesus Christ instructed His disciples in Matthew 16:15-19 that when they bound a person into the membership of their local church on this earth by scriptural baptism, He would respect their action and record that person as a member of a **special group** in Heaven which He called "the Kingdom of Heaven". **That special group was not the "universal church"**. Jesus Christ gave the authority to baptize to His local churches. If that special group in Heaven was the "universal church", that would mean that after a person was saved, they would have to wait around until a local, scriptural church baptized them so they could be bound into the membership of the "universal church" since " *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven.*" It would also mean that none of the saved people in the Old Testament would belong to the "universal church" since there were no local, scriptural churches in the Old Testament.

We find in Acts 14:22 that before returning to the church in Antioch, Barnabas and Paul told the people in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidia, Pamphylia and Perga that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they would have to go through much tribulation. Does that sound like the Kingdom of the Saved or does that sound like the executive phase of Christ's kingdom, His local, scriptural churches that He left in charge of making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them? " ²¹ *And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,* ²² *strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."* ²³ *So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.* ²⁴ *And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.* ²⁵ *Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.* ²⁶ *From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.* ²⁷ *Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.* ²⁸ *So they stayed there a long time with the disciples." Acts 14:21-28 (New King James Version)*

Please remember the order. The **first** thing that happens is a local, scriptural church binds a born again person into their membership by baptizing them. " ¹ *Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—* ²

although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee." John 4:1-3 (New International Version)

Jesus Christ said in Matthew 16:15-19 (printed above) that the **second** thing that happens is, He would respect the action of that local, scriptural church and He would record them as a member of a **special group** in Heaven which He called "the Kingdom of Heaven". Jesus Christ **did not** say that the **first** thing that happens after a person's salvation was, He would record them as a member of a **special group** in Heaven which He called "the Kingdom of Heaven".

That would agree perfectly with the rest of the scriptures teaching scriptural baptism. For instance, we also find in Matthew 18:15-18 that Jesus Christ gave the members of His scriptural churches the authority to bind or loose a person. Do you believe Jesus Christ was giving His local, scriptural churches to authority to bind a person into membership in a "universal church"? If so, He was also giving them the authority to loose a person from the membership of a "universal church".¹⁵ "If your brother acts wrongly towards you, go and point out his fault to him when only you and he are there. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."¹⁶ But if he will not listen to you, go again, and ask one or two to go with you, that every word spoken may be attested by two or three witnesses.¹⁷ If he refuses to hear them, appeal to the **Church**; and if he refuses to hear even the **Church**, regard him just as you regard a Gentile or a tax-gatherer.¹⁸ I solemnly tell you that whatever you as a Church bind on earth will in Heaven be held as bound, and whatever you loose on earth will in Heaven be held to be loosed." Matthew 18:15-18 (Weymouth New Testament)

Also, Jesus Christ instructed His disciples that when they removed a person from the membership of their church on this earth, He would remove them as a member of that **special group** in Heaven which He called "the Kingdom of Heaven". This is the same "Kingdom of Heaven" that both John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed was "at hand" or was **about** to be formed. We know that they were not referring to the "Kingdom of the Saved" because, if they were, no one could be saved until the ministry of Jesus Christ. If the local churches have the authority to remove a person from the "the Kingdom of Heaven", and if that "the Kingdom of Heaven" would be all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and

people, and nations, that would mean the local churches have the authority to remove a person from salvation, would it not????????? If a local church does not have the authority to remove a person from membership in the Family of God, what do you call the group they have the authority to remove them from?

Matthew 16:15-19 (printed above and offered by some as proof of a "*universal church*") only proves that Jesus Christ gave His local, scriptural churches the authority to bind a person into their membership and as a consequence, He would add that person into a special group in Heaven and to remove a person from their membership and as a consequence, He would remove that person from that special group in Heaven. **THAT SPECIAL GROUP IN HEAVEN IS NOT THE FAMILY OF GOD!!!** However, we cannot see anything in Matthew 16:15-19 (offered by some as proof of a "*universal church*") that proves that there is a "*universal church*".

2- Matthew 18:15-20

"¹⁵ Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in Heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Jesus Christ is instructing **His disciples, the local church in Jerusalem,** about the procedure they were to follow if they felt that another member **of their local church** committed an offence. Please note that Jesus Christ told His disciples that if it was necessary for them to follow the entire procedure and the person would not respect the council of the members of **their**

local church, that local church was to remove that person from the membership of their church on this earth and He would remove them as a member of a **special group** in Heaven.

Jesus Christ also instructed them that if, through the leadership of the Holy Spirit, "*two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in Heaven*". In addition, Jesus Christ promised them that where even two or three of their members were gathered together by His authority, "*I am there in the midst of them*".

Also, please note that Matthew 18:15-20 proves that a local, scriptural church existed during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and did not begin on the day of Pentecost. The disciples of Jesus Christ (the local church in Jerusalem) had been baptizing new candidates for membership into their local church before John the Baptist was killed. In addition, Matthew 18:15-20 is another scripture that proves that Jesus Christ gave His local, scriptural churches the authority to bind a person into their membership and into a special group in Heaven and to remove a person from their membership and from that special group in Heaven. However, we cannot find anything in Matthew 18:15-20 (offered by some as proof of a "*universal church*") that proves that there is a "*universal church*".

3- Acts 2:41-42,47

"⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Luke is describing the results of the local church in Jerusalem preaching the good news of salvation after the local church in Jerusalem had received the sevenfold power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. If you have any questions about the sevenfold power of the Holy Spirit that the church in Jerusalem received on the day of Pentecost and then passed down to their progeny, please take time to read the paper "The Power Of The Sevenfold Spirit Of God" on this website, <http://www.bayourouge.net>. Please remember that the disciples of John the Baptist were just as saved as you are. But the disciples of John the Baptist were **not** assisting in that evangelistic service nor did they receive the sevenfold power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. There were about 3,000 people who were saved as a result of that evangelistic service. **After** receiving **scriptural baptism**, they became members of the local church in Jerusalem. They did not become members of that separate group who still considered themselves the disciples of John the Baptist and who only had John's baptism. " ¹ *While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul was visiting some places on the way to Ephesus. There he found some followers.* ² *Paul asked them, "Did you receive Holy Spirit power (there is no Greek indefinite article-see "The Power Of The Sevenfold Spirit Of God" on our website) when you believed?" They said, "We have never even heard of Holy Spirit power (there is no Greek indefinite article-see "The Power Of The Sevenfold Spirit Of God" on our website)!"* ³ *So he asked, "What kind of baptism did you have?" They said, "It was the baptism that John taught."* ⁴ *Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of changed hearts and lives. He told people to believe in the One who would come after him. That One is Jesus."* ⁵ *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus.* ⁶ *Then Paul laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. They began speaking different languages and prophesying.* ⁷ *There were about 12 men in this group." Acts 19:1-7 (International Children's Bible)*

Again, Luke described the results of the local church in Jerusalem preaching the good news of salvation after the local church in Jerusalem had received the sevenfold power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. According to Matthew 16:15-19, when they became members of the local church in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ recorded them as a member of a **special group** in Heaven which He called "the Kingdom of Heaven". Luke added in Acts 2:47, " *the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*". What church?? The scripture tells

us they were added as members of the local, scriptural church in Jerusalem after they received scriptural baptism. The scripture (printed above and offered by some as proof of a "*universal church*") does not say they were added to a "*universal church*".

4- Acts 5:11-14

"¹¹ So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. ¹² And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. ¹³ Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. ¹⁴ And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,...."

Unfortunately, many people read only verses 11 through 14 and do not read verses 1 through 10. If they would read verses 1 through 10, they would see that Luke was describing an event that happened within the local, scriptural church in Jerusalem. Luke recorded that when Ananias and his wife Sapphira died because they lied to God, it struck great fear upon the members of the local church in Jerusalem and upon all those who heard about it. But nowhere in Acts, chapter 5, does it even hint that great fear "*came upon all the universal church*", that is, upon all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations. We guess that the proponents were hoping we would not read verses 1 through 10. This passage tells us what happened **within** a local, New Testament church. So we find the scripture (printed above and offered by some as proof of a "*universal church*") does not say "*great fear came upon all the universal church*". Therefore, that scripture does not teach the existence of a "*universal church*".

5- Acts 6:3-6

"³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give

ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵ *And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,* ⁶ *whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.*

According to Acts, chapters 2 and 4, by the time we get to the events of chapter 5, the local, scriptural church in Jerusalem had over 8,000 members. Acts, chapter 5, tells us that out of that number, the local church appointed seven deacons. Wow! It only took seven deacons for over 8,000 members! Jesus Christ never meant for His churches to be appointing deacons like the Boy Scouts give out merit badges. Christ never meant for His churches to appoint deacons based upon how influential they are in the community or in that particular local church. Nor does Christ intend for a local church to appoint deacons based on how much financial support they contribute. ³ *Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of Holy Spirit Power (there is no Greek indefinite article) and wisdom".* No wonder Christ's churches, today, are in so much trouble!

There are two other important points we would like to share while we are considering Acts 6:3-6. The first is that only men who met the qualifications of a deacon were set aside and served as deacons in the early churches. The Lord set high standards that men were to meet in order for them to be chosen as a deacon by a local church and when those men meet those standards, they are not to ever usurp the authority the Lord gave only to the pastor. Again, no wonder Christ's churches, today, are in so much trouble! ⁸ *Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;* ⁹ *Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.* ¹⁰ *And let these also **first be proved**; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.* ¹¹ *Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.* ¹² *Let the deacons **be the husbands of one wife**, ruling their children and their own houses well.* ¹³ *For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."*
1 Timothy 3:8-13 (King James Version)

The second point is that only seven men who were of good reputation and who had exhibited to their local church that they were full of Holy Spirit Power (there is no Greek indefinite article) and wisdom were chosen as a deacon. Please take time to read the paper "The Power Of The Sevenfold Spirit Of God" on this website, <http://www.bayourouge.net>. Now, out of over 8,000 members, there must have been more than 7 men who qualified. But they only appointed 7 deacons because their church of over 8,00 members only needed 7 deacons. When you do read the paper "The Power Of The Sevenfold Spirit Of God" on this website, <http://www.bayourouge.net>, please notice that you cannot lose your salvation but you can, most certainly, lose the sevenfold power of the Holy Spirit.

So we find the scripture (printed above and offered by some as proof of a "*universal church*") does not say the deacons were selected from the membership of a "*universal church*" so this scripture should not have been in the list.

6- Acts 13:1-3

"¹ Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

We see in Acts 13:1-3 where the local, scriptural church in Antioch was instructed by the Holy Spirit to separate Barnabas and Paul for a special work. We see where the local, scriptural church in Antioch fasted, prayed, laid hands on them as a sign of giving them authority and then sent them away as missionaries to do the work that the Holy Spirit called them to do. What we **do not** see is where any of those three verses teach that there is a "*universal church*". Those three verses teach, rather, the work of a local church. So we find the scripture (printed above and offered by some as proof of a "*universal church*") does not say the "*universal church*" sent

Barnabas and Paul out to do a special work. It make us wonder why the proponents listed the scripture as one of 32 scriptures that prove the existence of a "*universal church*".

7- Acts 14:23

"²³ *So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

We find in the 14th chapter of Acts that Barnabas and Paul witnessed in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidia, Pamphylia and Perga before returning to the church in Antioch. The local church in Antioch had sent them out as missionaries and had given them the authority to establish new local, scriptural churches. Again, we find in Acts 14:22 that before returning to the church in Antioch, Barnabas and Paul told the people in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidia, Pamphylia and Perga that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they would have to go through much tribulation. Does that sound like the Kingdom of the Saved or does that sound like the executive phase of Christ's kingdom, His local, scriptural churches?

The 14th chapter of Acts teaches us about the work of two missionaries who were authorized and then sent out by a local, scriptural church, the church in Antioch. What we cannot find in the 14th chapter of Acts is any scripture that teaches that there is a great big, invisible "*universal church*" to which all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations belong. We find the scripture (printed above and offered by some as proof of a universal church) does not say anything about there being a "*universal church*".

8- Acts 14: 27

"²⁷ Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

The church Barnabas and Paul gathered together was their home church in Antioch who had authorized and sent them out as missionaries. Now if Acts 14:27 is referring to a "universal church" when it says "the church", that would mean that Barnabus and Paul gathered together and reported to a great big, invisible "universal church" to which all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations belong. How did they do that? Barnabas and Paul felt they were responsible for reporting their successes and their failures to a local, scriptural church, not a board or a committee. Why? Because when a local, scriptural church sends out a missionary, they are responsible for what that missionary does and what they teach. When the members consign their responsibility for what their missionary teaches and preaches, the members no longer feel accountable. But that is not true! One day they will be held accountable. But we cannot find where Acts 14:27 (printed above and offered by some as proof of a universal church) teaches that there is a "universal church".

9- Acts 15:1-30

"¹ And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."² Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.⁴ And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.⁵ But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."⁶ Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.⁷ And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and

brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.⁸ So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.¹⁰ Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."¹² Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.¹³ And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:¹⁴ Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:¹⁶ 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up;¹⁷ So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.'¹⁸ "Known to God from eternity are all His works.¹⁹ Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,²⁰ but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.²¹ For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."²² Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.²³ They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.²⁴ Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"--to whom we gave no such commandment--²⁵ it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:²⁹ that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep

yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. ³⁰ *So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.*

First, Acts 15:2 informs us that Paul, Barnabas and certain others were sent to the local church in Jerusalem to ask them if you had to be circumcised in order to be saved. They were sent by the local church in Antioch, not a "universal church". Why were they sent to the local church in Jerusalem? Because during Christ's earthly ministry, **over 500** of the members of the local church in Jerusalem had been **personally** instructed by Jesus Christ from the beginning of His ministry to the time He ascended back to Heaven 43 days after Passover or 7 days before Pentecost (3 days and **nights**+40+7=50). Many of them were still alive and serving Christ in the local church in Jerusalem. ³ *I passed on to you what I received, of which this was most important: that Christ died for our sins, as the Scriptures say;* ⁴ *that he was buried and was raised to life on the third day as the Scriptures say;* ⁵ *and that he was seen **by Peter** and then **by the twelve apostles**.* ⁶ *After that, Jesus was seen same **by more than five hundred of the believers at the time**.* *Most of them are still living today, but some have died.* ⁷ *Then he was seen **by James** and later **by all the apostles**.* ⁸ *Last of all he was seen **by me**—as by a person not born at the normal time." 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (New Century Version)*

The church in Antioch felt that the first members of the church in Jerusalem (who had been personally instructed by Christ during His earthly ministry) would surely know whether you had to be circumcised in order to be saved.

¹⁵ *In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said,* ¹⁶ *"Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus.* ¹⁷ *For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry.* ¹⁸ *(Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.* ¹⁹ *And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Akel'dama, that is, Field of Blood.)* ²⁰ *For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his habitation become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it'; and 'His office let another take.'* ²¹ ***So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,*** ²²

beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us -- one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." ²³ **And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsab'bas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthi'as.** ²⁴ And they prayed and said, "Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place." ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthi'as; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles." Acts 1:15-26 (Revised Standard Version)

"³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, **he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time**, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (New International Version)

If anyone knew for certain that you had to be circumcised in order to be saved, it would be those who had been instructed by Christ during His earthly ministry. Acts 15:5 tells us, " *they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders*". Were they received by the local church in Jerusalem or were they received by a "universal church"? This may seem like a silly, unnecessary question but it is a quite serious question. Every time the word "church" is used in the scriptures, it is either referring to a local, scriptural church or it is referring to the composite of all the local scriptural churches. There is not one single reference to a "universal church" in the 15th chapter of the book of Acts. So why did the proponents of a "universal church" list that scripture as one of the 32?

10- Acts 16:5

"⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Did you notice that Acts 16:5 says "churches"? That would mean that Acts 16:5 which the proponents listed, was referring to local, visible congregations not a "*universal church*".

11- Acts 20:28

"²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Does a "*universal church*" have pastors? Please consider that question carefully. If there **was** a great big, invisible "*universal church*" to whom all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations belong, who pastors the people who are saved but are not members of a local, scriptural church? Therefore, when we read Acts 20:28, the church of God that is referred to must be the composite of all the local, scriptural churches, the **institution** of the church. If you will read Acts 20:17, you will see that in Acts 20:28, Paul was speaking to the elders of the local, scriptural church in Ephesus when he said, "*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*" Those elders from Ephesus did not believe that God had made them overseers and shepherds of a "*universal church*". So this scripture proves the existence of local, New Testament congregations but it does not teach the existence of a "*universal church*".

12- Romans 1:7

"⁷ To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was to those saints in the church in Rome that Paul wrote in Romans 6:1-6, "¹ *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* ² *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* ³ *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?* ⁴ *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* ⁵ *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:* ⁶ *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."* Romans 6:1-6 (King James Version)

Lets see now. The saints to whom Paul wrote the book of Romans had all received scriptural baptism. Hmm. Therefore, they must have been members of a local, scriptural church since it would be difficult for a "universal church" to administer baptism. That means that Romans 1:7 (listed as proof of a "universal church") was addressing saved members of a local, scriptural church, not a "universal church". Also, please consider that if there were a "universal church" that was composed of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations, most of them never received scriptural baptism. Therefore, we know that Romans 1:7 (printed above) was addressed to local, scriptural churches and it does not prove the existence of a "universal church".

Before we leave the subject of the church in Rome, please, please read the paper "A Chronological Study Of Revelation" posted on this website, lest you think that the assembly in Rome, at this time, is the original church in Rome. Also, please remember, "⁸ *Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.* ⁹ *Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.* ¹⁰ **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them.** ¹¹ **Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.**" ² John 1:8-11 (New International Version)

13- 1 Corinthians 1:2

"² To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:..."

It seems that when some of the scriptures refer to "the church" or "the church of God", the proponents of a "universal church" want to claim that it is referring to a "universal church". THEY DO NOT! Every time the word "church" is used in the scriptures, it is either referring to a local, scriptural church or it is referring to the composite of all the members of local, scriptural churches as an institution. Paul was addressing a group that was a component of that composite, the local, scriptural church in Corinth. As you can see, we are desperately trying to find a scripture that the proponents list which teaches the existence of a "universal church" but we have not found one yet. Have you seen one in their list so far?

14- 1 Corinthians 3:16

"¹⁶ Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Perhaps we should examine other scriptures about the indwelling of God and the temple of God.

"⁸ So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ¹⁰ And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken **your mortal bodies** by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. ¹² Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. ¹³ For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Romans 8:8-14 (King James Version)

"¹² All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. ¹³ Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power. ¹⁵ Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. ¹⁶ What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. ¹⁷ But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. ¹⁸ Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 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? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (King James Version)

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (printed above), Paul counsels that the saved should keep their body under subjection because the body of a saved person is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

"¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for **ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (King James Version)

Again, in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (printed above), Paul is addressing the problem of not keeping our bodies under subjection because our bodies are the temple of God. So, we find that the Holy Spirit dwells in the saved and because of that, it is their body that is the temple of God. In the verses preceding 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul is reminding each individual member of the local church in Corinth that they should be building a life that is pleasing to God. Paul is not teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:16 that the "universal church" is the temple of God but, rather, the

individual member of the local church in Corinth is the temple of God. Therefore, this verse, listed by the proponents, does not teach the existence of a *"universal church"*.

15- 1 Corinthians 5:4-5

"⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians, chapter 5, deals with what the local, scriptural church in Corinth should do with a member who was living with his father's wife (apparently with his father's new wife). This is another scripture that not only proves the existence of local, scriptural churches but also proves the authority and necessity of local, scriptural churches to discipline wayward members. But we cannot find where this scripture teaches the existence of a *"universal church"*.

16- 1 Corinthians 7:17

"¹⁷ But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

We searched the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 7 and could not find one single verse that taught the existence of a *"universal church"*. On the other hand, we noticed that 1 Corinthians, chapter 7 was written to a local, scriptural church and was explaining the Lord's standards. Verse 17 even refers to a composite of the local churches.

17- 1 Corinthians 9:13-14

" ¹³ *Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?* ¹⁴ *Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.*

Paul and Barnabas supported their ministry by working with their hands so that the gospel of Christ would not be hindered. They did not request monies or any other type of support when they taught others the principles of Christ. It seems that occasionally, others would voluntarily give them support because they appreciated their teaching ministry. We find that in 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, Paul was defending himself and Barnabas because many times they worked to provide their own living expenses. Perhaps there were some who thought they could not be "real preachers" if they worked for a living. However, we cannot find anywhere in chapter 9 where Paul mentions a "universal church" or even hints at there being a "universal church".

Please note in 1 Corinthians 9:1-27, that when Paul referred to "the Jewish law", he was referring to the ceremonial laws which apply only to members of the Jewish Theocracy. Paul was not referring to the moral laws which everyone on the earth is required to follow. ¹ *Am I not as free as anyone else? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn't it because of my work that you belong to the Lord?* ² *Even if others think I am not an apostle, I certainly am to you. You yourselves are proof that I am the Lord's apostle.* ³ *This is my answer to those who question my authority.* ⁴ *Don't we have the right to live in your homes and share your meals?* ⁵ *Don't we have the right to bring a Christian wife with us as the other disciples and the Lord's brothers do, and as Peter does?* ⁶ *Or is it only Barnabas and I who have to work to support ourselves?* ⁷ *What soldier has to pay his own expenses? What farmer plants a vineyard and doesn't have the right to eat some of its fruit? What shepherd cares for a flock of sheep and isn't allowed to drink some of the milk?* ⁸ *Am I expressing merely a human opinion, or does the law say the same thing?* ⁹ *For the law of Moses says, "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain." Was God thinking only about oxen when he said this?* ¹⁰ *Wasn't he actually speaking to us? Yes, it was written for us, so that the one who plows and the one who threshes the grain might both expect a share of the harvest.* ¹¹ *Since we have planted spiritual seed among you, aren't we entitled to a harvest of physical food and drink?* ¹²

If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ. ¹³ Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. ¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it. ¹⁵ Yet I have never used any of these rights. And I am not writing this to suggest that I want to start now. In fact, I would rather die than lose my right to boast about preaching without charge. ¹⁶ Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News! ¹⁷ If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust. ¹⁸ What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News. ¹⁹ Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. ²⁰ When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. ²¹ When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. ²² When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. ²³ I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings. ²⁴ Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! ²⁵ All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. ²⁶ So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. ²⁷ I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified." 1 Corinthians 9:1-27 (New Living Translation)

18- 1 Corinthians 9:12

"¹² If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

We suppose that many people **will not** go to the trouble to check out what they are told the scriptures are teaching. After all, they hold those people who offered that list of scriptures in such high regard because of their background and their position. This is beginning to remind us of Hans Christian Anderson's story about the Emperor's new clothes. Of course we admit that the story of the Emperor's new clothes is only applicable if we find that there are no scriptures in the Bible that teach that there is a "*universal church*".

Many years ago there was an Emperor so exceedingly fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on being well dressed. He cared nothing about reviewing his soldiers, going to the theatre, or going for a ride in his carriage, except to show off his new clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day, and instead of saying, as one might, about any other ruler, "The King's in council," here they always said, "The Emperor's in his dressing room."

In the great city where he lived, life was always gay. Every day many strangers came to town, and among them one day came two swindlers. They let it be known they were weavers, and they said they could weave the most magnificent fabrics imaginable. Not only were their colors and patterns uncommonly fine, but clothes made of this cloth had a wonderful way of becoming invisible to anyone who was unfit for his office, or who was unusually stupid.

"Those would be just the clothes for me," thought the Emperor. "If I wore them I would be able to discover which men in my empire are unfit for their posts. And I could tell the wise men from the fools. Yes, I certainly must get some of the stuff woven for me right away." He paid the two swindlers a large sum of money to start work at once.

They set up two looms and pretended to weave, though there was nothing on the looms. All the finest silk and the purest old thread which they demanded went into their traveling bags, while they worked the empty looms far into the night.

"I'd like to know how those weavers are getting on with the cloth," the Emperor thought, but he felt slightly uncomfortable when he remembered that those who were unfit for their position would not be able to see the fabric. It couldn't have been that he doubted himself, yet he thought he'd rather send someone else to see how things were

going. The whole town knew about the cloth's peculiar power, and all were impatient to find out how stupid their neighbors were.

"I'll send my honest old minister to the weavers," the Emperor decided. "He'll be the best one to tell me how the material looks, for he's a sensible man and no one does his duty better." So the honest old minister went to the room where the two swindlers sat working away at their empty looms. "Heaven help me," he thought as his eyes flew wide open, "I can't see anything at all". But he did not say so.

Both the swindlers begged him to be so kind as to come near to approve the excellent pattern, the beautiful colors. They pointed to the empty looms, and the poor old minister stared as hard as he dared. He couldn't see anything, because there was nothing to see. "Heaven have mercy," he thought. "Can it be that I'm a fool? I'd have never guessed it, and not a soul must know. Am I unfit to be the minister? It would never do to let on that I can't see the cloth."

"Don't hesitate to tell us what you think of it," said one of the weavers. "Oh, it's beautiful-it's enchanting." The old minister peered through his spectacles. "Such a pattern, what colors!" I'll be sure to tell the Emperor how delighted I am with it." "We're pleased to hear that," the swindlers said. They proceeded to name all the colors and to explain the intricate pattern. The old minister paid the closest attention, so that he could tell it all to the Emperor. And so he did.

The swindlers at once asked for more money, more silk and gold thread, to get on with the weaving. But it all went into their pockets. Not a thread went into the looms, though they worked at their weaving as hard as ever.

The Emperor presently sent another trustworthy official to see how the work progressed and how soon it would be ready. The same thing happened to him that had happened to the minister. He looked and he looked, but as there was nothing to see in the looms. He couldn't see anything.

"Isn't it a beautiful piece of goods?" the swindlers asked him, as they displayed and described their imaginary pattern. "I know I'm not stupid," the man thought, "so it must be that I'm unworthy of my good office. That's strange. I mustn't let anyone find it out, though." So he praised the material he did not see. He declared he was delighted with the beautiful colors and the exquisite pattern. To the Emperor he said, "It held me spellbound."

All the town was talking of this splendid cloth, and the Emperor wanted to see it for himself while it was still in the looms. Attended by a band of chosen men, among whom were his two old trusted officials-the ones who had been to the weavers-he set out to see the two swindlers. He found them weaving with might and main, but without a thread in their looms.

"Magnificent," said the two officials already duped. "Just look, Your Majesty, what colors! What a design!" They pointed to the empty looms, each supposing that the

others could see the stuff. "What's this?" thought the Emperor. "I can't see anything. This is terrible! Am I a fool? Am I unfit to be the Emperor? What a thing to happen to me of all people! - "Oh! It's *very* pretty," he said. "It has my highest approval." And he nodded approbation at the empty loom. Nothing could make him say that he couldn't see anything.

His whole retinue stared and stared. One saw no more than another, but they all joined the Emperor in exclaiming, "Oh! It's *very* pretty," and they advised him to wear clothes made of this wonderful cloth especially for the great procession he was soon to lead. "Magnificent! Excellent! Unsurpassed!" were bandied from mouth to mouth, and everyone did his best to seem well pleased. The Emperor gave each of the swindlers a cross to wear in his buttonhole, and the title of "Sir Weaver."

Before the procession the swindlers sat up all night and burned more than six candles, to show how busy they were finishing the Emperor's new clothes. They pretended to take the cloth off the loom. They made cuts in the air with huge scissors. And at last they said, "Now the Emperor's new clothes are ready for him."

Then the Emperor himself came with his noblest noblemen, and the swindlers each raised an arm as if they were holding something. They said, "These are the trousers, here's the coat, and this is the mantle," naming each garment. "All of them are as light as a spider web. One would almost think he had nothing on, but that's what makes them so fine." "Exactly," all the noblemen agreed, though they could see nothing, for there was nothing to see.

"If Your Imperial Majesty will condescend to take your clothes off," said the swindlers, "we will help you on with your new ones here in front of the long mirror." The Emperor undressed, and the swindlers pretended to put his new clothes on him, one garment after another. They took him around the waist and seemed to be fastening something - that was his train-as the Emperor turned round and round before the looking glass.

"How well Your Majesty's new clothes look. Aren't they becoming!" He heard on all sides, "That pattern, so perfect! Those colors, so suitable! It is a magnificent outfit." Then the minister of public processions announced: "Your Majesty's canopy is waiting outside." "Well, I'm supposed to be ready," the Emperor said, and turned again for one last look in the mirror. "It is a remarkable fit, isn't it?" He seemed to regard his costume with the greatest interest.

The noblemen who were to carry his train stooped low and reached for the floor as if they were picking up his mantle. Then they pretended to lift and hold it high. They didn't dare admit they had nothing to hold. So off went the Emperor in procession under his splendid canopy. Everyone in the streets and the windows said, "Oh, how fine are the Emperor's new clothes! Don't they fit him to perfection? And see his long train!" Nobody would confess that he couldn't see anything, for that would prove him either unfit for his

position, or a fool. No costume the Emperor had worn before was ever such a complete success.

"But he hasn't got anything on," a little child said.

"Did you ever hear such innocent prattle?" said its father. And one person whispered to another what the child had said, "He hasn't anything on. A child says he hasn't anything on." "But he hasn't got anything on!" the whole town cried out at last.

The Emperor shivered, for he suspected they were right. **But he thought, "This procession has got to go on." So he walked more proudly than ever, as his noblemen held high the train that wasn't there at all.**

AND SO, BECAUSE OF PEER PRESSURE, THE PROCESSION OF THE ERROR OF A "UNIVERSAL CHURCH" GOES ON AND ON AND ON AND ON AND ON AND ON.

WHAT IS THE DANGER OF TEACHING THERE IS A "UNIVERSAL CHURCH?"

"¹ Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor; So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor. " Ecclesiastes 10:1 (New King James Version)

Danger #1

The Bride of Christ will be dwelling with Jesus Christ for eternity **inside** the Holy City Jerusalem on the New Earth. When a person believes in a "universal church", they expect to be a member of the Bride of Christ even if they are not serving Jesus Christ as a member of a scriptural church here on this earth because they are a member of "the church". There is going to be great disappointment when many people discover they were taught error by someone they highly respected and counted on for wisdom and honor. When they attend the Marriage of the Lamb, they will be shocked to find themselves a wedding guest rather than part of the Bride of Christ.

If all saved people will be future residents of the Holy City Jerusalem, who are the nations living **outside** the Holy City Jerusalem on the New Earth? THE LOST? I don't think so!

²² *But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.* ²³ *The city*

had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.²⁴ And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth **bring** their glory and honor **into** it.²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).²⁶ And they shall **bring** the glory and the honor of the nations **into** it." Revelation 21:22-26 (New King James Version)

Why did the writer of the Book of Hebrews tell us we will see two groups of saved people living on the New Earth when we get there? " ²² Instead, you have come (1) to Mount Zion, (2) to the city of the living God (the heavenly Jerusalem), (3) to myriads of angels in festive gathering,²³ (4) **to the assembly of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven**, (5) to God who is the Judge of all, (6) **to the spirits of righteous people made perfect**,²⁴ (7) to Jesus (mediator of a new covenant), and (8) to the sprinkled blood, which says better things than the [blood] of Abel." Hebrews 12:22-24 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

The writer of the Book of Hebrews shared that when we get to the New Earth we will see **the assembly** (ἐκκλησία) **of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven**. The Greek word "ἐκκλησία" is pronounced "ek-klay-see'-ah" in English. The Greek word "ἐκκλησία" means a called out assembly. The firstborn is Jesus Christ. The called out assembly of the firstborn is His Bride. They are members of that special group Jesus Christ gave His local, scriptural churches the authority to bind a saved person into.

Then the writer of the Book of Hebrews also shared that when we get to the New Earth we will see **the spirits** (πνεῦμα) **of righteous people made perfect**. The Greek word "πνεῦμα" is pronounced "pnyoo'-mah" in English. The Greek word "πνεῦμα" means the vital spirit or life, that is, the principle of life residing in man. It is the breath breathed by God into man and again returning to God. That is, the spiritual entity in man (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 104:29; Eccl. 12:7). The spirit is that part that can live independently of the body. The writer of the Book of Hebrews shared that there will be those on the New Earth who's sins were paid for by Jesus Christ (they were made perfect by the blood of the Lamb). But they never became part of the called out assembly of the firstborn because they never received scriptural baptism and thereby became a member of a local, scriptural church.

There's the danger! Because they have been told they are a member of a "universal church", they never seek scriptural baptism and consequently they never serve Jesus Christ as a member of a local, scriptural church.

I HAVE ALSO OTHER SHEEP—WHICH DO NOT BELONG TO THIS FOLD

"¹⁴ "I am the Good Shepherd. And I know my sheep and my sheep know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I am laying down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ **I have also other sheep—which do not belong to this fold.** Those also I must bring, and they will listen to my voice; and they shall become one flock under one Shepherd." John 10:14-16 (Weymouth New Testament) Christ will bring all His sheep in all His folds together at the Catching Up.

"³⁸ And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and **he followeth not us:** and we forbad him, **because he followeth not us.** ³⁹ But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For he that is not against us is on our part." Mark 9:38-40 (King James Version)

"⁴⁹ Then John said in reply, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because **he does not follow in our company.**" ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you." Luke 9:49-50 (New American Bible)

"¹⁶ "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. **Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it.**

¹⁷ It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law." Luke 16:16-17 (New International Version)

"⁴² Jesus said to them, "Surely you have read this in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders did not want became the cornerstone. The Lord did this, and it is wonderful to us.' ⁴³

"So I tell you that **the kingdom of God will be taken away from you.** It will be given to people who do the things God wants in his kingdom. ⁴⁴ The person who falls on this stone will be broken. But if the stone falls on him, he will be crushed." ⁴⁵ The leading priests and the

Pharisees heard these stories that Jesus told. **They knew he was talking about them.**" Matthew 21:42-45 (International Children's Bible)

"²² **And he said unto his disciples**, Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. ²³ For the life is more than the food, and the body than the raiment. ²⁴ Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither reap; which have no store-chamber nor barn; and God feedeth them: of how much more value are ye than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit unto the measure of his life? ²⁶ If then ye are not able to do even that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God doth so clothe the grass in the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more shall he clothe you, O ye of little faith? ²⁹ And seek not ye what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. ³⁰ For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. ³¹ Yet seek ye his kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you. ³² **Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**" Luke 12:22-32 (American Standard Version)

THE NEW EARTH

Not everyone who was saved (made perfect by the blood of the Lamb) during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ were members of the church in Jerusalem. There were the disciples of John the Baptist who did not follow Christ when He called to them to be a part of His flock that we call the "church in Jerusalem". In addition, there were those who began with their name on the "church roll" of the church in Jerusalem but who abandoned Him. " ⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard this, they said, "This is a difficult statement. Who can accept it? ⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶² What if you saw the Son of Man going up to the place where he was before? ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. ⁶⁴ But there are some among you who do not believe." For from the beginning Jesus knew those who wouldn't believe, as well as the one who would betray him. ⁶⁵ So he said, "That's why

I told you that no one can come to me unless it be granted him by the Father." ⁶⁶ As a result, many of his disciples turned back and no longer associated with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, "You don't want to leave, too, do you?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ Besides, we have believed and remain convinced that you are the Holy One of God." John 6:60-69 (International Standard Version)

Those disciples of John the Baptist who did not follow Christ when He called to them to be a part of His flock that we call the "church in Jerusalem", remained a separate flock. They were saved but choose to serve God as a separate flock, a separate evangelizing assembly. Their main message to those around them was the message John the Baptist shared, " ¹ *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, ² And saying, **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** ³ For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, **Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.** ⁴ And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, ⁶ And were baptized of him in Jordan, **confessing their sins.** ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to **flee from the wrath to come?** ⁸ **Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:** ⁹ And **think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father:** for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. ¹⁰ And now also **the axe is laid unto the root of the trees:** therefore every **tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.** ¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but **he that cometh after me** is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he **shall baptize you with Holy Spirit Power** (there is no Greek indefinite article), and with fire: ¹² Whose fan is in his hand, and **he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner;** but **he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**" Matthew 3:1-12 (King James Version)**

The gospel (good news) of salvation had been known by mankind since the Garden of Eden. The Lord explained to Adam and Eve that someone had to die for the sins they committed. " ²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Romans 6:23 (New American Bible-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

God shed the blood of an innocent animal in the Garden of Eden in order to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. " 20 The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them." Genesis 3:20-21 (New Revised Standard Version). Could Jehovah have clothed their nakedness without sacrificing an innocent animal? Of course He could have clothed their nakedness without sacrificing an innocent animal. But God was giving them a reality picture of their need for the sacrifice that His Son, Jesus Christ, would give one day in the future. From that day forward, every Patriarch testified about the death of the coming Messiah each time He offered a sacrifice to Jehovah. As the innocent animal was dying, the people of the Old Testament went to God in prayer and asked forgiveness of their sins. While looking forward in faith, they asked that the sacrifice the innocent Son of God would give one day, pay the sin debt they owed God. Every sin has to be paid by either the Messiah or by each of us. Each time the Patriarch was asked by his friends and family why he was sacrificing animals and birds, he was to explain the gospel to them. He was to tell them about the death of the coming Messiah and he was to invite them to repent of their own sins and accept the coming Messiah as their personal Savior. It did not take them any more faith to believe that He **would** die then it takes for us to believe that He **has** died. All are saved by faith in Christ because of the grace (the unmerited favor) of God. The age or **Dispensation of Grace** will last from the time of Adam and Eve to the last person who will take advantage of God's glorious plan of salvation (before we go back into unmeasured time, that is to say, eternity). " ¹ And you, when you were dead in your offences, and sins, ² Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief: ³ In which also we all conversed in time past, in the desires of our flesh, fulfilling the will of the flesh and of our thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest: ⁴ But God, (who is rich in mercy,) for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ, (**by whose grace you are saved.**) ⁶ And hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus. ⁷ That he might shew in the ages to come the abundant riches of his grace, in his bounty towards us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; ⁹ Not of works, that no man may glory. ¹⁰ For we are his

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them. ¹¹ For which cause be mindful that you, being heretofore Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh, made by hands; ¹² That you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the conversation of Israel, and strangers to the testament, having no hope of the promise, and without God in this world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities in his flesh: ¹⁵ Making void the law of commandments contained in decrees; that he might make the two in himself into one new man, making peace; ¹⁶ And might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, killing the enmities in himself. ¹⁷ And coming, he preached peace to you that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh. ¹⁸ For by him we have access both in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God, ²⁰ Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: ²¹ In whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord. ²² In whom you also are built together into an habitation of God in the Spirit." Ephesians 2:1-22 (Douay-Rheims Version, New Catholic Edition)

When John the Baptist began his ministry, the theme of his messages was "the Messiah who was promised many years ago is about to appear". After his death at the hands of Herod the tetrarch (Matthew 14:1) those disciples who had stayed with John the Baptist rather than follow Christ, continued to share the messages that John the Baptist had proclaimed, "the Messiah who was promised many years ago is about to appear".

1- Therefore, Repent ye.

2- Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3- Therefore, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4- Therefore, confess your sins.

5- Therefore, flee from the wrath to come.

6- Therefore, bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

7- Therefore, think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.

8- Therefore, the axe is laid unto the root of the trees.

9- Therefore, the tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10- Therefore, He that cometh shall baptize you with Holy Spirit Power (there is no Greek indefinite article). The problem was that they still refused to become a member of the church in Jerusalem and they remained a separate group so they were never immersed in the **complete** sevenfold power of the Holy Spirit like the Bride of Christ received on the day of Pentecost.

³⁸ And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and **he followeth not us**: and we forbad him, **because he followeth not us**. ³⁹ But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For he that is not against us is on our part." Mark 9:38-40 (King James Version)

⁴⁹ Then John said in reply, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because **he does not follow in our company**." ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you." Luke 9:49-50 (New American Bible)

Consequently, those who still refused to become a disciple of Christ, those who remained a separate group, (1) were not in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, (2) were not filled with the **complete** sevenfold power of the Holy Spirit and (3) were not involved in the evangelistic service on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 accepted Jesus Christ and became members of the church in Jerusalem.

So those disciples who had stayed with John the Baptist rather than follow Christ continued to share the messages that John the Baptist had proclaimed "the Messiah who was promised many years ago is about to appear".

11- Therefore, He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner.

12- Therefore, He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

We know that those 12 men mentioned in Acts 19:1-7 were not saved under the direct ministry of John the Baptist. If they had been, they would have heard John the Baptist preach about the Holy Spirit and about Holy Spirit power. They must have thought that John the Baptist could pass his authority to baptize down to his disciples and they were able to pass the authority done to their disciples, etc. " ¹ While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled across the hill country to Ephesus, where he met some of the Lord's followers. ² He asked them, "When you put your faith in Jesus, were you given Holy Spirit Power (there is no Greek indefinite article here - see the paper "The Sevenfold Power Of The Holy Spirit" on this website)?" "No!" they answered. "We have never even heard of Holy Spirit Power (there is no Greek indefinite article here)." ³ "Then why were you baptized?" Paul asked. They answered, "Because of what John taught." ⁴ Paul replied, "John baptized people so that they would turn to God. But he also told them that someone else was coming, and that they should put their faith in him. Jesus is the one that John was talking about." ⁵ After the people heard Paul say this, they were baptized in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus. ⁶ Then Paul placed his hands on them. The Holy Spirit was given to them, and they spoke unknown languages and prophesied." Acts 19:1-6 (Contemporary English Version)

Please note that God only gave two people the authority to baptize. One was John the Baptist and the other was Jesus Christ. But John the Baptist **could not** pass his authority down to his disciples. Jesus Christ **could** and **did** pass His authority down to His disciples, His local, scriptural churches. " ¹ Now as soon as the Master was aware that the Pharisees had heard it said, "Jesus is gaining and baptizing more disciples than John"— ² though Jesus Himself did not baptize them, but His disciples did— ³ He left Judaea and returned to Galilee." John 4:1-3 (Weymouth New Testament)

" ⁵ But the angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here! For He has been resurrected, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell His disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead. In fact, **He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there.**' Listen, I have told you." ⁸ So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell His disciples the news. ⁹ Just then Jesus met them and said, "Good morning!" They came up, took

hold of His feet, and worshiped Him.¹⁰ Then Jesus told them, “Do not be afraid. **Go and tell My brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see Me there.**”¹¹ As they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.¹² After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money¹³ and told them, “Say this, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole Him while we were sleeping.’”¹⁴ If this reaches the governor’s ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble.”¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day.¹⁶ **The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them.**¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped, **but some doubted.**¹⁸ Then Jesus came near and said to them, **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”**¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of (by the authority of) the Father and (by the authority of) the Son and (by the authority of) the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:5-20 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

OK, we see where Jesus Christ gave the members of His local, scriptural churches the authority to go out and make other disciples, to baptize them and to teach them. But what about the saved across the world who took advantage of Christ's glorious offer of salvation but never advanced any further by receiving scriptural baptism and serving Christ as a member of a local, scriptural church? Are they also under any responsibility to spread the good news of salvation?

¹² Consider this. I am coming soon. **And my reward is with me, to render to each one according to his work.** As for myself, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the originating cause and the One who brings to completion. Spiritually prosperous are those who wash their robes in order that theirs shall be the authority over the tree of the life and in order that they may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and those who practice magical arts, and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who is fond of and practices falsehood.¹⁶ I, Jesus, sent my messenger (John the brother of James) to testify these things to you in the assemblies. As for myself, I am the root and the offspring of David, the star, the bright one, the morning star. And (1) **the Spirit and the bride** are saying, Be coming. **And (2) he who hears,** let him say, Be coming. And he who is thirsty, let him be coming. He who

is desirous, let him take at once the water of life gratis. It is I who am testifying to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll; if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which stand written in this scroll. And if anyone shall take away from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God shall take away his portion from the tree of the life and from the holy city, from the things which stand written in this scroll. ²⁰ *He who testifies these things says, Surely, I am coming soon. Amen. Be coming, Lord Jesus.* ²¹ *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all."* Revelation 22:12-21 (Wuest New Testament: An Expanded Translation)

The Bride of Christ, the members of His local, scriptural churches, were made administrators of the executive phase of Christ's Kingdom by Jesus Christ when he ascended back to the Throne Room of God. " ¹⁴ *These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;* ¹⁵ *but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the **house of God**, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**"* 1 Timothy 3:13-15 (New King James Version)

" ¹ *To Theophilus. The first book I wrote was about everything Jesus began to do and teach* ² *until the day he was taken up into heaven. Before this, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Jesus told the apostles he had chosen what they should do.* ³ *After his death, he showed himself to them and proved in many ways that he was alive. The apostles saw Jesus during the forty days after he was raised from the dead, and he spoke to them about the kingdom of God.* ⁴ *Once when he was eating with them, he told them not to leave Jerusalem. He said, "Wait here to receive the promise from the Father which I told you about.* ⁵ *John baptized people with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with Holy Spirit Power (there is no Greek indefinite article)."* ⁶ *When the apostles were all together, they asked Jesus, "Lord, are you now going to give the kingdom back to Israel?"* ⁷ *Jesus said to them, "The Father is the only One who has the authority to decide dates and times. These things are not for you to know.* ⁸ *But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, **you will receive power.** You will be my witnesses—in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world."* ⁹ *After he said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud hid him from their sight.* ¹⁰ *As he was going, they were looking into the sky. Suddenly, two men wearing white clothes stood beside them.* ¹¹ *They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into the sky? Jesus, whom you saw taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you saw him go."* Acts 1:1-11 (New Century Version)

Does a person have to be a member of a local, scriptural church in order to live on the New Earth? **NO!** Does a person have to be a member of a local, scriptural church in order to be part of the assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven? **Yes!**

Danger #2

When a person believes in a "*universal church*", they expect to be a member of the Bride of Christ regardless of whether they are serving Jesus Christ as a member of a scriptural church because they are a member of "the church". However, if that were true, why did Jesus Christ tell us there will be both the Bride of Christ and there will be wedding guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? Please note that the wedding guests were not invited in order for them to be the Bride but rather, wedding guests. Those wedding guests will include John the Baptist, a friend of the Groom, Jesus Christ. " ¹ *Jesus again in reply spoke to them in parables, saying,* ² *"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.* ³ *He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come.* ⁴ *A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast.'* ⁵ *Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business.* ⁶ *The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.* ⁷ *The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.* ⁸ *Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come.* ⁹ *Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.'* ¹⁰ *The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests." Matthew 22:1-10 (New American Bible-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)*

Danger #3

How many times do we hear churches complaining about lower attendance and lower participation of their members? How many times do we hear about fewer baptisms? Why is it so difficult to motivate the members of Christ's churches to go out and tell others about salvation? Why is attendance to Bible classes so low? Perhaps it is because we teach our members that

everyone who is saved will inherit the same blessings, whether or not they are a scripturally baptized member of one of Christ's local, scriptural churches or not.

Of course we admit, again, that the story of the Emperor's new clothes is only applicable if we **cannot** find any scriptures in the Bible that teaches that there is a "*universal church*", so let us continue our study. If you know of any scripture that teaches that there is a "*universal church*", please consider it your duty to share it with us. Our email address is roberttanner@bayourouge.net.

19- Ephesians 1:22-23

"²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The Bible is full of types and shadows. A type is something that is an example of something else that has been, is now or will be. The marriage of a man and a woman is a perfect type of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Bride. Jesus Christ explained it this way, *"⁴ He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." Matthew 19:4-6 (New American Bible - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)*

Dear reader, we hope you have noticed that all of the members of Christ's scriptural **churches**, present on this earth and already departed into Paradise, are at this time espoused to Christ. Paul wrote the book of 2 Corinthians to the members of the **church** in Corinth. Each one of the members of the **church** in Corinth had received scriptural baptism. After it was studied (and perhaps copied) by the **church** in Corinth, the letter began a circuit where it was passed

around from **church** to **church**. Most, if not all of the books of the New Testament were on that circuit. " ¹ *I want you to put up with a little foolishness from me. I'm sure that you will.* ² *I'm as protective of you as God is. After all, you're a virgin whom I promised in marriage to one man—Christ.*" 2 Corinthians 11:1-2 (God's Word)

We find the same scripture in the International Children's Bible, " ¹ *I wish you would be patient with me even when I am a little foolish. But you are already doing that.* ² *I am jealous over you. And this jealousy comes from God. I promised to give you to Christ. He must be your only husband. I want to give you to Christ to be his pure bride.*" 2 Corinthians 11:1-2

Even though the members of Christ's scriptural churches have not yet left to go to the Third Heaven, their relationship with Christ is considered as sacred as being married to Christ right now. In the New Testament, when a woman was espoused to a man prior to being married, it was considered as sacred as being married except they did not engage in sex. That is why Joseph, in the verse below, considered divorcing Mary. " ¹⁸ *This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through Holy Spirit power (there is no Greek indefinite article-see "The Power Of The Sevenfold Spirit Of God" on our website)¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.* ²⁰ *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.* ²¹ *She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*" Matthew 1:18-21 (New International Version)

Isn't it marvelous how many of the types in the Bible and in Christ's parables teach us about future events? We will not be joined with Christ until He comes (1) to get His Bride and (2) to get the wedding guests to attend the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.. Yes, Jesus taught that He would also be retrieving wedding guests as well as His Bride. **Please note, as you read this passage, that the bridesmaids were not the Bride.** " ¹ *Then will the Kingdom of the Heavens be found to be like ten bridesmaids who took their torches and went out to meet the bridegroom.* ² *Five of them were foolish and five were wise.* ³ *For the foolish, when they took their torches,*

did not provide themselves with oil; ⁴ but the wise, besides their torches, took oil in their flasks. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, so that meanwhile they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ But at midnight there is a loud cry, "The bridegroom! Go out and meet him!" ⁷ "Then all those bridesmaids roused themselves and trimmed their torches. ⁸ " 'Give us some of your oil,' said the foolish ones to the wise, 'for our torches are going out.' ⁹ " 'But perhaps,' replied the wise, 'there will not be enough for all of us. Go to the shops rather, and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ "So they went to buy. But meanwhile the bridegroom came; those bridesmaids who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. ¹¹ "Afterwards the other bridesmaids came and cried, " 'Sir, Sir, open the door to us.' ¹² " 'In solemn truth I tell you,' he replied, 'I do not know you.' ¹³ "Keep awake therefore; for you know neither the day nor the hour." Matthew 25:1-13 (Weymouth New Testament)

⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshipped God who is seated upon the throne, saying, Amen. Hallelujah. And there came out a voice from the throne, saying, Be giving praise to our God, all those who are His bond slaves, those who fear Him, those who are of a lowly station in life and those who are great. And I heard a sound like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah, because the Lord our God, the Omnipotent, has assumed His royal authority. Let us be rejoicing and let us be glad. And let us give the glory to Him at once, because **the wedding of the Lamb** has come, and **His bride** has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should array herself in fine linen, shining, bright, clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he says to me, Write at once. Spiritually prosperous and fortunate are those who have been invited to the banquet of the wedding of the Lamb. And he says to me, These are the dependable words of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he says to me, See to it that you do not do so. I am a fellow bond slave of yours and of your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Revelation 19:4 (Wuest New Testament: An Expanded Translation)

Jesus Christ taught in His parables on marriage that there will be wedding guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. ¹ Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He

sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' ⁵ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' ¹⁰ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests." *Matthew 22:1-10 (New Revised Standard Version)*

Was Jesus teaching that the king was sending his servants out to invite others to be **the bride** at the wedding or was he sending his servants out to invite others to be **wedding guests**? We also find on another occasion, "¹⁶ Jesus said to him, "There was once a man who was giving a great feast to which he invited many people. ¹⁷ When it was time for the feast, he sent his servant to tell his guests, 'Come, everything is ready!' ¹⁸ But they all began, one after another, to make excuses. The first one told the servant, 'I have bought a field and must go and look at it; please accept my apologies.' ¹⁹ Another one said, 'I have bought five pairs of oxen and am on my way to try them out; please accept my apologies.' ²⁰ Another one said, 'I have just gotten married, and for that reason I cannot come.' ²¹ The servant went back and told all this to his master. The master was furious and said to his servant, 'Hurry out to the streets and alleys of the town, and bring back the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' ²² Soon the servant said, 'Your order has been carried out, sir, but there is room for more.' ²³ So the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the country roads and lanes and make people come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you all that none of those who were invited will taste my dinner!" *Luke 14:16-24 (Today's English Version)*

Once the bride and the groom are married, Jesus Christ said in Matthew 19:4-6, they are considered one flesh, "**and the two shall become one flesh so they are no longer two, but one flesh**". That means that the Living God sees the bride as the body of the groom and He sees the groom as the body of the bride. Now if we are going to have wedding guests at the Marriage

Supper of the Lamb, Christ will not be taking the wedding guests as His Bride. Therefore, the wedding guests are not part of His body. But when Christ takes all the baptized members of all the local, scriptural New Testament churches combined, that is to say, the institution of the "church" as His Bride, they will be considered one body and they will reside with Christ in the Holy City Jerusalem. The wedding guests will be part of the nations living outside the Holy City Jerusalem. ⁷ "Write to the angel of **the church in Philadelphia**: "The Holy One, the True One, the One who has the key of David, who opens and no one will close, and closes and no one opens says: ⁸ I know your works. Because you have limited strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name, look, I have placed before you an open door that no one is able to close. ⁹ Take note! I will make those from the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying—note this—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to endure, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is going to come over the whole world to test those who live on the earth. ¹¹ I am coming quickly. Hold on to what you have, so that no one takes your crown. ¹² The victor: I will make him a pillar in **the sanctuary of My God**, and he will **never go out** again. **I will write on him** the name of My God and **the name of the city of My God—the new Jerusalem**, which comes down out of heaven from My God—and My new name." Revelation 3:7-12 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

I absolutely, completely agree with Ephesians 1:22-23. However, all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations are not all members of the body of Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of His churches. The marriage of a man and a woman is a perfect type of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the composite of all the members of all local, scriptural New Testament churches combined, that is to say, the "church". So we see that this scripture the proponents listed, Ephesians 1:22-23 (printed above), certainly does not prove that there is a "universal church".

20- Ephesians 2:19-22

"¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

We explained in the previous scripture, Ephesians 1:22-23, what Paul meant when he wrote, *"²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.* As we examine Ephesians 2:19-22 (printed above), we see that Paul is continuing to encourage the local, scriptural church in Ephesus by pointing out that their members were a component of a temple being built as a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus Christ was the chief corner stone.

What did Paul base his opinion on when he said that the church in Ephesus was a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God? Jesus had told His disciples, the local church in Jerusalem, *"¹⁵ If ye love me, keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; ¹⁷ Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* John 14:15-17 (King James Version)

That was also the truth that Peter was sharing with the scripturally baptized Jews who had accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and had become members of a local, New Testament church. *"¹ Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, ² As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: ³ If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. ⁴ To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ⁵ Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, **an holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. ⁶ Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be*

confounded. ⁷ Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, ⁸ And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. ⁹ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: ¹⁰ Which **in time past were not a people**, but **are now** the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." 1 Peter 2:1-10 (King James Version)

We know Peter was writing to scripturally baptized members of scriptural churches because we find that in 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter exhorted the elders in the group to whom he wrote to feed the flock over whom they had been given oversight. He also cautioned the pastors not to lord it over the flock to whom they had been given oversight but, rather, to be an example to their flock. Since the saved disciples of John the Baptist did not have pastors we know that Peter was only addressing members of scriptural churches. Please note that Peter said the members of scriptural churches were **a holy, kingly priesthood**. Peter did not say that the saved disciples of John the Baptist or the saved disciples of Jesus who later abandoned Him made up **a holy, kingly priesthood**. " ⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples went back; and walked no more with him. ⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? ⁶⁸ And Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ And we have believed and have known, that thou art the Christ, the Son of God. " John 6:66-69 (Douay-Rheims Version, New Catholic Edition)

21- Ephesians 3:8-11

" ⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who

created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the Heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,..."

Only the Three Mighty Ones, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all knowing. Picture one angel speaking to another angel and saying, "Did you hear the news that one of the members of the church in Jerusalem is proclaiming? Peter, one of their members, said the Lord told him that the earth will burn up with fervent heat. I didn't know that until I heard Peter proclaim it." And the second angel says, "Christ's churches have been so successful in proclaiming the good news of salvation that it is hard to believe most of them will become cold. But I heard that John recorded that he was told there would be a time when most of Christ's churches would have a name that they were alive but they will be cold and barren" A third angel who overheard said, "I heard that the Lord revealed to Paul, one of the members of the church in Antioch, that one day those people who have been saved will be given sinless bodies and will be transported to the Throne Room of God".

That is what Paul meant when he wrote, "... now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the Heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,..." That scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit shares knowledge with members of Christ's local, scriptural churches so they can share it with others. In fact, do you know of any writer of any books of the New Testament who did not have scriptural baptism? But please note that the scripture the proponents listed, Ephesians 3:8-11, as proof that there is a "*universal church*", does not teach that.

22- Ephesians 3:21

" ²¹ to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

We have another instance of Paul referring to the institution of the church. Naturally, since the scripture was written to a local, scriptural church, the scripturally baptized members do indeed belong to the institution of "the church", that is, the composite of all the local, scriptural New Testament churches combined. Do you want to give Jesus Christ the greatest honor and glory? Do not just get your name on a church roll of a local, scriptural church but (1) study to show yourself a workman approved by God and (2) serve Him faithfully, teaching others the truths you have learned instead of fading back into the world as some have done. The scripture they listed, Ephesians 3:21, teaches us that the Lord receives the greatest honor and glory when we serve Him in a local, scriptural church. But it does not teach us that there is a "*universal church*".

23- Ephesians 5:22-23

"²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

We have another instance of Paul referring to the institution of the church. Naturally, since the scripture was written to a local, scriptural church, the scripturally baptized members do indeed belong to the institution of "the church", that is, the composite of all the local, scriptural New Testament churches combined. We already discussed the concept of the body of Christ when we examined scripture # 19 (Ephesians 1:22-23) in detail. Just as the husband is the head of the wife (that's what Jesus Christ said), Christ is the head of His Bride, the composite of all the local, scriptural churches, the institution of "church". But again, the scripture they listed as proof, Ephesians 5:22-23, does not teach that there is a "*universal church*".

24- Philippians 1:1

"¹ Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:..

There is nothing in the entire book of Philippians that even hints at a "universal church", including this verse. On the contrary, as we read verse 1, it is evident that this verse was written to a local, scriptural church. A "universal church" would not have bishops and deacons. So we find that this scripture they listed does not teach a "universal church" either.

25- Colossians 1:18

"¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

We already discussed the concept of the body of Christ when we examined scripture # 19 (Ephesians 1:22-23) in detail. Just as the husband is the head of the wife (that's what Jesus Christ said), Christ is the head of His Bride, His body. So we find another scripture that the proponents of a "universal church" listed that does not teach a "universal church".

26- 1 Timothy 2:9-14

⁹ In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; ¹⁰ But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. ¹¹ Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. ¹² But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was first formed, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

Who is speaking? Paul is speaking. To whom is he speaking? Paul is speaking to Timothy. What is the subject under discussion? Paul tells Timothy, "¹⁴ *These things to you I am writing, hoping to come to you quickly, but if I delay, in order that you may know how it is*

necessary in the nature of the case for men to be conducting themselves in God's house which is of such a nature as to be the living God's assembly, a pillar and support of the truth. And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness; who was made visible in the sphere of flesh, vindicated in the sphere of spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." 1 Timothy 3:14 (Wuest New Testament: An Expanded Translation)

Paul is instructing Timothy how a person should conduct themselves in the assembly of the Living God, the institution we call "the church". Among the things Paul mentions in this first letter to Timothy, is the way men and women are to dress and to behave as members of one of Christ's local, New Testament churches. How do we know that Paul is referring to a local church and not a "*universal church*"? Would Paul require Timothy to instruct the women who were part of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations? How would Timothy instruct believing women who had already died? How would Timothy instruct believing women from every tribe and tongue and nation?

It is our understanding that the prostitutes of that day would adorn themselves with braided hair, gold, pearls and costly clothing. Paul did not want the godly women to be confused with a prostitute because that would be a reflection on the local, New Testament churches. Every instruction in this letter applies to living members of local, scriptural churches, not members of a "*universal church*".

27- 1 Timothy 3:1-15

"¹ This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³ not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴ one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶ not a novice, lest being puffed up with

pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.⁷ Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.⁸ Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.¹¹ Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.¹² Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Do you see anything in 1 Timothy 3:1-15 (printed above) that teaches that there is a "universal church"? 1 Timothy 3:1-15 is one of the scriptures the proponents of a "universal church" listed. Paul is instructing Timothy how a person should conduct themselves in the assembly of the Living God, the institution we call "the church". Among the things Paul mentions in this first letter to Timothy, is the qualifications of a bishop of one of the local, New Testament churches. In addition, Paul mentions the qualifications of the wife of someone who is being considered as a bishop. Also, Paul instructs Timothy about the qualifications of a man and his wife if the man is being considered as a deacon in one of the local, New Testament churches. Every instruction in this letter applies to living members and officers of local, scriptural churches, not to members or officers of a "universal church". Paul ends up saying that the institution of the Living God's church (the composite of all His local, scriptural churches combined) is the house of God and the pillar and ground of the truth.

28- 1 Timothy 4:14

"¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

This is sad. There is nothing in 1 Timothy 4:14 that even hints that there is a "*universal church*" and yet it is listed as a proof. Read the scripture in your own Bible.

Barnes in "Barnes' Notes on the New Testament" shared these different observations, " Among the Jews it was customary to lay hands on the head of a person who was set apart to any particular office. This was done, not to impart any power or ability, but to *designate* that they received their authority, or commission, from those who thus laid their hands on them, as the act of laying hands on the sick by the Savior was an act signifying that the power of healing came from him. Ordination has been uniformly performed in this way. Though the seven deacons had been chosen by the church to this work, yet they derived their immediate commission and authority from the apostles. Every instruction in this letter applies to living members of local, scriptural churches, not members of a "*universal church*". " ¹⁸ *So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him."* Numbers 27:18 (New International Version)

29- Hebrews 11:39-40

³⁹ *And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,* ⁴⁰ **God having provided something better for us**, *that they should not be made perfect (complete) apart from us.*

Paul told the church members to whom he was writing that " *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.*" Hebrews 13:10 (King James Version)

The writer of the Book of Hebrews was teaching that the Jews who were trying to worship and serve God as a good Jew, had no right to participate in observing the Lord's Supper. He was attempting to warn those Jewish members of the local, scriptural churches that if they "jumped ship" and no longer served Christ in a local, scriptural church, they would, like Esau, sell their birthright for "a bowl of bean soup".

Serving Christ in a local, scriptural church is **that** important and the benefits are **that superior**. Jesus Christ also told **His disciples, the local church in Jerusalem,** " ¹⁶ *But spiritually prosperous are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear; for assuredly, I am saying to you, **Many prophets and righteous men passionately desired to see the things which you are seeing and did not see them, and to hear the things which you are hearing, and did not hear them.** As for you, therefore, hear the illustration of the one who sows seed. While everyone is listening and not comprehending the word of the kingdom, there comes the Pernicious One and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This man is he who was sown as seed alongside the footpath. And he who was sown upon the shallow ground where the rock layers were near the surface, this man is the one who hears the word and immediately with joy receives it. And he does not have rootage in himself, but is by nature a temporizer, and the pressure of circumstances having come, and persecution because of the Word, immediately he sees in it that of which he disapproves and which hinders him from acknowledging its authority. And he who was sown as seed into the midst of the thorns, this is he who hears the Word, and the worries of this age and the deceitfulness of its wealth combine to utterly choke the Word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who was sown as seed upon the good ground, this is he who hears the Word and understands it, who is such a one as bears fruit and produces, in the case of one on the one hand, one hundred per cent, and in the case of another on the other hand, sixty per cent, and in the case of still another, thirty per cent." Matthew 13:16 (Wuest New Testament: An Expanded Translation)*

However, nothing in Hebrews 11:39-40 (listed by the proponents as proof) teaches that there is a "universal church".

30- 1 Peter 5:1-4

" ¹ *The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:* ² *Shepherd the flock*

of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Peter addressed his first letter to the Jewish members of local New Testament churches, strangers residing in the land we refer to as Galatia even though their homeland was Palestine. In 2018, we call that land, the nation of Turkey. We know Peter was writing to church members of local, scriptural churches because he mentions in 1st Peter 3:21 that they all had scriptural baptism. In 1st Peter 5:1-4 Peter addresses part of the letter to elders in the group, like the elders Paul and Barnabas ordained in Acts 14:23. Peter admonishes the elders (1) to feed the flock, (2) to take oversight of the flock of God, (3) to serve the flock willingly, (4) not to serve the flock for personal gain, and (5) not to use their position to exercise domination over the flock but rather to lead the flock by example. In 1st Peter 5:4, Peter identifies the faithful elders as under shepherds who would receive a crown of glory when the Chief Shepherd shall appear. In addition, the church in Babylon sent salutations to the church members to whom he was writing (1st Peter 5:13). Every instruction in this letter applies to living members of local, scriptural churches, not members of a "*universal church*".

31- Revelation 2-3

Revelation chapters 2 and 3 contain the seven letters that were sent to seven local, scriptural churches that were in existence at the time of the recording of the book of Revelation. Because of their combined length, we will not print the seven letters in this paper but you can find them printed, with comments, in the paper, "A Chronological Study Of Revelation", on this website, <http://www.bayourouge.net> .

If you will read the letters to the seven churches you will see for yourself that none of the letters teach that there is a "*universal church*". Quite frankly, we do not understand why those scriptures were listed by the proponents of a "*universal church*".

32- Revelation 21:2-3

"² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from Heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

WOW! This is scripture #32 that the proponents offer as definite proof of the existence of a *"universal church"*. We must ask you, do you see anything in Revelation 21:3-4 that teaches that there is a *"universal church"*? What we do see in Revelation chapters 21 and 22, is a small glimpse, provided by Jesus Christ, of the place the Lord will tabernacle with the saved for eternity. The Lord will end up with exactly what He want in the beginning when He paused eternity and began time (measured eternity). In the beginning, the Lord desired to tabernacle for eternity with a perfect people who will live with Him on a perfect earth who will have chosen to be there of their own free will.

Again, when we read those 32 verses printed above that the proponents offer as definite proof of the existence of a *"universal church"*, we have to wonder why they offered those particular verses when none of them even mentioned the existence of a *"universal church"*.

Why do most "faiths" teach that there is a *"universal church"*? It seems to be a vain attempt to include themselves as members of the Bride of Christ and a future, permanent occupant of the Holy City Jerusalem which will descend from Heaven and will occupy an eternal place on the New Earth. The New Earth is where those of us who have been redeemed through the blood of the Lamb will spend eternity with God just as Revelation 21:3 says we will. But just because Revelation says that God will tabernacle with the Family of God does not mean that all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations are going to be living inside the Holy City Jerusalem. That is reserved as a permanent abode of the Bride of Christ. The wedding guests will be living outside the City.

After the White Throne Judgment (*Revelation 20:11-15*), the Lord will create a New Earth where the Bride of Christ will live as well as the rest of the saved who are not members of the Bride of Christ but, rather, are wedding guests. " ¹ Now I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from Heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." ⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." ⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." *Revelation 21:1-11 (New King James Version)*

Why will the Heavens pass away as well as the elements that now exist? Because Satan has even touched the Third Heaven, the present Throne Room of God. " ⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ⁸ And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge

around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.” Job 1:6-12 (English Standard Version)

Why do most "faiths" teach that there is a "universal church"? Because they did not "search the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" when they were told that all the saved are members of a great big, invisible "universal church". They did not search the scriptures when they were told that they are members of a great big, invisible "universal church" and therefore they are members of the Bride of Christ. If they had searched, they would have noticed that in addition to members of the Bride of Christ living in the Holy City Jerusalem on the New Earth (*Revelation 21:22-27* printed below), there will be nations of other saved people living outside the city also. If those nations living outside of the Holy City Jerusalem are not the wedding guests, who do you think they are, the lost? And if those nations living outside of the Holy City Jerusalem are not the wedding guests, where will the wedding guest be living for eternity? We are told in Revelation 21 that the Holy City Jerusalem is the dwelling place for the Bride, not the wedding guests. " ²² I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ **The nations** will walk by its light, and **the kings of the earth** will bring their glory **into it**. ²⁵ Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ **People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.** ²⁷ But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21:22-27 (New Revised Standard Version)

Also, if they had searched the scriptures daily to see if the things they had been taught were so, they would have noticed that when the writer of the book of Hebrews listed the things the saved will see on the New Earth, **he listed two groups of saved people.** " ²² But ye are come unto (1) mount Sion, and unto (2) the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to (3) an innumerable company of angels, ²³ **(4) To the general assembly and church of the**

firstborn, which are written in Heaven, and to (5) God the Judge of all, and to **(6) the spirits of just men made perfect,** ²⁴ And to (7) Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to (8) the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Hebrews 12:22-24 (King James Version)

If they had searched the scriptures, they would have questioned what group did the members of a local, scriptural church have the authority to bind someone into. If they had searched the scriptures, they would have questioned from what group did the members of a local, scriptural church have the authority to remove someone. " ¹⁵ "If a brother sins against you, go to him privately and confront him with his fault. If he listens and confesses it, you have won back a brother. ¹⁶ But if not, then take one or two others with you and go back to him again, proving everything you say by these witnesses. ¹⁷ If he still refuses to listen, then take your case to the church, and if the church's verdict favors you, but he won't accept it, then the church should excommunicate him. ¹⁸ And I tell you this—whatever (the Greek word is ὅσος and is better translated in most other passages, "**as many as**") you bind on earth is bound in Heaven, and whatever you free on earth will be freed in Heaven. " Matthew 18:15-18 (The Living Bible)

Do the members of a local, scriptural church have the authority to bind someone into the Lamb's Book of Life that lists the members of the Family of God? No! That would mean that the members of a local, scriptural church have the authority to bind someone into salvation so that they become a child of God. Their own Bible does not teach such a thing.

Do the members of a local, scriptural church have the authority to remove someone from the Lamb's Book of Life that lists the members of the Family of God who will one day be living in their heavenly, glorified bodies on the New Earth (Revelation chapter 21 & 22)? No! That would mean that the members of a local, scriptural church have the authority to remove someone from salvation so that they are no longer a child of God. Their own Bible does not teach such a thing.

Perhaps you are thinking that Jesus was only referring to a local church practicing discipline upon one of their wayward members but that does not apply to the members of the "universal church". Let's consider that a moment. If the Lord desires for a wayward member of

a local, scriptural church to be removed from their membership, wouldn't He want a wayward member of the "*universal church*" to be removed also or does He want them to continue in sin without any consequences? A local, New Testament church only has the authority to remove a wayward member if they are a member of that particular church. The members do not have the authority to remove a wayward member of another local church nor would they have the authority to remove a wayward member of the "*universal church*", if there was such a thing as a "*universal church*". So I guess the Lord would have to remove them. Now we really have a dilemma. We have "painted ourselves in a corner". If there is a "*universal church*" that is composed of all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations and one of them is wayward and will not repent, what does the Lord loose them from? Salvation? If there is a "*universal church*" that is composed of all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations and one of them is wayward and will not repent, what does the Lord loose them from? The Holy City Jerusalem?

If saved people would search the scriptures daily to see if the things they had been taught were so, they would have questioned what Christ meant when he gave His local, scriptural churches the authority to forgive sins. ¹⁹ *It was the evening of the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked because they were afraid of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you".* ²⁰ *After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side, and when they saw the Lord the disciples were overjoyed.* ²¹ *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. Just as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."* ²² *When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.* ²³ *If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain people's sins, they are retained."* *John 20:19-23 (International Standard Version)*

As we shared earlier, one of the most important things to practice as we study the Divine Word of God is to always ask ourselves (1) who is speaking, (2) to whom are they speaking and (3) what is the subject under discussion. Many, many errors have been made because the person did not ask those three questions and because they have applied the instructions that were given to a particular group to themselves also. Many times people attempt to claim for themselves,

promises that were made only to a particular group even though they are not a member of that particular group.

If they (and all others who believe in a great big "*universal church*") would have asked those three questions, they would have ascertained that (1) Christ was speaking in John 20:19 (printed above). They would have ascertained that (2) Christ was speaking to His disciples in John 20:19-20 (printed above), the first members of the local, New Testament church in Jerusalem. And they would have ascertained that (3) the subject under discussion was the authority that Christ was giving His disciples to forgive sins. What sins do the members of a local, New Testament church have the authority to forgive? What sins do the members of a local, New Testament church have the authority to retain? The members of a local New Testament church have been given the authority to forgive **a wayward member** if that member has repented and wants God's chastisement to cease. Also, the members of a local New Testament church have been given the authority to retain (not forgive) the sins of **a wayward member** if that member will not repent. ¹ *It is reported commonly that there is fornication **among you**, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.* ² *And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed **might be taken away from among you**.* ³ *For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,* ⁴ *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **when ye are gathered together**, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ⁵ *To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* ⁶ *Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"* 1 Corinthians 5:1-6 (King James Version)

After the man repented and wanted to be restored back into the membership of the local church in Corinth, Paul wrote in a second letter, ⁵ *If anyone has caused pain, he has caused pain not so much to me but to some degree—not to exaggerate—to all of you.* ⁶ *The punishment [inflicted] by the majority is sufficient for that person.* ⁷ *As a result, you should instead forgive and comfort him. Otherwise, this one may be overwhelmed by excessive grief.* ⁸ *Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.* ⁹ *I wrote for this purpose: to test your character [to see] if you*

are obedient in everything. ¹⁰ *If you forgive anyone, I do too. For what I have forgiven—if I have forgiven anything—it is for you in the presence of Christ.* ¹¹ *[I have done this] so that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his schemes."* 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

If the "universal church" was composed of all the saved across the world, that would mean that it would be necessary for all of the members to meet in one location at the same time so that they could vote to discipline **a wayward member** by removing them from membership in that great big "universal church" and delivering them unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Then, if that member repents and wants the chastisement to cease, it would be necessary for all of the saved across the world (if they were all members of a great big "universal church"), to meet in one location at the same time so that they could vote to forgive **a wayward member** and restore them back into their membership so that Satan would no longer be able to discipline their fleshly body. If there was such a thing as a "universal church" and if they did not meet in one location at the same time and vote to forgive a wayward member, Satan's destruction of the wayward member's fleshly body would not stop since Christ gave that authority to "THE CHURCH"!

Perhaps you said to yourself, Paul was only referring to a local church practicing discipline upon one of their wayward members but that does not apply to the members of the "universal church". Let's consider that a moment. The Holy Spirit instructed Paul to say in 1st Corinthians 5:5 that the church in Corinth was to turn the wayward member over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. If the Lord desires for the wayward member of a local, scriptural church to be turned over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, does He desire for the wayward member of a "universal church" to continue in sin without any consequences?

If a church teaches their members and their community that they will benefit from all the gifts that Christ promised the members of His local, scriptural churches whether they attend or support their church or not, the material bodies of many members will see little need to attend or support. Please remember that it is the spiritual body that is born again, not the material body. That is why the material body of a saved person is not going to get off this earth alive. The apostle Paul observed, " ¹⁸ *I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature*

*is concerned. No matter which way I turn I can't make myself do right. I want to but I can't.*¹⁹
*When I want to do good, I don't; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.*²⁰ *Now if I am
 doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp.*²¹ *It
 seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.*²² *I
 love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned;*²³ *but there is something else deep
 within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a
 slave to the sin that is still within me. In my mind I want to be God's willing servant, but instead
 I find myself still enslaved to sin.*²⁴ *So you see how it is: my new life tells me to do right, but the
 old nature that is still inside me loves to sin. Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will
 free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature?*²⁵ *Thank God! It has been done by Jesus
 Christ our Lord. He has set me free." Romans 7:18-25 (The Living Bible)*

Paul voiced the dilemma of a saved person. Now if a church tells the world that as long as you are saved, you will benefit from all the gifts that Christ promised the members of His local, scriptural churches whether they attend and support a local church or not, the material bodies of many saved people will see little need to attend or support. It is little wonder why many saved people do not see a need to be a faithful, supporting member of one of Christ's local, scriptural churches. They have been promised all the rewards regardless of how they live and regardless of what they do.

*"*¹⁰ *According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a
 foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.
¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if
 anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each
 one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire,
 and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on
 the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer
 loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (English
 Standard Version)*